

New Lease Of Life For Thornton Le Dale Christmas Lights

The Thornton le Dale Annual Christmas Lights Display and Switch-On Event is a 27 year tradition that recently faced the threat of being discontinued, until The Big Lottery Fund, Ryedale District Council, North Yorkshire Council and the North York Moors Planning Authority, together, secured the future of the event, by providing funding totalling £14,625 and planning permission with a 10 year lease, to enable the purchase and siting of their own equipment storage facility.

In 2015 the future of the christmas lights was threatened by losing the donated use of two equipment storage barns within the village. In 2016 the village was very close to not having christmas lights at all, when the search for replacement, available and affordable storage space drew a blank. Fortunately, a local business provided a life-line by offering two years temporary storage, free of charge, that enabled the Lights Committee to launch the project to “acquire their own equipment storage facility”.

During 2017 the concept of a specially adapted, ‘portable’ storage structure, suitable to be sited in a central location within the village, was developed with help and advice from the North York Moors National Park Planning Authority. A subsequent planning Application was approved, and a 10 year lease was granted. However, the total cost of the finished project, was an eye watering £19,000!

Fundraising began early in 2018. Councillor Janet Sanderson, approached the Community Officers at Ryedale District Council and North Yorkshire Council, which resulted in grant aid of £3,000 and £1,645 respectively. With the support of the same Community Officers, The Lights Committee successfully applied for and were awarded £10,000 from The Big Lottery Fund’s Awards4All program.

The balance of £4,355 has been funded by The Lights Volunteer’s fundraising activities, with the welcomed ongoing support from other community groups including Village and Traders, Village Hall, Toddlers Group, Women’s Institute, Thornton Le Dale School and the Parish Council.

The specially adapted portable storage unit has

now been delivered. A special crane lifted the unit over the grade II listed heritage wall into position, to complete the project and enable equipment from this years’ Switch-On Event on Saturday 1st December and subsequently the lights display, to be dismantled straight into our own 300sqft equipment storage facility.

The future of the Thornton le Dale Christmas Lights is now much brighter, however there is still one ongoing challenge. The Village Constitution describes The Christmas Lights as being “By the Village – for the Village” and because volunteers are mostly of retirement age, new volunteers are constantly needed to compliment the cycle of aging senior volunteers.

Work parties commence on Tuesday 2nd October. If you are interested, please email David Mitchell hm1910ef1912@btinternet.com for more information or to join what is probably the best volunteer Christmas lights display in the North East!