

STONY STRATFORD LOCKDOWN LANTERN PROJECT 2021 – The Windy One...

As the Covid-19 Pandemic continued during 2021, there was much discussion between SS Business Association and the CLASS Committee as to if the Switch-On Fun Day should go ahead and, if so, what we could do to make it as safe as possible for the volunteers and the people coming along to enjoy the day. Compromises were made and we agreed that both the Switch-On Day and Lantern Project would go ahead but there would be no Lantern Parade, as it draws in such large crowds of spectators.

The Lantern Volunteers decided to deliver a 'hybrid' version of the project, with a limited number of 'make at home' lantern kits being sold online to include all the materials and instructions needed to make a Father Christmas lantern for this year's theme of "Santa Claus is Coming to Town!". The kits sold out quickly and were collected via sessions at York House, one of which took place during a 'mini hurricane' which saw branches falling from trees and damage to the building!

The drama didn't stop there, as Storm Arwen was forecast to hit the town on Switch-On Day (Saturday 27 November). The fairground rides, stalls and dancing went ahead despite the dreadful weather, but the CLASS Committee were forced to think on their feet and change the live music and switch-on proceedings planned for the Market Square. In the end, a pleasingly large crowd braved the high winds and amassed for the switch-on, some people proudly displaying their lanterns, and Stony Radio saved the day by leading a live broadcast of the countdown via a speaker stuck out of a window at The Crown. The lights came on at 5pm and looked wonderful with the Christmas tree back in place, and The AcaBellas followed this up by leading the community carol singing. Not a day any of us will forget in a hurry!

Huge thanks to all the Lantern Volunteers who organised and ran the project this year for being innovative, hardworking, and flexible – but mostly for being good humoured in the face of adversity. We usually make a giant lantern for the back of the Lantern Parade, but there was no need for that again this year. Instead, we set to work making a 'Rainbow of Father Christmases' for the switch-on and thoroughly enjoyed soaking up the fantastic atmosphere in the Market Square.

Finally, grateful thanks to our funders – Stony Stratford Town Council, Stony Stratford Business Association, and the York House Local Giving Fund – for their continued financial support, helping us to keep the project affordable for all.

Will we back to 'normal' in 2022? Who knows...?



