



It's a purr-fect way to address problem of cat overpopulation

Emma Knights

emma.knights@archant.co.uk

Decorated in fairy lights and jelly stars, and with a party ring biscuit doubling as a Christmas wreath on the front door, this elaborate gingerbread house is home sweet home to Kitty and Boots and their 65 kittens.

Called the Meow Mansion, this wacky creation by Norwich art student Kazz Morohashi is an ingenious twist on a tasty festive tradition, but it also carries a serious message about the importance of pet owners neutering their feline friends to stop the problem of cat overpopulation.

Throughout the Christmas season the edible installation is adorning the window of the Cats Protection shop in Plumstead Road, Norwich, where passers-by will be able to learn about

“I sincerely hope the project will help raise awareness through photo sharing on social media and look forward to any feedback

Kazz Morohashi

the story of Kitty and Boots – who have not been neutered – and their rapidly expanding family.

This year the gingerbread couple are celebrating their second Christmas and have 65 offspring – by next Christmas there could be 300 more kittens, with the number of cats in the family estimated to grow to more than 11,000 by 2017.

Ms Morohashi, who studies MA Communication Design at Norwich University of the Arts, worked in collaboration with Cathy Bucher and Cats Protection on the art project which aims to encourage more people to support a happy, healthy population of cats by neutering and rescuing cats in need of attention. Many cat owners



■ The gingerbread house, Meow Mansion, filled with gingerbread cats, made by art student Kazz Morohashi, (pictured inset), on display at the Cats Protection shop on Plumstead Road.

Photos: DENISE BRADLEY/KAZZ MOROHASHI



also contributed to the project by sending in pictures of their own cats to create the framed pictures within the installation.

Sales of an accompanying book about Kitty and Boots and ceramic cat ornaments will also raise funds for Cats Protection.

Ms Morohashi said: “My hope is that the project can grow with the same impact as the cat population.

That is, I hope that somewhere next year, I can install another large gingerbread house with 300 cats, maybe more. I sincerely hope the project will help raise awareness through photo sharing on social media and look forward to any feedback.”

Val Askew, a Cats Protection volunteer, said the Meow Mansion was attracting lots of attention. She said:

“We have had lots of people actually wanting to buy the house. It is lit up in the evening, and people can see it in the shop window. Kazz has done a really good job – it has definitely got the point across.”

→ **The Cats Protection shop in Plumstead Road closes today for Christmas and will be reopening on January 5. However, the Meow**

Mansion will be on display in the shop window throughout the Christmas period.

→ **Find Kazz Morohashi online on Facebook or Flickr.**

→ **Do you have a Norwich arts story? Email arts correspondent Emma Knights at emma.knights@archant.co.uk**



■ Volunteer Val Askew with the gingerbread house.

Leading feline charity supports and encourages neutering

Cats Protection is said to be the UK's leading feline welfare charity and helps about 200,000 cats and kittens every year.

Its vision is a world where every cat is treated with kindness, and the charity has three main objectives. These are to: find good homes for cats in need; support and encourage the neutering of cats; and

improve people's understanding of cats and their care.

Cats Protection champions neutering as the only effective way to reduce the number of unwanted cats in the UK. Cats Protection volunteer Janice Galley is responsible for issuing cat neutering vouchers to pet owners in Norwich. She said: “Cats can get

pregnant when they are five to six months old, and Cats Protection now recommends they are neutered by four months old – otherwise they can be having kittens while they are still kittens.

“It is important to help stop the issue of unwanted cats – there are so many little strays out there that don't have

homes.” She said the cost of neutering cats depended on the vet, but on average it costs £60 to £70 to neuter a female cat and £45 to £50 to neuter a male cat.

People who are on benefits or have a low income can apply for a voucher from Cats Protection to help pay for some of the cost of neutering their

cats. The vouchers are £20 for male cats and £26 for female cats.

People in the Norwich area can find out about applying for a cat neutering voucher by calling 0845 4941900 and choosing option two.

→ **For more information about Cats Protection visit www.cats.org.uk**