

The village of Crosthwaite lies in the Lyth Valley between Windermere and Kendal and north of Grange-over-Sands.

The population of the parish of Crosthwaite and Lyth is approximately 570, which includes a number of small, outlying settlements as well as the main village. A quarter of the population is of pensionable age which is slightly higher than the Cumbrian average.

It is an active community with a church, primary school, village pub, and a number of clubs and groups.



Background

In October 2005 the shop and Post Office in Crosthwaite closed. The following month the Parish Council called a public meeting to discuss the implications.

It was recognised that the shop had been important because it was a place where people met and exchanged news as well as a place to buy goods.

The result of this initial meeting was that a Post Office was opened in the village pub and the idea of starting a coffee shop was mooted. The aim of this would be to bring people together and provide a focal point in the community.

The Project

In November 2005 a steering group was formed to take forward the coffee shop idea. At that meeting the name, format, timings, finances, products to sell, promotion and start date were all agreed and responsibilities allocated.

The recently refurbished village hall was chosen as the venue and the “coffee shop” opened in February 2006. It runs every Wednesday 2pm to 4pm with lunch at 1pm once a month.

The organisers wanted the “Exchange” to look and feel smart and to create an atmosphere where all ages would be welcome.

Besides the café, there are a range of stalls selling Traidcraft goods, home baking, seasonal garden produce and second-hand books. Children’s activities are also provided in the holidays.

A loan was obtained from a local trust to buy crockery, table cloths, aprons and to cover other start-up costs. The Exchange was quickly in profit and was able to pay back the loan.



Crosthwaite Exchange 4th Birthday

What has been achieved?

On average over 60 people attend each week and people exchange news, views, concerns and learn of people who may need help and support.

Friends have been made and support is given when it's needed. The Exchange makes a profit and is able to make donations back to the community.

Besides the main café and stalls a wide-range of activities are run at the Exchange including fish deliveries, the library van, a chiropodist, and musical performances.

There are themes at the café for seasonal events; Easter, Halloween, Valentines etc. and there have also been visits by the Fire Service and Community Nurses and energy efficiency information provided by the District Council.

The Learning

A large team of volunteers helps to spread the load of running the weekly event. Thirty helpers contribute to running and baking for the Exchange.

There are four coordinators on the main committee of eight who between them take

responsibility for the café, home-baking and produce, Traidcraft, children's activities and finances.

A wide range of publicity materials have been produced including 'A boards' outside the village hall, posters, flyers, leaflets, a quarterly newsletter and a page on the community website:

www.crosthwaiteandlyth.co.uk

Being clear about their remit has meant the committee has sometimes turned down requests to diversify as they don't want to compromise their original aims.

Contact Details

If you would like more information about Crosthwaite Exchange, please contact committee members:

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If you would like more information about setting up an Exchange in your area, please contact ACT on Tel: 01228 817224 or Email: info@cumbriaaction.org.uk

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