



**HAY, BRECON & TALGARTH SANCTUARY FOR REFUGEES
GROUP MEETING**

Wednesday 11 Nov 2015 18:30. Gwernyfed Rugby Club, Talgarth

1. Minutes & Matters arising from Group Meeting in Talgarth 14/10/2015

Minutes approved and S reported that the Joe Gooch concert raised £237 and was a great success. Our gratitude has been conveyed to Joe.

2. City of Sanctuary

a. Brecon public meeting 29 Oct

A report has been circulated and was approved. Feedback from the group was positive and it was felt to have raised our profile, although there is still much to do. It was reported that many like-minded people still haven't heard about our group.

b. Follow-up suggestions from A were discussed and are itemised below. We need to bear in mind the need for awareness-raising, especially with schools and groups like Young Farmers and also to make visits to other groups to see how they run respite. Also very important to discuss what people seeking refuge in the Welsh cities want. **ACTION** to address these things in detail in the New Year.

c. Affiliation of HBTSR to CoS was unanimously agreed. **ACTION** - the form will be completed and sent.

3. Pressure on our elected representatives

One of our initial main aims was to pressurise and lobby government at all levels to encourage a more humane approach to asylum seekers and to show our support for accepting a fair and generous quota of people seeking refuge from Syria.

a. **Welsh Assembly Government & CoS Senedd Day (Dec 10)** - At the public meeting Kirsty Williams reported upon the set-up of a taskforce to address the potential needs and ensure readiness for Syrian refugees. She subsequently asked in SENEDD about the consideration given to inclusion in the taskforce of active local voluntary groups and was reassured that the main voluntary stakeholders were involved and that mechanisms were to be put in place to accept feedback from local groups. There is to be a Sanctuary in SENEDD day to which local groups would be asked to send representatives. **ACTION** - we will find out how many can go and seek volunteers to be delegates.

b. **Powys County Council** - A working group has been set up and we were asked for information about our state of readiness. A document was prepared from our database and showed we have 189 on our mailing list and a wide range of offers including accommodation and assistance much of which is highly skilled.

- c. **Delegation to meet Chris Davies MP** - The planned meeting of a small delegation including church representatives for tomorrow has been postponed by Mr Davies. **ACTION** - we await a further date.
- d. **CoS parliamentary meeting/lobby 1st December** - We can send 2 members to this. A and S were proposed. Mr Davies has had at least 2 invitations sent from the group **ACTION** - inform COS of delegates.
- e. It was suggested that we should seek representation or at least discuss with both the Health Board and the National Parks about our group. MOSAIC was mentioned as a group that might be useful to work with. **ACTION** - DM agreed to open discussions with the National Park and will give us details of the person to contact. One of our supporters SJ will give more information about MOSAIC

4. **Material goods**

We had initially agreed to avoid collecting material goods as this requires time, energy, storage and transport and may not be what is needed and we have encouraged the donation of money to charities working in Europe and the refugee camps. However it was felt that material goods to be donated nearer to home might now be appropriate especially if a clear list of what was needed was given.

- a. **Refugee 'welcome' packs** have been requested by Swansea COS to be made up of pots and pans, cutlery etc. for people who are allocated housing. They would like about 5 initially. **ACTION** - S agreed to coordinate these packs and will send out a request to the whole group with details of what is needed and where to take it when this is clear. [Note: since the meeting we have had offers to use the Guildhall for collection and storage and also Kirsty Williams' constituency office.]
- b. **Clothing, baby clothes, etc. SWARM appeals**
(SWARM [Swansea Bay Refugee Matters] this group is an email network who can post emails around a group highlighting needs and people can offer help. To be on this email list write to t.cheesman@swansea.ac.uk). If people collect the appropriate items it is likely that transport can be arranged by our group but we are aware that storage in Swansea is a problem. **ACTION** - continue to monitor the requests and pass on relevant ones within our group.

We will need a group to coordinate donations and transport as goods come in so expect emails seeking volunteers!

- c. **Toys, etc., for Christmas.** We have been told that the Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group are planning a Christmas party and may be grateful for presents for up to 100 children. **ACTION** - M agreed to oversee the toy donations as she already had several bags of suitable toys

5. **Donations**

The treasurer reported that he is still in the process of opening a bank account but that we have £700 thanks to collections on stalls, book sales, CD sales and Joe Gooch's concert.

- a. **Regular pledges/donations to CoS** - It was agreed that we would make a donation of £100 to COS to help with running costs.
- b. **Donations to Swansea** it was agreed that we would make a donation to Swansea COS of £200 - possibly to Share Tawe. **ACTION** - We will check charitable status

and at the request of members give details of how to set up regular donations should they wish. If the group has Charitable status then gift aid and tax can be claimed by the donor and the recipient. *Since the meeting checks show SHARE Tawe is a partnership project whose funds are held by Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group, which is a charity, so Gift Aid can be claimed. Email Share.tawe@gmail.com for more details or visit <https://swansea.cityofsanctuary.org/share-tawe>*

- c. It was agreed that we would continue to review our own non-charitable status but that at present we did not wish to hold much money and would channel money to organisations helping refugees now.

