

WEST END

NEWSLETTER



NEW PROJECTS STARTED!

Recognising the cost-of-living crisis West End Morecambe Big Local (WEM) has extended its support to the West End food club shop (a project WEM helped establish) and has commissioned a Morecambe-based social enterprise to help households in the West End tackle issues around energy costs. More information about both projects inside.

Picture: Rebecca from the West End Food Club and Lucy, from the West End HEAT project.

www.westendmorecambe.co.uk

INSIDE

MENTAL HEALTH OPEN COMMISSION

ARE YOU A GROUP, ORGANISATION, OR AGENCY THAT IS INTERESTED IN DELIVERING A MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT IN THE WEST END COMMUNITY? SEE PAGE 5 FOR A WEM COMMISSION OF UP TO £50,000. DEADLINE APRIL 24th

HELP WITH HEATING PROJECT

PAGE 2



**WEM'S NEW
ACTION PLAN
PAGES 6 & 7**



AT THE TIME OF WRITING...

It is needless to say how complicated life is right now. After the pandemic the world has fallen into upheaval, and the cost-of-living crisis hangs over everyone.

This is all having a noticeable impact on people's mental health. Not just our general wellbeing but issues which qualify as serious problems. WEM has been planning to commission some work locally to help on this topic (see page 5) and include support totalling up to £50,000.

Whilst it sometimes feels like nothing is happening there are local people who are still trying to make a difference. WEM itself delivered some urgent activity during the pandemic but some people thought we then vanished. Behind the scenes we have been busy and most of last year was spent writing our new Action Plan - a major point in the Big Local's project life. This plan was agreed nationally and now sets out what we aim to do in the next three years, and we have already started in on it - see the news about the Food Club shop, HEAT project and more. You can read the full plan, which includes a review of previous activity, on our website.

In writing the plan the question arose again: if you were given money to improve the West End, how would you spend it? It's a simple question that's deceptively difficult to answer given the array of both issues and opinions in the community. With some only seeing WEM as a purse it became apparent that we might have been asking the wrong question. Anyone can spend money but the real question is how do we make a difference? This is why our new Action Plan is more focused on the underlying issues, seeking to build stronger foundations rather than papering over the cracks.

We can't work miracles and can't meet every expectation, but we have good reason to believe we can have a positive impact on the West End. We know that problems in the past with WEM delayed spending, but we are confident about changing that and have set out an ambitious set of projects to do just that. We are also going to avoid getting bogged down in the gossip and micro politics which we all know exists. We hope you will support our ambitions, and even take part in helping make things happen.

www.westendmorecambe.co.uk

Local Trust | Big Local



"Well, that explains why the fig leaves at the florist have shot up in price."

FRONTIERLAND

Last year WEM asked local people about their future thoughts on Frontierland site. This was a general survey on aspirations, not solid judgments made on in-depth knowledge. Nevertheless, it offered views which are useful for others to consider.

The largest response was to see some sort of family leisure venue or complex. Then a place for children and young people to play, possibly a sports or activity venue.

Below that came a desire for green open space.

Still lower down on priorities came new, interesting, decent shops, with the potential for a community venue of some kind.

Lastly came housing and something to generate new jobs.

One broad summary of most responses was to have something that met the needs of local people as much as a way to attract or provide for visitors.

The City Council bought the land primarily to address people's concerns to see something finally done with the site. It was bought on terms that the land would need to somehow get the costs back. The Council is currently seeing what

potential ideas are out there with something called an expression of interest. This is like inviting stalls to a fair, from which the Council then walks round and sees what is of interest, but with no commitment to buy.

The good news is there are interested parties out there already, so we will have something on Frontierland and the blight will be ended. The bad news is there still seems to be a lot of wrangling about quite where priorities should sit. It will be a tough job for decision makers to match hopes, expectations, practicalities, and financial viability of any final idea. There will undoubtedly be arguing between politicians, local agencies, businesses, and one or two thousand other opinions.

Morecambe Town Council has recently taken the bold step of saying it will raise a million pounds for ideas it has developed. The fundraising proposal for that is proving quite controversial and only time will tell what comes of it.

