

Beacon Project SR5 Report 2022

2022 brought quite the roller coaster for the Beacon Project SR5 with some great events balanced with staff changes and, ultimately, the decision from the Diocese that funding would not be continued leading to the closure of the project.

First the positives, Becca Cooper was in post as our Youth and Community worker and ran a Sunday evening youth group each week until her departure. Whilst only reaching two young people each week she was brilliantly faithful in continuing to offer friendship and belonging to them, recognising that Jesus was all about the one and to do that for one or two is as valuable as for ten or twenty.

Also popular with a select crowd were the prayer walks early in the year. Covering our parish physically whilst praying appeals to some of us! Hopefully this is something that as the weather improves we can do more of again as a parish.

There were many community events through the year, one community day in particular stands out with St Cuthberts awash with colour and the buzz of people. And Cuddy Ducks toddler group and Cuddy's Cafe Lunch club have proved to be great ongoing opportunities to bring new people through the doors and meet a community need.

The Beacon was also a catalyst for us applying for funding to Sunderland Council under the Warm Welcome scheme which has since yielded around £10,000 in grant funding, largely towards our much increased energy bills. Warm spaces means we open our buildings and provide a space for people to enjoy some warmth and refreshment. It's proving a great way for us to engage new people.

With the withdrawal of funding, the PCC took the decision, whilst we could find volunteers to absorb the warm spaces, Cuddy Ducks and Cuddy's Cafe into the day to day operations of the parish, we don't have the resource at the moment to fund the two paid roles. Therefore these roles were made redundant. Rox Nicholl left her role as Project Coordinator in January and Tony Harbottle-Noppen left his role of Families Chaplain in February. Thankfully they and Becca have all since found new work. We are grateful for them all and the roles they played.

Whilst the news about Beacon was disappointing and not what was intended at the start, we can take heart that nothing is wasted in God's plan. Isaiah 55:10,11 says "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire ..." So it is too for the Beacon. There will be connections made, people reached, heard and loved that will not be for nothing. It might take time to see the full realisation of the investment but one day we will.