



Miners Lamp Community Cafe and Hub
Eastwoods Park
Eastwoods Road
Prudhoe
Northumberland
NE42 5DT

Date : 7th February 2022

Prudhoe Town Council

By Email

Dear Councillors

Update on our work

Firstly let us thank Prudhoe Town Council for their continued support of our work in Eastwoods Park and throughout Prudhoe through the Miners Lamp Community Cafe & Hub

Food Bank

The past few years have been challenging to say the least, our food bank as seen a significant rise in requests for support not just in Prudhoe but also further afield where coverage is lacking. As a small food bank dedicated to residents of Stocksfield, Mickley, Prudhoe, Wylam, Ovingham, Horsley and Ovington, we have provided support as far afield as Haltwhistle, Humshaugh and Ponteland. This is an issue which we have raised with the Northumberland Communities Together Hub to co-ordinate a more joined up approach between different food bank providers.

We expect over the coming months to see an even greater increase in requests for help with many households feeling the squeeze of increased food, fuel and energy prices. Already we are seeing not just those facing food poverty who survive on benefits, but those on low incomes and over the past year pensioners who are struggling even more. It is unfortunate that many of those we will help will already be vulnerable people.

Pay as you feel market

Unfortunately at the end of 2021 we decided to cease operating our pay as you feel market. In 2020 we re-distributed over 35 tonnes of food within our community which would have gone to landfill. In 2021 this reduced to around 25 tonnes of food. Previously we were collecting donations around 5 days per week, sometimes twice per day in 2020 and towards the middle of 2021.

Due to reported supply issues and a reduction in the amount of food being donated our collections dropped to 2 days per week. As a result our pay as you feel market was reduced from 5 days per week to 2 days per week. The amount of food we were receiving continued to reduce throughout the end of 2021 and as a result donation income reduced greatly, resulting in the amount of donations we received not covering fuel costs for our van to collect items.

We needed to re-think our approach, and sadly decided to cease operating our pay as you feel market. Whilst we are still collecting what we can, much of this is now redirected to those we support through our food bank in addition to providing food through the Miners Lamp to children and others who need it.

We are increasingly hearing from children who visit Eastwoods Park and the Miners Lamp that they are going hungry. Our approach has always been to try and freeze food where possible and as a result we are able to provide some free meals to those in need.

School Uniform

Our school uniform bank continues to be accessed by many people in the community. Due to increased demand and therefore having to increase storage on our food bank over the past two years, we had to put our school uniform into a lock up storage unit.

In the summer of 2021 we held a food uniform market held at Prudhoe Parish Hall which was held over two days and was very successful. We aim to hold similar events in future.

We are aware that some schools in Prudhoe are beginning to operate their own schemes and this is to be applauded and encouraged. Prudhoe West and St Matthews are two schools we are aware of that operate their own pre-loved uniform schemes.

Ebenezer Chapel and proposed building works at the Miners Lamp

As many Councillors are aware the Ebenezer Chapel was placed on the market. Initially our bid was unsuccessful, however after withdrawal from the proposed purchaser we were offered the building again. Unfortunately after having a thorough survey of the building carried out, the works required to bring the building back into use was beyond our means, so we decided that we were not in a position to pursue this course of action.

We are desperately in need of space. Our community room at the Miners Lamp has had to be used for additional storage for our food bank, our school uniforms are held in a lock up unit along with many other items which aren't required on a daily basis at the Miners Lamp.

It is with this in mind that we are now concentrating on extending the Miners Lamp in Eastwoods Park to provide much needed space. We are currently in discussions with Northumberland County Council regarding a piece of land to the rear of the Miners Lamp which will provide limited space for extension without interrupting use of the play area.

Eastwoods Park

Eastwoods Park continues to be a well used park by the community and also attracts many visitors from further afield.

We were delighted that following a mystery shop Eastwoods Park was awarded Green Flag status for its second year for 2021-22. Our charity had invested

considerably more in terms of planting to achieve this. A slight set back being some plants were uprooted and destroyed.

Funding from Prudhoe Town Council helped us host two fun days in September 2021 which were very well attended and a great boost for our community. Many of the businesses and entertainers we used were local providers who themselves had saw their own businesses affected by covid.

We are continuing to work with NCC and push for the completion of planned works in Eastwoods Park. A number of new seats were installed in 2021 and the remainder are planned for replacement in 2022-23. The planned footpath around the park continues to be delayed. We see this as vital to the future value of Eastwoods Park enabling access for those in wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs. Currently around half of the park is inaccessible.

We hope at some point to renew floodlights in the park, whilst NCC has limited finances available for improvements, we have offered contributions from our own funds to enable works to be completed.

Miners Lamp Community Cafe

Our cafe has continued to operate over the winter providing access to public toilets and refreshments to park users. Unfortunately we have very little footfall from areas of Prudhoe being on the outskirts of town. Unfortunately trading income has reduced significantly due to covid, including the period of school summer holidays. We are continuing to face difficult times and footfall to the Miners Lamp has been the lowest we have since since we opened in April 2019. Unfortunately this is something which many isolated businesses face on the outskirts of our town. Certainly with the opening of Ginevra and MacDonalds nearby has had an effect on our cafe.

Without the success of the Miners Lamp Community Cafe which generates income for the Friends of Eastwoods Park we are unable to invest in our park or the work that we do.

In the summer of 2021 we contracted and paid for Prudhoe Youth Project to take 15 children away for activities. Activities that Prudhoe Youth Project planned were all fully booked and the children would not have had any other opportunity over the summer. Many of the children who visit the miners lamp do not access PYP events or activities as it is either too far to travel, or in many cases parents are disengaged and do not involve or enrol their children in any activities. This was evidence from the activities we funded PYP to do, where I personally had to visit some of the children's homes to ensure they did not sleep in and miss the bus for the activity day.

Many of the children we see on a regular basis are those who are at the right age to help develop into responsible young adults. Whilst since the Friends of Eastwoods Park was created we have experienced many issues as a result of

antisocial behaviour. These are thankfully reducing, and the children around 8yrs up are those that we need to influence for the future.

Future events

Following the success of our summer fun days in September 2021. We plan to host these again in conjunction with the Prudhoe Miners Race. Last year we invited food vans and stall holders which was a great success and we hope with the completion of the path around Eastwoods Park we can increase usage of the park and host other events such as food festivals etc.

This year we will also see the Platinum Jubilee of HM The Queen. We are currently in the process of seeking a contractor to manufacture a Beacon to be permanently placed in Eastwoods Park which will be lit accompanied by a Bugler on the evening of the 2nd June to start the celebration of the Jubilee. This will be followed by a 'picnic in the park' on Sunday 5th June to end celebrations.

Alongside these major events, we regularly hold smaller events around school holidays and continue to offer free meals for children at these times to combat holiday hunger.

Eastwoods Park is an amazing park and offers so much potential for further events if we have the support of our town. We read with interest that a proposal for a band stand was brought to PTC recently. This is a great idea, Eastwoods Park should be considered as a potential site for a bandstand, just look at how successful and well used Hexham Bandstand is in a wider green space.

We hope Prudhoe Town Council will continue to support our work for our community and town.

Yours faithfully

Russell Greig

Secretary

Friends of Eastwoods Park

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