



Power of the people gets aid all the way to Ukraine

By Lynn Winton

Last year, when I started to write about one man's commitment to helping people caught up in the horrific onslaught in Ukraine, little did I know how in just one year this would snowball into a major force amongst the N2 community to send tons of desperately needed aid to the worst-hit regions.



Final destination: Grateful Ukrainians receive essential items from the East Finchley deliveries. Photo Driving Aid to Ukraine.



Transfer point: Michael Byrne unloads his van at the border for onward transport to families inside Ukraine. Photo Driving Aid to Ukraine.

Lynmouth Road resident Michael Byrne started Driving Aid to Ukraine from his living room after watching the horrific humanitarian disaster of Russia's invasion unfold on our screens.

He has now personally driven or organised the safe transport of 12 trips carrying massive lorry loads full of goods up to the Polish/Ukrainian border, averaging one a month.

And, as his photos show, from there trusted and vetted aid worker teams carry on the dangerous work of driving these loads further into Ukraine to the hundreds of displaced people who wait patiently in line for

warm clothes, food, medical supplies, children's packs, batteries, candles, to name just a few of the items he transports.

Such has been the response of the East Finchley and Muswell Hill communities that Michael has now upgraded to using a 40-ton articulated lorry that can carry 24 tons of aid per trip.

Donations and donors

So how have we done it? Many ways. The most pressing need is monetary donations as fuel and logistics are vital to continue and this is Michael's biggest challenge.

People have been remarkable; groups organising fundraising events, individuals sending

money through the Crowdfunder page, Martin School organising a collection. Then there's the donations of warm clothing, and other items that you will find on the website's list, often by neighbours reaching out via their street WhatsApp groups, including Homefield Garden sheltered housing residents, all of which Michael then collects.

One generous man turned up with thousands of new items, satisfied that they would be distributed in Kherson and neighbouring decimated villages within days. Another person negotiated a refund after a very unsatisfactory Airbnb experience and donated it to Driving Aid to Ukraine. Acts like these are the emotional fuel that keeps Michael going, as he has pledged that he won't stop until Ukraine has no more need.

Volunteers

And then of course, there's the band of East Finchley volunteers who have been inspired to get on board. Scout groups, schools, business owner Amanda McGrath, retired teacher Nicola Cousins, volunteer drivers now driving 4x4s and ambulances to Ukraine, shop owners, website and social media creators and those who use their contacts to collect goods. "The response has been tremendous. I'm just a facilitator, I can't do this without all this fantastic support," Michael says.

His latest fundraising idea is to ask people to 'sponsor a pallet' for £100. This will be to fund fuel and logistics costs, as all goods are donated and neither Michael nor any volunteer takes a salary.

You too?

If you want to help Michael Byrne help Ukraine, whether by sponsoring a pallet, volunteering, collections, fundraising or making a donation, his number is 07791 912389 and the website is drivingaidtoukraine.org.

BE PART OF IT Volunteers wanted

Compiled by Lynn Winton

The North London Hospice shop on East Finchley High Road is looking for more volunteers. Whether you want to get work experience, help temporarily between jobs or are looking for a long-term role, please call in to the shop and talk to the manager Anastasiya. Age is no barrier; volunteers aged 14 - 94 are welcome. You will play a vital role in funding the hospice's work and enjoy the camaraderie of a very inclusive team. Do you enjoy having fun and using your imagination? Can you inspire young people aged between six and 10 years old to focus their energy and reach their full potential? The North London Air Scout Group based in Sheldon Avenue, N6, is looking for men and women to work as part of a team of adult volunteers, helping to plan and deliver an exciting programme of indoor and outdoor activities and challenges. Visit www.224northlondonscouts.org.uk/Adults/ or contact scout leader Derek Chambers on 07707 773344.

Driving Aid to Ukraine is a new non-profit organisation based in N2 and started by local resident Michael Byrne, who delivers lorries of humanitarian aid across Europe to the Ukrainian conflict zones, via border transfer points. They require all kinds of volunteers: to help building a social media campaign, fundraising and grant writing and to organise collections of warm clothes and other vital humanitarian aid items, and people who would like to drive locally to pick up the collections. A fantastic opportunity whatever your skill sets to bring vital aid to an utterly devastated people and learn about the international aid sector at a grass roots level. Find out more at Drivingaidtoukraine.org or get in touch with Michael on 07791 912389.

A crucial element of Finchley Foodbank is their volunteering team who are sensitive to the needs of the clients, work from a position of trust and are great team players. Roles range from receiving deliveries and sorting food donations to restocking shelves and staffing Tuesday and Saturday sessions. Requests for help with food supplies are increasing week on week and volunteers are urgently needed. If this could be you, email the team at finchleyfoodbank@gmail.com

If you'd like your organisation to be included in this column please send details to Volunteer@ILoveN2.co.uk Max 80 words please.



Rejuvenation plan to preserve Cherry Tree Wood for the future

By Debbie Linton

The Friends of Cherry Tree Wood have joined forces with Barnet Council to develop a new woodland management plan that will rejuvenate the woodland for future generations.

The wooded parts of the park will be closely monitored and work will be carried out to keep the environment thriving and healthy. The plans were explained at the Friends' annual general meeting by Barnet's biodiversity officer Harriet Duffield, joined by council tree officer Lesley Hipple.

The plan is in its early stages with more details to be circulated soon. To start things off, in January the Friends laid a new traditional hedge near the High Road entrance. This will come into leaf in the spring.

Planning objection

The meeting also heard that the prospect of a new six-storey building being built on the old sub-station site on the Great North Road, opposite the junction with The Bishops Avenue, has not gone away. Last year, as reported in *The Archer*, the Friends successfully opposed the plans on the basis that the building would overlook Cherry Tree Wood but now the developers are appeal-

ing against Barnet Council's refusal. The Friends said they would raise their objections again.

Flooding

With regard to the flooding situation that creates large areas of standing water on the grass in the park, useful surveys have been undertaken and there have also been several visits and meetings with Barnet Council and Thames Water. Answers were beginning to emerge and the Friends said drainage would continue to be a major priority for them in 2023.

They would also continue discussions about improving the approach and extending the wood at the High Road entrance.

Get involved

The next litter pick in Cherry Tree Wood takes place on Sunday 12 March at 2pm-3pm. Everyone is welcome to come along and help. Meet near the café and tennis courts. To get in touch, email friendsofcherrytreewood@gmail.com

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Thu 16 Mar

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