Gifts for cruise ship staff from Devon communities

Staff on cruise ships anchored off the coast of Devon are receiving festive hampers from the local community.

Due to Covid-19 the ships have been anchored off the south coast for several months. On Christmas Day, there will be six ships offshore with about 700 members of staff on them.

Organiser Louise Lewis said they had become part of the community, with the hampers full of sweet treats, decorations and small gifts a way to spread “Christmas spirit”.

The pandemic has stopped the cruise ships from operating, although they still require staff on board to keep them running.

The idea of sending them hampers started with a few friends on a group chat, but has since grown, with people from Brixham, Paignton, Dawlish, Teignmouth, Torquay and Guernsey all getting involved.

“Because the cruise ships have been here so long, they’re just part of the community,” said Ms Lewis.

“It’s all about the true meaning and spirit of Christmas, letting these people know that we’re thinking of them.”

About eight large boxes of gifts are being sent to each cruise ship, with the tenders usually used to ferry passengers to shore being repurposed as delivery vessels. As well as gifts, the crews will receive Christmas cards from local primary schools.

Ms Lewis originally contacted the ships two months ago, to encourage them all to “blow their horns” on Remembrance Day.

“I’d also heard that the staff had been donating surplus food to local food banks, so I thought it would be really nice to give them something back,” she said

Carnival, which owns several of the cruise ships said the gifts were “the most lovely gesture from the local community and a very thoughtful way to spread some festive cheer”.

“It is hugely appreciated by all of those on board who can’t wait to get back to sailing and giving guests wonderful holidays, but for now will enjoy the festive season with all the usual trimmings, activities and celebrations on board.”