



HAY, BRECON & TALGARTH SANCTUARY FOR REFUGEES

GROUP MEETING

Wednesday 16th November 2016 18:30. Gwernyfed Rugby club in Talgarth.

Meeting was chaired by Mike in Sean's Absence.

Mike prefaced the meeting by emphasising how helpful he felt it was to have a group such as ours as a focus for people of goodwill to embrace at such a difficult time politically.

1. Minutes, Report

- Minutes and Report were accepted.
- We had a great day out at Llwyn Celyn that was well attended by our supporters and people from Swansea. The write up is on our website. We have been offered places on their volunteers' weeks in May and September for up to 6 people seeking refuge.
- We have taken three loads down to Swansea (including some football boots) but had no further food donations from Morrisons as yet. We had two large and delicious Gluten free cakes from Love At First Bake for our last respite day. Also about 14 lovely hand knitted jumpers and cardigans for children donated by a supporter's elderly mother who knits in the evenings.
- The opening night of the Brecon Thai Restaurant was a great success and raised a substantial sum for us. Thanks to everyone who attended.
- Money sent to Anna May in Calais and will be used to help in resettling the children. She appreciated our concern.
- We've had a further email from Chris Davies about the Child refugees in which he declined to attend an away day but said he might try to meet us at the Sanctuary in Parliament event. I also had a personal response after asking him to see what he could do to help three British subjects (Nazinan Zaghari-Ratcliffe, Kamal Foroughi and Roya Nobakht) who are detained in Iran. He said was concerned and that he would monitor progress but didn't say that he would do any of the 3 actions suggested by Amnesty International.

2. Matters Arising

- Football boots will be needed for the unforeseeable future by UID as people move on and are replaced regularly. Steve brought boots he had been given and is expecting more from a football team in Ross and Birmingham City.

Maggie will deliver these boots and others can go down with our transport links via Trevor, Lawrence, Sean or Maria/ Wayne.

Action if anyone wants to let Neil know what to put on a poster he will do one asking for boots

- **Reverse advent calendar** - People are keen to do this. We will ask Neil if he could do a poster for this that we can share to promote this. (Basically- start the Reverse Advent Calendar when you start your regular Advent Calendar. Grab a basket or box, and every day leading up to Christmas, add something useful to the box (tinned food, cleaning stuff, toys, whatever you think would be welcome). Then, in run up to Christmas donate the entire basket and contents to HBTSR. We will deliver to families for the New Year. **Action**, Neil and then us to distribute.
 - Lynne and Philip reported that Anna May was back in UK but is returning to France to help with some of the children. She will use the money to help with things that they need. Sadly the teaching bus was burned down in Calais with the loss of all resources and reports and work.
 - MIDAS - Gez did MIDAS training with the National Trust at a saving to us and passed. Neil will do the training shortly so we will then have 3 drivers. Both thanked for doing this.
 - Thai Restaurant opening raised us £500 which will be presented soon. David to be thanked for arranging this.
3. **Listening skills** presentation by Maggie, Hilary and Philip. A light interlude of how not to actively listen. It was agreed that a smile and eye contact overcomes all language barriers! It was suggested that we avoid questions that are too personal as it may unlock unhappy memories but that we should continue to show that we value and respect the individuals we meet. We were also reminded that some observant Muslims will not wish to touch/ shake hands with people of the opposite sex. We have been lucky so far that we have had no major issues with communication but if people feel that they want to discuss any issue that they can bring this to a meeting and also email Maggie, Philip or Hilary for advice. We agreed to make this a regular agenda item for group meetings and to encourage both organisers and the wider group to discuss this as part of feedback from each Respite Day. They were thanked for both the presentation and offer of help.
4. **Youth / Schools –**
- Cradoc will hold an away day on 29th January and have some lovely plans for activities. They had a short presentation this week from Ailsa about the value of away days and refugee issues.
 - Gwernyfed Head is keen to have a presentation about this and Sue will liaise with him. The school may be persuaded to consider the advent calendar as well as considering a day.
5. **Lobbying –**
- Calais Children - we have had 2 emails from Chris Davies but he hasn't undertaken any of the suggested activities and will not attend either an away day (he is too busy) and will not attend the Sanctuary in Parliament (too busy