6. Christmas

- a. **HBTSR presence in Christmas fairs & events** - It was agreed that we would help with a stall at the Hay lights 26/11 and Christmas fair 12/12 [teas and cakes] in Hay, consider if we could do something in Talgarth and Brecon 27th and 4th [Amnesty Christmas cards signing] as well. **ACTION** We will sell the books and CDs and provide information, pledge sheets and possibly refugee welcome signs. We can have the shopping list of items needed in Swansea on stalls and local drop off points. Check possible dates for Talgarth. Will need volunteers to man the stalls so expect email request!
- b. **CoS in Guardian Christmas appeal** - A kindly let us know that COS has been selected as one of 6 charities for this year's appeal and wondered if there were any good stories about how COS has helped or about good grass root support for refugees. **ACTION** - This to be considered. If anyone has a good story about how COS has helped us/people in need of refuge, please let us know before end of next week.
- c. **HBTSR local appeal**- it was agreed that we wouldn't appeal for money ourselves but would collect for other refugee charities on our stalls. **Action** - Collection bucket at each stall.
- d. **Children's party or other pre-Xmas respite sanctuary event**
We may be able to help with events being organised in Swansea or Cardiff and there may be opportunity to invite families from the cities to, for example, come for a meal and a pantomime. **ACTION** - await the results of L's fact finding trips

7. Respite sanctuary

- a. The need to check if we need DBS checks for people involved although the general consensus was that if we were helping accompanied children, this was not required. **ACTION** - S agreed to check.
- b. L and C are going to visit several groups in Swansea over the next week to consider how we can best help them and will report back to us. **ACTION** - await report
- c. Planning our first respite day outing. **ACTION** - agreed to do this after Christmas.
- d. Activities to be further discussed but the National Park may be able to help. **ACTION** - D will give us a contact
- e. Planning group. To be agreed and there may be a need for a training, awareness briefing session. **ACTION** - consider further at next meeting. R reported that there were Syrians living in Brecon and he would try to contact them to see if they would be interested in joining us.

8. Group Business

- a. M reported that our deputy Chair was unhappy with aspects of how we were working and that there were some teething problems as might be expected from a new group of people who were mainly strangers trying to work together over a dispersed area for an emotive cause. He suggested that we might try to have an away day type meeting in the New Year to discuss aspects of the organisation and work out how we best utilise and capture the considerable talents of our many members. **ACTION** - consider further at next meeting.
- b. **Response to Nada's appeal** for immediate accommodation offers. Several group members have sent their offers to Nada, a doctor in Swansea, who asked if we could help her to put pressure onto Swansea council to accept Syrian refugees more quickly by demonstrating readiness and accommodation. No need for further action at present.
- c. It was noted that we might be able to help the destitute asylum seekers by offering accommodation to them especially as some of these may be families. **ACTION** - write again to SHARE TAWE to see if this is feasible.
- d. **(CoS) Website.** We now have a site on the City of Sanctuary Website **ACTION J** has agreed to work on this with others. We hope to have our news, minutes [minus names] and forms available for people to see there and to link these to information also on Facebook and Twitter.
- e. **Twitter & Facebook.** We have 90+ Facebook group members and 42 Twitter followers so far
- f. **New banners.** The banners were on show and gratitude was expressed to the members who funded them as well as to N and C who designed them. **ACTION** - The Brecon Banner is to be stored with P and A, the Hay one with S and the Talgarth one with A and L.
- g. **Brochure & petition [s]** it was agreed to continue to use our pledge form. **ACTION** - all our leaflets and pledge forms will be on our webpage so they are available for download.
- h. **RefuTeas-** this idea of the Refugee Council was discussed and their debunking myths booklet distributed. **ACTION** - This fundraising idea will be considered further next meeting. Individual members may like to consider holding a small tea party, discussing refugee issues and sending some money to the refugee council <http://www.welshrefugeecouncil.org>
- i. **Table stalls** - agreed we would have a presence at the Christmas events as above
- j. **Sale of donated CDs and books** - Eugene was thanked for his generosity in donating some of the proceeds of his book sales and H was asked to thank her friend Richard Worthing Davies for donating the entire price of the CDs that he made in memory of his son.

9. A.O.B.

None

10. Date & venue of next meeting

Agreed that we would try to hold our next meeting during the day so that some of those unable to attend evening meetings could be present. 6 of the attendees at the present

evening meeting would be unable to attend. We could consider alternative evenings but this might pose problems with finding a venue as the rugby club would be unavailable. It was unanimously agreed that the rugby club was an ideal venue and again the group wished their thanks to be passed onto the club.

NEXT MEETING: 9th December at Gwernyfed Rugby club at 11 am.