Cumbrian landmarks wrap up warm to launch winter appeal

Thursday 24 October, 2024

Three iconic Cumbrian landmarks have been wrapped in giant scarves to mark the launch of Cumbria Community Foundation's 2024 Winter Warmth Appeal.

As Cumbria prepares itself for another winter in which many will struggle to heat their homes, the 33-metre scarf was draped around The Hoad in Ulverston, Whitehaven Lighthouse and the rotunda at Tullie in Carlisle, as a giant reminder that many older Cumbrians are facing a winter of potentially deadly cold.

It is hoped that Cumbrians will give the appeal their support and help ensure no one has to choose between heating and eating, amid fears there will be extra hardship this winter.

Every year in Cumbria, between 300 and 500 older people die because of problems related to not being able to afford to heat their home, and this year that number could be higher.

"Today we're sending a message to the people of Cumbria," said Jenny Benson, Director of Programmes & Partnerships at Cumbria Community Foundation, the charity which runs the appeal.

"We want to remind everyone not to forget the older vulnerable members of our community who are facing a winter of suffering because they cannot afford to heat their homes adequately.

"As we look towards winter, we know that the continued support of our donors will be vital. Pensioners were already due to get less this year as it will be the first time since 2022 that they will not receive an extra winter fuel cost-of-living top-up and energy prices have recently risen by 10%. In addition, the Government announced that only those in receipt of Pension Credit or a means tested benefit, will receive the Winter Fuel Payment.

"We know that many pensioners already find winter a struggle. The withdrawal of the winter fuel payment from all but the most vulnerable people means that this year will be especially difficult for many older Cumbrians.

"Our appeal is therefore more vital than ever before, and we want to ensure that no one is forced to struggle during the colder months.

"Please support the Winter Warmth Appeal by making a donation, however large or small, if you can."

The Winter Warmth Appeal sees money donated by the public then redistributed to those most in need, to allow them to stay warm without worrying about the cost.

Last year over £315,000 was awarded in grants – through delivery partners Age UK and Copeland Age & Advice Service – benefitting a total of 1,941 vulnerable older people across the county.

Someone hoping to receive a payment this year is Shirley McGuire, from Carlisle. She has applied for support after admitting she will not be able to turn on her heating this winter otherwise.

"I'm about to retire," the 65-year-old explained, "and I'd said to my sister that at least as a pensioner I'd get the winter fuel payment and finally be able to turn on my heating, and then the Government took it away.

"It's just wonderful that Age UK, through the Winter Warmth Appeal, has been able to help me – it is very much needed."

Up until now, Miss McGuire has been out at work some days, and so has managed to survive without switching on her heating – relying solely on hot water bottles and "lots of jumpers".

She added: "I'm used to always being cold: it's food or heat for me. This fund is a lifeline."

Cumbria Community Foundation has run the appeal every year since 2010 raising more than £2.5m.

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Terrance Abba, 72, from Barrow-In-Furness, received a grant last winter, thanks to the appeal.

“There are seven months through the year when it’s cold,” he explained, “so this payment is very helpful. Otherwise, for me, it’s a choice to put my heating on or have a warm meal.

“Last year the payment meant I could split it up and have some food and put the heating on when I really need it.”

Donate online using this link:

https://cumbriafoundation.enthuse.com/cf/cumbria-winter-warmth-appeal-2024

Alternatively, donations can be made by cheque or phone. To make a phone donation, please ring 01900 825760 between the hours of 9am-5pm.

A match funding challenge will run from Monday 11 November to Friday 13 December. During this period, anyone who donates will have their donation doubled, thanks to the generosity of match funding champions, who this year include Electricity North West, WCF Ltd, and Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness Councils.

Karen Hunter, customer inclusion and partnerships manager at Electricity North West, said: “We’re delighted to support Cumbria Community Foundation’s Winter Warmth Appeal.

“Customers are at the heart of everything we do and we’re always looking for partnerships that make a difference to communities.

“For four weeks from 11 November, as a match funding champion, we’ll double the donations that are made, £1 for £1 up to a total of £20,000. Hopefully, we’ll see new and current donors get involved knowing their donation will be doubled.”

If you know someone aged 60 or over who may need support from the fund, click here.

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