at Winter Fair). Margaret sent a report from the REFUGEE WELCOME phone conference. (*Rescue the Calais Children Call Conference; 15th November 2016, Hosted by Beth and Daniel (Citizens UK), about twenty of us representing organisations from around the UK shared knowledge, ideas and experiences. Clearly, there is great concern about the plight of the children left behind in France. Since the demolition of the Calais camp, media attention has switched elsewhere and so the pressure on Amber Rudd and the Home Office has subsided with the result that the whole process of trying to re-settle hundreds of minors has slowed right down. Since the demolition almost none have had their cases settled; though 15 – 17 young girls have recently arrived in Scotland. In order to help the hundreds of others, we need to re-activate that concern so as to help these children. It is thought that, in all, the total number of young people, aged from nine years to seventeen, at the time of the demolition was around 2,000. Amber Rudd is on record as committing Britain to take half of the child refugees involved at the time of the camp's demolition; that means around 1,000 of them. (Though I personally think that government estimates may differ from this figure.) So far, 350 children have been admitted to the UK under either the Dublin Agreement or the Dubb's Amendment. The remainder, though, are scattered throughout France in 65 centres offering temporary accommodation. Some of these are feeling positive but for many the reality is very different. Some have not even had clean clothes provided; many have not yet seen any Home Office officials (there are only a handful of them dealing with all the centres); often there are no translators. As a result, many are scared and anxious, unable to effectively communicate their concerns. Some have absconded, having given up hope of ever being admitted to the UK through legal routes. There is clearly an urgency to bring pressure on Amber Rudd to honour her original commitment, especially in this period running up to Christmas. Although several of the groups are holding awareness-raising events of one sort or another, which is all very commendable, it was suggested that the priority at this time should be to take political action involving our MPs. A 'festive, fun' action was recommended, such as one or more of the following. (a) Present the MP with a Christmas Present; a back pack containing all that a child would need – asking that he/she then present to a refugee child in the coming months on their arrival in the UK (b) Ask the MP to write/sign a letter to Amber Rudd, asking her to honour her pledge to re-home half of the children involved (c) Sing a contemporary carol to the MP. Help/support on offer from Citizens UK is as follows: Daniel will be working with some of the conference callers to produce the relevant carols; A template letter will be provided, for amendment to suit local needs, for those wishing to take a letter with them to the meeting; A template press release will also be offered*

It was Agreed that we should write direct to Amber Rudd with a copy to Chris Davies and to Mark Williams who we know is supportive. Margaret will do a letter and provide us with the draft template so people can take what they want from this. As many as like should do this letter please, and vary or personalise the template letter as much as possible.

Also agreed that Penny would explore if we could highlight our welcome and way of working in France

