Kirkby Lonsdale Fire Disaster Recovery Appeal launched

Tuesday 17 December, 2024

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At the request of the Kirkby Lonsdale Community Recovery Partnership, Cumbria Community Foundation is launching the Kirkby Lonsdale Fire Disaster Recovery Appeal to address hardship caused by the devastating fire that destroyed many buildings on 8 December 2024. This appeal will help support the immediate and long-term recovery of people affected by the fire.

The Appeal has been launched with a donation of £50,000 from Westmorland and Furness Council so that the first wave of awards can be made before Christmas.

The fire caused the death of one person and forced 20 people to find emergency and temporary accommodation. In addition, six businesses have been destroyed with a further 78 businesses affected. The fire caused significant internal and external damage to buildings. Market Street remains closed to both vehicles and pedestrians, with a cordon in place to ensure public safety. Demolition work on structurally unsafe buildings is underway.

The Appeal is focussed on individual hardship caused by the fire and will broadly support the following:

- People who have lost their homes and possessions to the fire and been displaced, and
- People who are suffering hardship due to business closure linked to the fire and the loss of income to their households.
- If funds allow, community recovery activities

Immediate hardship needs are being met through the distribution of grant awards by Cumbria Community Foundation, in partnership with Westmorland and Furness Council and the Kirkby Lonsdale Community Cupboard. Grant awards will be made by a committee composed of representatives from the Community Foundation and the Kirkby Lonsdale Community Recovery Partnership.

Angela Jones from Westmorland and Furness Council and Chair of the Kirkby Lonsdale Community Recovery Partnership said: *"This fire has caused significant financial hardship and emotional distress to those directly affected and also to the whole community. The full impact of the fire is still emerging, but recovery is likely to take many months, if not years. The community response has been amazing, but many people and businesses have been significantly affected and will be affected for the long term. That is why is it essential that we raise as much money as possible to help support the community with their recovery plans.*

"We are also working alongside the local MP, Lizzy Collinge to lobby Government for match funding and if we are successful that means for every pound donated the government would match the same amount."

Councillor Paul Cassell, Chair of Kirkby Lonsdale Town Council and a member of the Kirkby Lonsdale Community Recovery Partnership, said: *"The primary aim of the fundraising is to support all families and individuals affected by the tragic fire that has devastated our beloved town. We have witnessed so many unseen acts of support and help and give our sincere and heartfelt thanks to all those who have been kind enough to donate. Recovery is going to be a long process, please support this appeal if you can."*

Andy Beeforth, Chief Executive at Cumbria Community Foundation, said: *"It is tragic to see such devastation and loss of life in this beautiful market town. The team at the Community Foundation have significant experience of managing disaster appeals and we will bring all our fundraising and grant making skills to help the people of the town*.

"We have set an initial target to raise £100,000. The people of Kirkby Lonsdale have responded magnificently to help their neighbours and friends. They have provided practical and financial support including temporary accommodation, food, clothing, emotional help, the use of holiday homes and a number of GoFundMe pages have raised funds to help specific people and the wider community. We look forward to working with the Kirkby Lonsdale Community Recovery Partnership to support people in their recovery from this horrific episode."

The Foundation is working closely with the Kirkby Lonsdale Community Recovery Partnership.

The Foundation is also coordinating its efforts in relation to the Lunesdale Hall GoFundMe page which has now been closed.

The Appeal is being promoted and supported by Westmorland and Furness Council, Kirkby Lonsdale Community Recovery Partnership, as well as by local news media, regional and national newspaper groups.

Donations and funds are being sought from:

- Individuals and businesses
- Grant making trusts and local, regional and national charities
- Community fundraising events
- Existing and new government funding programmes

Support for businesses

Westmorland and Furness Council are coordinating efforts in support of local businesses including seeking government support for grant aid and suspension of business rates. Charitable appeals are unable to support businesses directly. The Appeal can support business owners and employees experiencing financial hardship as a result of the fire.

About the Kirkby Lonsdale Fire Disaster Recovery Fund

To donate to the Fund, please visit:
https://cumbriafoundation.enthuse.com/cf/kirkby-lonsdale-fire-disaster-recovery-appeal

To find out more about the fund, please visit
https://www.cumbriafoundation.org/fund/kirkby-lonsdale-fire-disaster-recovery-fund/

Phase one of the fund will provide immediate short-term relief of hardship. Depending on funds available, we hope to make further grant awards in early 2025. To register for support, please contact the Community Hub on 015242 36404.

About the Kirkby Lonsdale Community Recovery Partnership

The Recovery Partnership has been formed to coordinate efforts in support of the recovery. Membership includes representatives from the Town Council, Westmorland and Furness Council, Chamber of Trade, Kirkby Lonsdale Community Interest Company, local churches, NHS Primary Care, Kirkby Lonsdale Community Cupboard CIO and local voluntary groups.

About Cumbria Community Foundation

Cumbria Community Foundation is an award-winning fundraiser and grant maker which has been in operation since 1999. It promotes philanthropy and manages grant making funds on behalf of a wide range of families, businesses, charitable trusts and public bodies. In 2023/24 it distributed £6.8M to projects and individuals throughout Cumbria. The Foundation has run disaster appeals in 2001 (FMD Recovery Fund) and 2005, 2009 and 2015 (Flood Recovery Funds) and in 2020 (Cumbria Coronavirus Recovery Fund).

Cumbria Community Foundation is registered with the Fundraising Regulator. Cumbria Community Foundation is a grant making charity (registered no 1075120): www.cumbriafoundation.org

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