One thing is for certain for Frontierland. It will be months more before we move beyond unknowns. We can only hope that local people will then be allowed some input on decisions over the credible options that come forward.

COST OF LIVING: ENERGY CRISIS

WEM FUNDS EMERGENCY PROJECT

Article by Green Rose.

West End Home Energy Advice Team – West End HEAT

In a year that has put a spotlight on energy use in the home like never before, a Morecambe-based social enterprise is now helping households in the West End tackle issues around energy costs.

Commissioned by West End Morecambe Big Local (WEM), we are starting a new project that brings Green Rose's home energy advice, support and education to people in the West End. Tailored and accessible for local residents, they will be able to access our advice at drop-ins and workshops in the heart of the West End. We will also be recruiting and training a team of volunteer Local Energy Champions so it will be easier than ever for local people to find someone to turn to if they are struggling with high bills or a cold home. When things get going, we hope to also help with some small measures such as free draught excluders, reflector panels, and alike.

The project now has a project worker Lucy Reynolds is in post and delivery has begun with free drop ins and training across the West End. Lucy says "I'm excited to share info to help people understand how to get more control of their fuel bills. Here's a few basic



Picture: Fitting a heat saving 'chimney balloon'.

tips here and now. None of this is rocket science but every little bit can save pennies and pounds."

1. Check your bills are accurate and your payments are reasonable. If you pay by Direct Debit, you may have built up credit, you can then ask for payments to be lowered.
2. Consider turning the thermostat down by 1 degree to save up to 10% on heating bills
3. Stop draughts: draught excluders, strips for windows and doors, and letterbox brushes are easily found at DIY stores, simple to install and cut bills while improving comfort
4. Switch to energy efficient LED lights and get into the habit of switching off lights, and devices when not needed.
5. In the bathroom, swap baths for showers when appropriate, and cut shower times.
6. In the kitchen, don't overfill the kettle and keep the temperature of your fridge between 3 and 5 °C.
7. When washing clothes, a reduction from 40 degrees °C to 30 could be a 40% energy saving. Tumble dryers are

one of the most energy intensive domestic appliances – air dry clothes when you can.

8. Become an expert on your heating system so you can use it efficiently, and programme your thermostat so it doesn't cost you hours of unneeded heating.
10. Boost your radiators by putting reflector panels behind them. Look into measures like insulation, if you can, to make your home more energy efficient.
10. Check out help and more information from our own Green Rose website – greenrose.org.uk

Green Rose is currently running drop ins locally. You can also book a free Energy Champions Training or Briefing. To get details on any of this contact Lucy on **07723 192241** or at heat@greenrose.org.uk



West End Food Club Shop

In 2021 WEM contributed to the setting up of a local food poverty project. Linking with the local food poverty alliance WEM developed a project involving Eggcup and Stanley's Community Centre and provided £32,000 to help establish a new community food outlet in the West End. The project helped draw down another £25,000 from other sources and the shop has proved a great success.

The club uses surplus food, donated mainly by supermarkets, and for a weekly fee, distributes it at the shop outlet at the corner of Claremont Road and Albert Road. In its first year it extended membership with over 400 members collecting from the West End outlet.

A survey showed almost all participants felt that Eggcup had made a significant difference to their personal finances. Almost 80% said they felt like a member of Eggcup as opposed to feeling more like a 'customer'.

For food justice organisations to have impact they must do more than simply ensure that people can access food and the project is currently exploring some different approaches.

The new area of focus includes two initiatives including a Members and Volunteers coordinator, and a one-to-one support over the next three-year project to help people furthest from the labour market move closer to employment or other fulfilling activity. The collective budget for both these initiatives is scaled between £100,000 to £240,000.

In late 2022 WEM agreed £18,000 to support their work as they develop these approaches. This extended 'wraparound' support will help cover costs over twelve months.

David France, project manager at Eggcup said "WEM were fundamental to getting this off the ground. From the outset they understood our vision for the project and were excited by it like we were. Our relationship has been really honest which is often the hardest thing to achieve - the conversations we had made us confident in working together." He continued "WEM is now helping us to take our membership model to the next level."

