Responding to local need across Cumbria

Wednesday 24 June, 2026

A community allotment, a village hub, and help for young people bereaved by suicide are among projects supported by a life-changing fund in its first year.

The Matson Ground Fund was founded by Alex and Samantha Scott in 2025 and is managed by Cumbria Community Foundation. It aims to strengthen communities by supporting them to respond to local need. It funds projects that bring people together to address shared challenges, encourage social action and improve local spaces.

Hesket Newmarket Community Shop received a grant of £10,000 from the fund to create a community hub. Local people took ownership of the shop in early 2026 and wanted to establish a welcoming space for people to meet, to combat loneliness and rural isolation.

A storeroom at the side of the building has been turned into a welcoming space with tables, chairs and a coffee machine.

Simon Hewitt, Chair of the Hesket Newmarket Community Shop management committee, said the aim was that, as well as being a social space, the hub would host training sessions, such as IT coaching sessions, drop-in sessions for healthcare professionals, and fun nights for young people.

He said: “The hub will form a key strand in our aims to combat rural isolation and loneliness within our community, and it will also act as a safe place of refuge in times of power outages and flooding, something the area is prone to.”

The Matson Ground Fund also gave £4,674 to **Windermere Park For All** towards the installation of a concrete bowl skate park. The project to replace the existing outdated skate park was initiated by local parents and park users who wanted to improve the facility for children and the wider community.

Ben Berry, Chair of the Windermere Park For All committee, said: “This project is about much more than ramps and concrete. It is about giving young people a place that feels like theirs, where they can be active, creative and part of the community.”

Distington Community Trust
has led a project to transform a piece of wasteland in the middle of the village into a lively community allotment. Their vision was to create “a community hub for residents to meet in a central place, to strengthen social skills, encourage physical activity, promote creativity, combat loneliness and bring the community together as a whole.”

The first plots were allocated in June last year and all 22 were soon full, with several people on the waiting list. Local people and businesses have given their time and materials to the project, and locals have held fundraisers to buy equipment.

Trust secretary Joy Jones said: “It’s been overwhelming, the response from the village. I’ve lived in the village for 19 years and would never have met all of these people if it wasn’t for the allotments.”

Hugh Cronie, 76, explained how having an allotment plot has helped him. “It’s got me out the house. If I wasn’t here, I’d be sitting at home. It gets me some fresh air.

“We’re a big happy family. Everybody’s enjoying it here.”

The Matson Ground Fund awarded Distington Community Trust £3,000 to pay for a community horticultural worker to provide expert guidance in establishing and maintaining the community garden.

The Fund aims to respond quickly and flexibly to emerging and urgent need. This month, it awarded £25,000 over two years to **Every Life Matters**, a charity that campaigns for action against suicide. The funding will go towards suicide bereavement support for children and young people in Cumberland.

Chris Wood, Chief Executive of Every Life Matters, explained the need for the project: “Our records show that in Cumbria approximately 100 children annually lose a parent or step-parent to suicide, with more losing extended family members, and some friends. This type of traumatic bereavement can have a profound impact on young people’s mental/physical health.”

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No Rainbows Without Rain
is a Workington-based charity supporting people across Cumbria facing poverty and hardship. It provides food, clothing and household essentials for families and individuals in need, and Christmas dinners and presents for hundreds of people each year.

The Matson Ground Fund awarded the charity £5,000 towards the running costs of their Workington base, which acts as a charity shop, furniture warehouse, foodbank and community hub.

Alex and Samantha Scott said: “The need across Cumbria varies from community to community, but there are clearly some common themes, such as isolation, poverty and poor mental health.

“Community groups and charitable organisations throughout the county do incredible work to tackle some of these issues, and we are delighted to be able to support some of them through the Matson Ground Fund. We have been incredibly impressed with all of the projects we have been to visit.

“We take real joy from being able to give, and choosing Cumbria Community Foundation to manage our giving means we have a trusted partner to guide our philanthropy.”

Sarah Thompson, Grants and Programmes Officer for Cumbria Community Foundation, said: “After just one year, the Matson Ground Fund is already making a huge difference to communities across Cumbria. The generosity of Samantha and Alex means we can fund vital projects led by local people that strengthen communities and bring about meaningful change.

“We are really grateful that they trust us to deliver this essential work.”

The Matson Ground Fund will distribute £100,000 in grants each year for 10 years, creating a total investment of £1 million into community driven charitable activities across the county.

To find out how to apply to the fund, go to https://www.cumbriafoundation.org/fund/matson-ground-fund/.

Cumbria Community Foundation gives around £6million in grants a year to local charities and voluntary groups through over 100 grant making funds set up by generous businesses, individuals and families.

To find out more about setting up a fund and supporting those in need in Cumbria, contact Development Manager Caroline Adams on 01900 820825 or email caroline@cumbriafoundation.org.

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