Brownies' winter sleepout to help older Cumbrians stay warm

Wednesday 28 January, 2026

A group of kind-hearted Brownies from near Carlisle have raised thousands of pounds to help vulnerable older people stay warm in winter – and they aren't finished yet!

Since 2013, 1st Wetheral Brownies have supported Cumbria Community Foundation's annual Winter Warmth Appeal, which gives out vital grants to older people to keep them warm and well through the colder months.

The Brownies have held a sponsored sleepout every winter at chilly spots across Cumbria, including Naworth Castle, Netherby Hall, Wetheral Priory Gatehouse and even in tents, on the shores of Windermere.

So far they have raised more than £12,000 – and this week they will be digging out their thermals and doing it all again.

Twenty Brownies and Young Leaders from 1st Wetheral will be joined by 10 Brownies and Guides from Hayton to spend the night in a tipi near Brampton. This year's theme is a Native American Adventure, and the girls have been making dream catchers and totem poles in preparation.

Their leader Janice Brown, AKA Tawny Owl, explained: "We have been learning about Native American culture, in preparation for our sponsored sleepout this week. The girls have made dream catchers and lanterns, and we've been practising our campfire songs and tracking skills, which we will try out in the woods.

She explained why the Brownies support the Winter Warmth Appeal each year, which last winter gave out more than £270,000 in grants, benefitting 1,570 vulnerable older people across the county.

"Sleeping out in the cold gives the Brownies a real understanding of what life must be like for older people who can't afford to heat their homes in winter. So while we always have a lot of fun, the girls know the serious reason for the campaign and do their best to raise as much in sponsorship as possible. They love that the money helps older people in need right here in Cumbria."

Andy Beeforth, Chief Executive of Cumbria Community Foundation, will be visiting the Brownies at their camp to thank them for their incredible fundraising efforts.

He said: "We have been running the Winter Warmth Appeal since 2010 and have raised more than £3m since then. I can honestly say there have been no more dedicated fundraisers in that time than our Brownie friends from Wetheral, and their wonderful volunteer leaders and helpers.

"Unfortunately, the need for the appeal is as great as ever. Every winter, as many as 500 older people in Cumbria die because they cannot afford to heat their homes and eat properly.

"Donations and fundraising by kind-hearted Cumbrians such as the Brownies mean older people won't have to make the impossible choice of whether to heat their homes or put food on the table."

The Winter Warmth Appeal is open for donations until March.

How to donate

Donate online: https://cumbriafoundation.enthuse.com/cf/cumbria-winter-warmth-appeal-2025

Donate by phone: Call 01900 825760 between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Donate by post: Please make cheques payable to Cumbria Community Foundation, writing 'Winter Warmth Fund' on the back, and send to: Cumbria Community Foundation, Dovenby Hall, Dovenby, Cockermouth, CA13 0PN.

Thanks to Special Event Tipis, Shake, Waffle and Roll, Darren Morgan of Talkin Adventures and Border Group Ltd for supporting the Brownies' sleepout.

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