To find out more about the services offered to the West End pop into the shop in Albert Road, call **01524 928027** or email **admin@eggcup.org**



Picture: West End Food Club shop on Albert Road.



The Independent Food Aid Network has created a handy guide to local organisations who can help you with your financial worries, big or small. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you need financial support, visit: worryingaboutmoney.co.uk/lancaster or find our leaflets in your nearest community space.

The Cost-of-Living Crisis has already had a significant impact on the lives of people across the UK, and we know it is only going to get worse as winter sets in. So far, media coverage has largely focused on the statistics, which, while important, can cause people to lose sight of the reality of the situation. The Lancaster District Food Justice Partnership wants to put real people's experiences back at the heart of the conversation.

Real people's lives are being permanently damaged by price increases and the lack of response from central policy makers. We must

join our voices together to call for urgent and meaningful change. We have created a Library of Stories to stand at the forefront of our campaign work. We will use this to show the media, local politicians, and policy makers of all types what is happening to our residents.

Our Library of Stories will only have an impact if it contains stories to tell. Please share with us how the crisis is affecting you at: foodfutures.org.uk/about-us/food-justice-partnership/library-of-stories.

We are a partnership of local organisations dealing with food and wider support, including Food Clubs, Foodbanks, Citizens Advice, the NHS, and District Council. Together, we are working to make it easier for people to get the support they need. We are passionate about campaigning for changes that make sure fewer people live in food insecurity.



MENTAL HEALTH OPEN COMMISSION



West End Morecambe Big Local Mental Health Project Commission

WEM has been looking at Mental Health as an issue for some time, but the conversation has been slow. In part because there's no real measurement of local strategic need. Many groups are active, and many projects are funded, but coordination between different projects can be patchy and the need for funding tends to dominate the agenda with groups sometimes competing against one another.

A further challenge we've seen is work branded as Mental Health can sometimes be indistinguishable from general community work. That's not to say such work is not important, but Mental Health work is more specific. It's clear that everyone cares, and everyone has an idea for mental health activity, but how do we improve the local dynamic which some feel is not working as well as it could.

OPEN COMMISSION

Because there are so many people interested in this theme, we are going to do an open commission on this project. Open to all groups and organisations (both very small and very large) to put forward an idea for a project/s that could deliver mental health support to the West End.

This will be done through a two-stage process. First, we will invite ideas that include basic information from which WEM will narrow down a list which will fit within our budget. Then, once groups have been chosen, we will together finalise the exact outputs they will deliver.

Once the commission is complete we will also be writing a summary on this process so that everyone can see what everyone is trying to do. Some groups might then link up and other funders can see what projects are looking for support.

The idea is to do this process as openly as possible so we can all see what's going on and perhaps

build better links with each other. We feel that is a key way to improve things on a strategic level.

We also want to set some good practice in terms of time, offering groups over a month to submit something. Rushed deadlines are a problem we've heard about.

Interested groups and organisations can find the Mental Health Commission Form on our website. The deadline to submit something is Monday 24th April 2023. WEM will then look at what has come in and choose which work it can support.

SMALLER IDEAS

As well as the main commission we are also inviting new or smaller groups with less experience to put forward ideas they might have on mental health. This is unlikely to be part of the larger commission, but we wanted to at least give the chance of putting forward ideas which we might be able to link up with other support. The short form for that is also on our website.

West End Morecambe Big Local commission to support Mental Health in the West End, within a maximum budget of £50,000.

We may fund one significant project or a number of different sized projects.

We want groups to submit the project at a scale they wish to deliver. If we like the project (but scale is an issue) we will come back and talk to them.

Chosen projects will be asked more questions as part of completing an agreement. This will include specifics on outputs and outcomes.

If you have any questions about the form or commission, email them to the secretary, address below.

The form should be returned by the close of Monday 24th April 2023, and either sent electronically to admin@westendmorecambe.co.uk or as a hard copy posted to: West End Morecambe Big Local, c/o LDCVS, The Cornerstone, Sulyard Street, Lancaster, LA1 1PX.

We aim to inform groups about a decision within a month of closing.

