

Update: Kirkby Lonsdale Fire Disaster Recovery Appeal

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Cumbria Community Foundation would like to thank everyone who has given so generously to the Kirkby Lonsdale Fire Disaster Recovery Appeal, which remains open for donations.

The appeal was launched by the Foundation at the request of the Kirkby Lonsdale Business and Community Recovery Partnership, following the devastating fire in the town on 8 December 2024. More than 100 residential properties and 84 business properties in the town centre were directly impacted by the fire, in which one person died and another was injured.

Launched with a donation of £50,000 from Westmorland and Furness Council, the appeal has since been supported by individuals, community fundraising events, community groups, businesses, local charitable trusts and foundations.

In partnership with the Kirkby Lonsdale Business and Community Recovery Partnership and Westmorland and Furness Council, the Foundation has awarded a total of £87,500 across two phases to support 83 households.

If funds allow, the Foundation hopes to support community organisations that have been helping local people through the recovery process.

Dr Jenny Benson, Director of Programmes & Partnerships at Cumbria Community Foundation, said: "It has been a privilege to work with the Kirkby Lonsdale Business and Community Recovery Partnership and Westmorland and Furness Council to support people affected by the devastating fire. By working together, we have been able to ensure that donated funds have reached those most in need. This swift turnaround would not have been possible without the council officers helping people on the ground in Kirkby Lonsdale to apply, and the support provided by the Community Hub and associated community organisations – a huge thanks to everyone involved."

Funding has been used to support those directly affected by the fire, including those left permanently or temporarily homeless and those whose business or job was lost as a result of the disaster.

Comments from some of those receiving grants included:

- "Many thanks for your kind grant; it is very much appreciated. All of our community are very grateful for the fantastic support work done by the council and our Community Hub."
- "I have received the money transferred into my account, and want to thank everyone involved for their care, support, empathy, and sensitivity over the past few days. It has made a huge difference."
- "Thank you so much for this, we as a family appreciate it very much and this will help us tremendously, as we get through the next few weeks of the unknown for us."

The appeal has received very generous donations from individuals, businesses and community groups, both in and around Kirkby Lonsdale itself and further afield.

A group from the nearby village of Hutton Roof carol sing for charity every year and this Christmas chose to donate the money raised to the appeal. Members of Capernwray Evangelical Church also supported the fund through carol singing, in and around Arkholme, and Drum Nation samba band busked to raise funds, with members of the band also donating.

Students and staff of Queen Elizabeth School and QESudio in Kirkby Lonsdale held a 'wear something festive' and cake sale fundraising day in aid of the appeal.

Jo Ritzema, Executive Chair of WCF Fuels North West, explained why the firm had decided to support the appeal. She said: "Like many others we couldn't fail to be moved by the sad events in Kirkby Lonsdale, more poignant given the time of year. Our customers live in rural communities and rely heavily on local services. It's important that we all support the town however we can to get back on its feet to ensure its long-term success."

Donations have also been received from organisations including Cumbria Freemasons, and charitable trusts including the Francis Scott Trust and Frieda Scott Trust.

Steve Curl, Chair of Trustees for the Francis Scott Trust, said: “The Francis Scott Trust are shocked and saddened at the disaster that has impacted the Kirkby Lonsdale community. To all of those affected, please know that you are in our thoughts both now and in the days and months ahead. We are pleased to be able to support you.”

The appeal remains open for donations, with a fundraising target of £150,000.

Dr Jenny Benson said: “We know that many people affected by the fire will need considerable support for several months to come, so I would urge anyone who hasn’t yet donated to the appeal to give if they are able. We will ensure your donation reaches those who need it most.”

To donate to the Kirkby Lonsdale Fire Disaster Recovery 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/>

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