

Pennywell Pantry – future secured with new charity link up

In Muirhouse, Pennywell Pantry which covers Muirhouse and West Pilton had joined forces with North Edinburgh Arts (NEA) and provided a welcome and vital food distribution service through the various lockdowns.

But with the impending move from the NEA premises for redevelopment of Macmillan Square, the help of another charity group has been enlisted. Now, a relationship with Community Renewal: Pennywell has been forged ensuring the continuation of the vital food provision which is much needed in the North of Edinburgh where many low-income families suffer from food poverty.

Julie Crawford from NEA's Link-up Muirhouse team said: "We knew first-hand how important the Pantry had become and the devastating effect its closure would have on the local community. We were committed to finding a new partner to work with to ensure it would continue running without a gap in service for the community

"We explored several options and eventually found Community Renewal: Pennywell, who are as passionate as us about keeping the pantry going.

“Alongside the team of dedicated volunteers, they are now running the pantry from their premises and we have been supporting them every step of the way as they learn the ropes.”

Local resident and Pantry member Kevin is delighted that the pantry will be kept going: “As most people know, basic household bills are really high now. The cost of essential things like energy and food is going up and up, but income has hardly changed. Not everyone feels comfortable going to a food bank and the Pantry gives members the ability to pay an affordable price for items they want instead of putting more pressure on Foodbanks and other services that are needed elsewhere.

“The volunteers have worked overtime to make sure the Pantry is a place where members feel welcomed and want to visit.”

Almond Ward councillor Kevin Lang joined the team at the official launch today and said: ““With a growing cost-of-living crisis and life hard for so many, we need to do all we can to help those struggling. I am proud and so very grateful to all these charities and volunteers for coming together to support families and residents in Muirhouse and West Pilton in this way. They have my full support.”

Sheila Thomson, Community Renewal’s Regional Director for the East said: “We have been building up a community hub on Pennywell Rd where we provide a wide range of support to residents in the area, along with several other organisations in the building. We were aware of how popular the pantry was, thanks to the hard work of all the volunteers and team at NEA and we were honoured to work with them to settle the Pantry into its new home. Thanks to a group of committed volunteers and staff from the Community Renewal team, the pantry is now up and running.

“The pantry runs every week Wednesday to Saturday. It is

extremely busy, and we are always on the lookout for people to help us run it. It is a great way to meet other people, learn new skills and do something positive for the community.”

The Pantry is currently fully subscribed though anyone is welcome to sign up to the waiting list for the next opening.

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