

PGM Address

Brethren and Companions,

Following my video message some days ago, I wanted to update you on our progress with a new Provincial initiative to support Community projects throughout the Province – and the welfare of our members – who have been adversely affected by the pandemic.

To assist the projects being undertaken by our Province or by individual members, I announced the creation of the West Kent Emergency Fund – a ring-fenced fund of £100,000 – to support worthwhile projects in the community in response to COVID-19, and modest grants or loans to aid the short-term needs of any member experiencing extreme financial difficulty.

I'm delighted to announce that this Fund is now live and it is a testament to the incredible work of Peter Sawyer, Peter Brooker, Neil Moakes and Binoy Karia, assisted by Roland Stokes and Bob Order, that we have been able to establish and launch this Fund in a matter of days.

A new Community and Welfare section is now live on our Provincial website, which provides important information on financial assistance available from the Government, Masonic Charitable Foundation, other Benevolent Funds and from Financial Institutions.

In addition, application forms have been provided, to enable you to apply to the Fund for financial assistance for community-based projects that require our support, or for individuals.

The welfare of the needy in our community – and that of our members and families – is my primary concern, so the Fund's Committee will ensure that every application you submit receives a prompt response, so that worthy cases receive the support in a timely manner.

Our work in the Community continues apace and the Provincial Almoner and his team are liaising with each of the Hospitals and Hospices in the Province – to establish what items of PPE they are most in need of for their front-line staff of and how we can assist with its provision. We are also reviewing the needs of local Charities that are responsible for care of residential patients.

I have also asked our Provincial Charity Steward and his team to liaise with the major Food Banks throughout the Province so that we can provide financial assistance to ensure that provisions are available to those most in need.

Having received excellent support to my letter for volunteers with 3D printing capabilities and stocks of PPE, each member has now been contacted so that they can apply to the Fund for financial assistance to cover the cost of materials to ensure that production of PPE continues.

Details of each of the initiatives we have supported will appear in our Social Media channels and you will have already seen West Kent's generous donation to "Absolute Home Care" to provide face masks for its staff – and to fund WBro Tom Weaver's initiative, where 200 visors are being made each day and provided free to front line workers and NHS staff.

In addition, the Provinces of East and West Kent, Surrey and Sussex have jointly arranged the procurement of 50,000 visors for front line staff, which will be distributed in the next few days. Another initiative to enable those patients who are in hospital or residential care to have contact with their families and loved ones is about to be finalised and further details will be announced shortly.

I continue to be hugely impressed with the measures you have put in place to keep in touch with each other. Having been the beneficiary of some of those calls, emails and texts – I can confirm that they are hugely uplifting, which continues to demonstrate the sense of togetherness we have in our very special Province.

As a consequence, I have asked our Provincial Almoner and his team to implement measures with each of our Lodge Almoners to ensure that every member in the Province is receiving contact on a regular basis – particularly those who are alone, at risk, vulnerable or in greatest need, and also our widows. These measures will extend to those members who have sadly left the Craft during the last 2-3 years, so that they might know that their welfare is important to us and they are still being thought of.

Do please keep me advised of any good news stories or community projects you, your Lodges and Chapters are involved with, for which you can now apply to the Fund for financial assistance.

When this pandemic is over, I'm convinced that we will emerge as a more caring, compassionate and benevolent organisation than ever before. In the meantime – if you possibly can, stay home, stay safe and I wish you and your families well. May God bless you all.

