

Charities in isolated communities

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High Sheriff of Cumbria 2023-2024

The lead-up to my Declaration as High Sheriff was spent planning an eight-day walk of the Cumbria Way. Cumbria is one of the largest counties in UK but has a small population of less than 500,000. Divided by a range of mountains, communities within this mostly rural environment face a diverse number of challenges; my aim in doing the walk was to raise awareness of the charities which support the needs of the most vulnerable within those communities. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet and thank the staff and volunteers of the 22 charities I visited along the 73-mile route and highlight the great work they do via social media reports at the end of each day.

Generous sponsorship enabled me to raise £15,000 for the High Sheriff's Community Fund, which is managed by Cumbria Community Foundation. This fund is the source of the awards at the end of my year which will involve some difficult decisions – I have met so many deserving and often unrecognised groups. The CCF has been a tremendous support to me, organising a series of visits all over the county.

In June I hosted an 'Adventures in Philanthropy' dinner to facilitate an introduction between the Community



'Adventures in Philanthropy' with Dave Fishwick

Foundation and a group of individuals who may not have considered philanthropy previously, enabling them to set up further conversations to explore the joys and challenges of large-scale giving. We were so fortunate to book Dave Fishwick (of 'Bank of Dave' fame) to be our keynote speaker just ahead of the release of the hugely successful Netflix film. Dave arrived by helicopter in between TV interviews at different ends of the country. He was inspirational, candid and very amusing – we were lucky to have him.

Soon after my Declaration at the end of March in Kendal Town Hall the new Lord-Lieutenant of Cumbria was announced: my husband Alex. It is unusual for a couple to hold both roles at the same time and we are certainly the first in Cumbria! He took office in July on the retirement of Claire Hensman who had been in the role for more than 10 years and is a previous High Sheriff. I made sure that for the first three months of my year Alex was three steps behind as, of course, he now takes precedence! Our first formal engagement together was a choral evensong at Carlisle Cathedral on the retirement of the Right Reverend James Newcome, Bishop of



In Ulverston at start of the Cumbria Way with Alex and in better weather with the Mayor and Mayoress of Carlisle at the end of the walk



Carlisle. Attending services at this beautiful historic cathedral is one of many privileges of being High Sheriff. There are many advantages to undertaking the two roles at the same time and my experiences this year will help us both greatly in the years to come. The disadvantage is that our diaries rarely coincide and we are often going in different directions.

My main focus in the first six months has been on the charitable sector but I have also had great fun presenting Constabulary Awards, taking part in mayoral civic parades led by cadet bands and a memorable evening with the Sea Cadets, presenting their burgee and taking the salute after their last armed guard before all cadet weapons were handed in. I have been welcomed into Carlisle County Court and the Barrow Magistrates' Court. It is truly a privilege to be an observer and the judges are very generous with their time.



Photo: Stuart Walker Photography



Above: With 1st Wetheral Brownies and their Coronation Crown at Wetheral Station
Left: The High Sheriff and Lord-Lieutenant of Cumbria