

TITLE OF INTERVENTION/PROJECT : Linthwaite Christmas Lights (Community Builders and Connectors)

AREA OF KIRKLEES: Linthwaite, Colne Valley

ELEMENT:

Background

A small group of individuals were interested in providing Christmas Lights for Linthwaite and a celebratory event for families. Traditionally, Linthwaite has lacked a sense of identity and people have travelled to Slaithwaite for community celebrations.

Who was involved?

Six community connectors and a community builder, Kim Strickson

Catalyst for change: The issue/problem and how we tackled this?

Linthwaite is the place people pass through to get from Huddersfield to Slaithwaite or Marsden where events and activities take place. Linthwaite has no obvious centre where community activity can take place.

A small group of individuals came together to see if they could at least provide a focus for the village during the Christmas period. Local businesses were approached to see if they would sponsor Christmas lights. Five businesses agreed to do this. A sixth light was paid for by the group themselves as a result of fundraising throughout the year.

Smaller events were organised as fundraisers such as curry nights and race nights.

A switch on event was planned with an indoor celebration at the Methodist Church Hall followed by an outdoor event for the switching on of the lights. Publicity was produced to be distributed throughout the village and in the two junior schools.

Outcomes and Impact: Six lights were sponsored, ordered and rigged in Linthwaite. The Slaithwaite Christmas lights team helped to rig them sharing a cherry picker with their neighbours.

The indoor event in late November 2015 was a great success, involving local groups such as school choirs, karate clubs, dancing schools, halloumi cheese makers, craft groups and church organisations. It brought families together in Linthwaite.

KS provided the scouts with a Christmas card making activity using old photographs of Linthwaite from the Kirklees archive. Lots of people made cards and responded to questions about why the event was significant/important/wanted and other skills local people might have. People were appreciative of the event.

Local sports celebrities Niko Gjoka (Albanian refugee and blackbelt) and Eorl Crabtree (rugby player) switched on the lights together, accompanied by Linthwaite Brass Band.

Well over 300 people attended the 2 events and expressed their appreciation and desire to have it happen again. The connectors were thrilled with the result and had a celebratory Christmas meal together. Positive comments on facebook.

The school choir were invited to perform at the Holocaust Memorial Day event at Huddersfield University in Jan 2016 on the strength of their performance.

What are we doing next?

The connectors have already met to discuss the successes and challenges of the event. They need to find a bigger venue for the indoor event and plan to approach one of the schools. The group would like to get more businesses to sponsor new lights and increase the number of lights on display. The group would like to attract new connectors to enhance the event and also lead imaginative activities throughout the year to involve more people and raise money.

Kirklees have been able to help by providing equipment for litter picking to tidy up the streets and cup holders and warming pans to make catering easier.



Rigging the lights in the pouring rain, November 2015



Linthwaite Ardron School Choir



Making cards using old images of Linthwaite



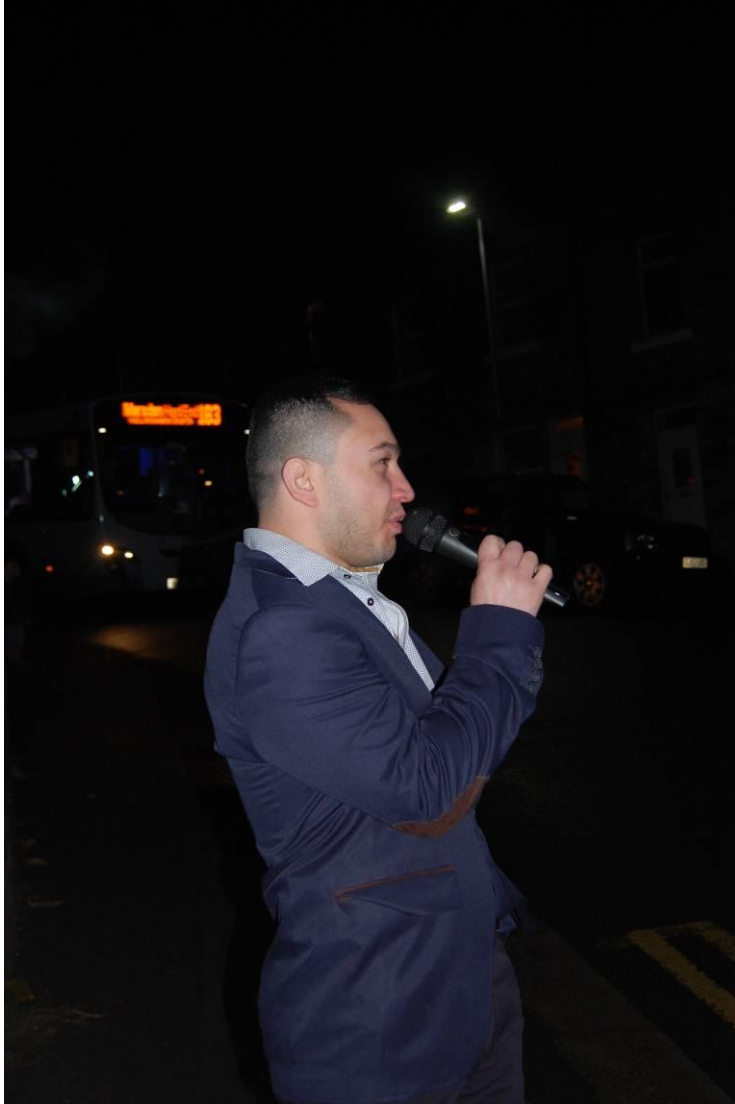


Indoor event



Outdoor event and switch on





Niko



Eorl Crabtree and Niko Gjoka

COMMENTS COLLECTED ON THE DAY

It's great to see some of the local businesses here, like the Halloumi cheese company.

It's given me some fantastic family time and that's what Christmas should be about.

It's great for the local community of Linthwaite.

It has brought Linthwaite together and shows what a great community we have.

Well done team!

We are all so separate - anything that brings the community together must be good.

Linthwaite is spread about - upper and lower - with no obvious centre so it's hard to find an identity.

Linthwaite is not an "obvious" community so it's great to have this kind of event - the first of many, we hope.

It's great to have activities going on in Linthwaite.

It's so nice for Linthwaite to come together as a community at Christmas - about time!

Well done everybody.

It's lovely to have something so near to home that we can walk to as a family and see lots of familiar faces.

It's nice to remember Christmas - it's a get together for Linthwaite. There aren't many opportunities to do this (child).

This has helped to create a real community spirit.

WHAT ELSE WOULD PEOPLE LIKE TO SEE/GET INVOLVED IN?

Linthwaite Clough School would be interested in getting involved in the Keep Linthwaite Tidy campaign

A summer carnival so that there's a summer and winter event.

Anything that brings the community together - a little festival or annual event

A fair

A street party

More Flowers

More community events

A community celebration "Boiling Lead" based on the Leadboilers of Linthwaite story.

(melting the bullets - making peace!)

More of the same, more events to bring local people and businesses together.