



East Grinstead & District Lions Club
(International Association of Lions Clubs)
District 105 SE England

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News Release

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Shoebox appeal is abandoned

THE town's Lions have abandoned their annual shoebox appeal because of bureaucracy in Belarus. New rules imposed by authorities in the former Soviet Union republic, forced the charity group to pull out of its annual fundraising efforts.

East Grinstead Lions has sent shoe boxes from the appeal to areas of Belarus for the last two years, including the Gomel region in 2004.

Businesses and residents in the town help the cause by filling the boxes with clothes, school equipment and sports equipment.

For the previous three years they have sent the donations collected to, Romania.

But this year, as the Lions prepared to start their collections, they were told that from now on, each box donated would require the contributor to fill out paper work.

Restrictions

This would include the weight of each item, and the value and name of the manufacturer for each article placed in the box.

Spokesman for the East Grinstead and District Lions Club Jim Miller said: "We can't expect people to do this, there are an awful lot of restrictions.

"Most of the items that go into the boxes are second hand and we would have to go to charity shops to get the items valued."

Mr Miller added: "We can't expect people to do that, it is too much to ask of people.

"If we get 200 to 300 boxes we have to take it all to charity shops and ask them to work out how much it is all worth."

But the red tape, introduced by the Belarus authorities, has not deterred the Lions from wanting to help the people of the country which was hit by the radiation from the Chernobyl catastrophe of 1986 and suffered 70 years of oppression and neglect under Soviet rule.

The Lions group is preparing to send £250 of new school equipment to the country instead of the usual shoe box appeal.

Mr Miller said: "This way we are still doing something, but we will know the value and weight of items we are sending out."

Anyone wanting to donate money to the Lions to help them send equipment to Belarus can contact Mr Miller on 01342 326164.

With acknowledgements to the 'The East Grinstead Courier'.