

Helping Whittlesey Committee meeting 6/2/26

The following bullet points give a flavour of the extraordinary work this organisation does in our community. Many will be aware that they moved from the Falcon to the Danzen Stadium area off Drybread Road.

- After securing funding and planning, we completed the new pantry within 10 months and moved in! It's been well received, and it's such a lovely, bigger space with our own car park!
- Busy December! A record 20.83 tonnes was collected, with 6.60 tonnes collected on Christmas Eve alone! We stored at both pantries and ran pantries 7 days a week, twice a day from both locations at times!
- 113.79 tonnes saved since we started!!!
- **Christmas appeal** – Volunteers worked incredibly hard and supported 201 children with presents this year.
- Families through the local schools, youth clubs, social prescribers, Whittlesey Emergency Food aid and people known through their Helping Whittlesey work were given support.
- We received cash and toy donations from the community, and the charity tins we put out in local shops, etc., were used to buy items as needed.
- A family we helped for the past 2 years, who are back on their feet, **donated £120**
- **A one-off donation from the pantry's** food provided for occasions has gone towards the appeal.
- We had a raffle which raised £200.
- Volunteers collected a van full of items from the March Factory shop during its closing down! Lots have been used for the appeal; some were donated to Fen Hands and Merrylegs fundraising, and others were sold alongside Aldi donations towards the appeal.
- Anna attended the Masonic lodge afternoon tea on Sunday, 30th November, to talk about what we do. We also provided their food. They had a collection as well as the price of the tea, and raised £321 towards the Christmas appeal. They have a collection pot permanently behind the bar.
- Whittlesey Lions donated £100 towards the Christmas appeal as a thank you for the buffet food provided
- The trustees from The Eastrea Centre donated Smellie sets.
- A few local businesses donated some money & Whittlesey Lions donated £300 towards selection boxes. Thanks to donations from other businesses, Anna brought 50 Advent calendars to the WEFA.
- **Larger One-off donations** from the pantry food provided for occasions have gone towards the Christmas appeal.

- Helping Whittlesey & The Community Pantry covered about 75% of the costs of the appeal themselves and have been working hard fundraising and sale shopping ready for Christmas 2026.
- One of the volunteers was approached by the head of the AJS school, as we have given talks in their assembly about our work, and they **wanted to support** what we do. I have been in touch and suggested that it would be brilliant for them to sponsor the pre-loved uniform shed we are planning on having. They loved the idea and are planning a sponsored walk in April.
- Lidl contacted us to ask if we would host some of their staff for the day as part of their **induction** on Thursday, 25th September, and to show them what happens to the surplus food their store donates. They spend the day collecting surplus food with us, taking it to the pantry to weigh and sort, helped out during pantry and cleaning up afterwards and after we agreed that we would be happy to help, Lidl revealed that, as a thank-you, we would get a donation, which went towards the insurance on the van.
- **Rent and Return** - We are looking to launch this year, but need to sort out the containers and get someone to run it!
- We have had a lot of interest from youths wanting to complete their volunteering hours for their **Duke of Edinburgh**. Unfortunately, we can only have so many, so we had to decline. We currently have 2 volunteers with us every Saturday and Sunday on a fortnightly rotation, for a total of 4 volunteers.
- Vanden Recycling closed and got in touch to see if we wanted anything. We took a table, chairs, and bookshelves which are in our new pantry office. We also got a hot-water urn and 2 keep-warm flasks. They also gave a washing machine and tumble dryer that have been passed over to local families.
- We continue to support local youth groups and schools weekly with cakes, pastries, cereal, milk, bread, etc., saving them money.
- We continue to work with the Whittlesey Emergency Food Aid, passing over any surplus in-date food, and Joe brings any leftover food to the pantry every Thursday.