**PLEASE PASS THIS INFO
ON TO ANY GROUP OR
ORGANISATION THAT
MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN
DELIVERING A MENTAL
HEALTH PROJECT IN THE
WEST END**

WEM ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Community

Health

Economy

Education

Place

WEM's vision has evolved with each action plan. Our new plan agreed in 2022 has revised and tightened things up so that it's more focused. This spread of new ideas were developed over months of discussion with partners during and after Covid.

Our priority is now to commission projects that work strategically for the West End. We'll also expand on trusted relationships with partners to deliver work and draw in other support. Finally, we have moved away from the early years of WEM where we funded single standalone grants as this no longer fits into our plan.

Some work is ready to roll out almost immediately and other work is primed to start more detailed discussions. All are based on foundations which we know can be delivered.

WEM is still small in comparison to what public services and other organisations deliver in the area. So our focus is about shifting how we collectively identify need and how we better work together to meet common interests.

You can read the whole plan on our website but here are the basic highlights of what we hope to do in the next couple of years.

1. Mental Health Work

Goal: Supporting community mental health and improved delivery

Budget £50,000

There are many local and district partners who are involved in mental health activity in the West End. The

positive contribution they make is unquestionable and their good work exists despite a long-term imbalance between need and resources. However, there are other factors which reduce the effectiveness of local work. Our project aims to deliver some direct mental health activity but also attempt to address these other issues in some way.

2. Stanleys Community Centre

Goal: Taking a property into community ownership

Budget £150,000

Stanleys Community Centre is the West End's only independent community centre not aligned to a particular strand of work (such as the arts) or host organisation (such as a church). It has a track record of meeting local needs, in particular for members of the community experiencing hardships of one form or another. It has recently gained charitable status and has links with many local services including the local medical group.

We are now working to help Stanleys achieve more stability with its future so they can justify investment in refurbishing the property, which is currently in a poor state of repair.

An external consultant has been brought in to establish how this work might proceed and ensure due diligence is met in order to meet the rules that Big Local have about larger projects like this.

Some small activity has already started on this project and the hope is to reach an agreement in the next few months.

3. West End Online

Goal: Tackling issues related to digital social exclusion.

Budget £40,000

We hope to develop a commission that helps those who are excluded or who have lagged behind in digital skills. There is currently limited access to digital skills or services through local groups and what does exist is uncoordinated. We aim to link and encourage more take up of existing resources and find ways to enhance the resources and offers available to people of the West End. The most significant issue is how to provide meaningful support such as training and assistance in a way that is welcoming.

4. Family Mentoring & Support

Goal: Pilot project looking at empowering families in poverty

Budget £52,000

Our positive partnership with Eggcup on the food club shop project has led to shared ideas for a bold project changing the culture of benefits and the 'charity' offered to families living with issues related to poverty. We are proposing to carry out a pilot project for a direct support scheme, where help goes directly to the family with an assistant who supports participants and acts as adviser.

We know that numerous stop-gap interventions in people's lives have limited impact in the long-term. We believe a person-centred approach could offer at least the same level of impact, and potentially improve on it. This idea is still in its early stages, and we hope to involve a number of key

organisations and agencies who will invest in the project and learn from its activity. We are confident this project will also raise further match funds from other sources.

In some ways this concept is taking Big Local's philosophy to its ultimate level, by empowering individuals and families to make their own decisions and then assisting them on the journey they have chosen to take.

5. Food Project Wraparound



Goal: Expanding on successful Food Club shop

Budget £18,000

This project is already up and running. See page 4 in this newsletter.

6. Housing



Goal: Pilot project looking at empowering families in poverty

Budget £20,000

We recognise the quality and social balance of housing plays a fundamental part in the social fabric of our community in terms of well-being, health and economy of the West End. WEM has spent many months discussing and sharing ideas related to housing and recognise our ability to create significant change on this theme is constrained. Some local partners are keen to focus on developing a social housing portfolio but we will instead focus on influencing change and attempting to improve relationships between sectors – particularly between different types of tenants and between tenants and landlords.

7. Community Networking & Unity



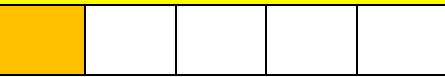
Goal: Potential to support small strategic initiatives

Budget £58,000

Experience over the past years has shown that while there are many local community groups and organisations working in the West End there is a disparity in the levels of personal and organisational capacity. The most significant impact of this on the community is the lack of strategic work between different groups, despite many working with the same residents and nearly all dealing with interconnected issues.

WEM aims to find alternative ways to change this. Part of this work will link in closely with the activity of the local Lancaster CVS and through networking in the West End. Capacity building will look at individuals within the voluntary sector as well as empowering residents looking to address issues within their community.

8. Celebrating Community



Goal: Resident focussed activity that celebrates community

Budget £50,000

As the area recovers from the pandemic there is also evidence to show a need to bring people together, through activity that meaningfully unites the community. We've set aside a budget to focus on this and may choose to expand on existing creative opportunities or consider alternative approaches to achieve our objectives.

Some exciting ideas are already beginning to filter through, perhaps including one that could be open to every resident in the West End.

9. Children's Environment Project



Goal: Developing children's environmental ideas into a physical project

Budget £30,000

This project has already started. See back page of this newsletter.

10. Frontierland Etc.



Goal: Influence and seed fund for future local development

Budget £22,000

WEM has set aside a small budget to engage with other significant town wide initiatives which could impact heavily on the West End and its community.

11. Fuel Poverty Project



Goal: Supporting residents

Budget £30,000

This project is already up and running. See page 3 in this newsletter.

This covers the basic work we plan to do but there is more detail on all these projects, plus WEM's own management work, in the Action Plan, available to read online at www.westendmorecambe.co.uk



in the Action Plan, available to read online at www.westendmorecambe.co.uk



Picture: West End children studying nature.

CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENT PROJECT

Children up to twelve years old make up roughly 17% of the West End population. This is a large part of the community whose direct views and choices should be taken onboard and valued.

Our previous engagement of children in decision making raised a major point under a heading of environment – both as a general theme but specifically in terms of a lack of such space for children to own and enjoy safely.

The project we have now put forward will develop the concept of an environment hub, to be shared by both primary schools in the West End but also the wider community.

The exact detail and substance of this project will be shaped by children themselves, and the proposal is to utilize a spare piece of local land to build the hub, creating opportunities for local others to also engage in learning.

BACK PAGE

The project's primary audience will be local West End children, both within and separate of school time. It is estimated that over ten years this project would intensively benefit 11,000+ (Yr5/6) children directly along with thousands of other individuals in the community.

Groundwork Cheshire, Lancs and Merseyside have agreed to take on project management as one of their hub initiatives. With Eden North being finally announced we hope to perhaps engage with them as well.

Children's Environment Project				
Budget £30,000				

WEM: THE BASICS

- West End Morecambe Big Local (WEM) is a resident-led community partnership that works toward making the West End a better place to live. We are one of 150 similar partnerships across the country who make up a programme called Big Local, run by the Local Trust with lottery funding.

- WEM was awarded a million pounds over 10 years. That is around one hundred thousand pounds per year although the spend is flexible. WEM is charged with writing Action Plan's that outline the work it will do. Our new plan is for three years and was agreed by Big Local in the Autumn of 2022.

- Our ethos is to try and work collectively and to build positive relationships with other individuals, groups, and agencies. We don't get involved in political or religious work.

- WEM is not a typical community group. We are not a charity, nor do we have a bank account. Big Local holds the money for us and we draw on the support of a local trusted organisation (LTO). In our case that's Lancaster District CVS. We employ 2 part-time staff and have support from Big Local.

- WEM has had its ups and downs. It's succeeding with some things and made mistakes elsewhere, but this is in line with the Big Local approach which supports learning as things go along. In doing this the partnership has evolved. We now commission activity rather than do open grants.



Picture: The WEM area, although activity and benefits ripple further out.

This newsletter is an occasional publication delivered by hand door-to-door in the West End. We try to ensure at least one copy reaches every house but if you don't receive it you can download a copy via our website. Information is correct at time of going to press around. We endeavour to ensure that all information is accurate. Newsletter: March 2023. Printed in Morecambe.