- **Senedd Inquiry into Asylum Seekers and Refugees** - The Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee is undertaking an inquiry into Refugees and Asylum Seekers. Please see link:
<http://senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=228> The closing date for responses is next week 23 November 2016. Please consider making a submission, however brief, based on your experience or what you hear from asylum seekers and refugees visiting. We will send some info but please do feel free to do so as well.
 - **Sanctuary in Parliament** on 29th November - Lawrence, Sean and Ailsa will attend and report back. We have also been asked to talk about our experience of respite days.
 - **Sanctuary in Senedd** on 7th December - again we have been asked to speak about of experience. All are welcome to book in for this and it was an interesting day last year <http://sanctuaryinthesenedd2016.eventbrite.co.uk> or via the City of Sanctuary website.
4. **Stalls** - 10th December in Hay. Sean will welcome help with running this refreshment stall and info stand. We discussed the possibility of having stalls at the Royal Welsh Show in summer 2017 or at this year's RWS winter fair. It may be too expensive to have our own stall, but we could ask the churches to provide us with some space or mention.
5. **Publicity, Twitter, Facebook, Website.**
- We now have a Facebook feed on our website so it is possible to see what has been tweeted and posted on Facebook via the website.
 - We now have 316 subscribers to emails, 276 followers on Twitter and 277 on Facebook.
6. **Christmas tree in Cathedral on 8th December.**
We have opportunities to highlight our group via the Christmas trees exhibition in the cathedral and Hilary suggested that we could provide blank decorations that people could write messages on which could then be shared. It will be an opportunity to give out info as well as promoting the reverse advent calendar. Anyone who would like to help please contact Margaret on tanyllan2@gmail.com
7. **Respite days**
- Successful day in Landmark Trust has led to additional offers of interest.
 - November 24th and 27th trips to Caerphilly castle via Lumen Prize. Newport and Possibly Cardiff will join us on the 24th and Swansea on 27th. So far on 24th I have Lynne, Philip, and Trevor. Margaret, Melrose, Lawrence, Steve and Ailsa and on 27th Lawrence, Steve, Katy and family and Ailsa. If anyone wants to join us on either day please let me know. Also if I've not remembered your offer of help please also let me know.

- A Minibus from UID and Maria and Phil will visit Hay winter festival on 26th November. Hay Festival has kindly given us 12 tickets for refugees to see the Ben Rawlence talk. If people want to be involved in showing people round Hay and thinking about how best to feed them then we'd be very grateful for help!
- We have agreed to fund a Christmas party in UID on 15th December. Steve will liaise with Wayne about Music. All are invited to attend so if people want to share lifts then let Lawrence know
- Cradoc 29th January is going to be an exciting day out involving the school and families.
- Llanfihangel nant Bran - Trevor and Margaret will liaise about this- possibly end of February.
- Outing to Hereford football in March - will accept 50+ and may offer some training opportunities. Lawrence to explore if Gary Lineker who is known to be favourably disposed to refugees might make any sort of welcoming gesture.
- Llangorse date to be agreed in April.
- Trefecca - no info
- The Pales - date to be arranged in June. Lynne reminded us of a friend in Llandrindod who runs a community Cafe and has links to Trefonen School who might do something over this weekend.
- Llwyn Celyn - May and September (up to 6 people are being offered the opportunity to have a week volunteering with plenty of fun and useful things and experiences with full board and lodging).
- Other offers welcome - Ron told us about a woman who owns land and ponies in the hills above Builth Wells and has offered riding for refugees. Other members reported that refugees at the Llwyn Celyn day showed an intense interest in horses and a longing to ride. It was felt that this could possibly be combined with other activities in the area to make an interesting day.
- We have various volunteering opportunities but as Trevor reminded us there are also similar opportunities that are easier to access in Swansea.

8. Hardship fund expenditure details –

- We funded a bus pass anonymously for an Albanian lady who was very grateful and said it was the best thing that had happened to her for several years as reported by a lady who works at the African Community Centre.
- We also bought running gear for a runner.
- No new requests

9. Finance and expenditure - The Treasurer reported that we have a healthy balance but we have spent over £700 with little income this month but several sums are expected. Andrew asked for reassurance that we would have a written financial report for the AGM. Agreed in principal, with some caveats about making too much financial information public.

10. Fundraising -

- Brecon Volunteer Bureau 4th February- Steve and Lynne will Liaise with Fran about this event which will raise monies for both our group and the volunteer Bureau. We can ask Neil for another wonderful poster for this.
- Fair Trade Winterfair 10th December in Hay and Fundraising evening at the Globe (Superb posters by Neil and Cate distributed and if anyone wants a copy we can send a PDF).
- Hay Winter Festival - may do a ticket exchange for us.
- Ideas of other events may be needed.

11. Goods –

- Virginia coordinator of supermarket donations report - received. Morrisons link had been away but has returned and will start supply again. Several people have offered transport to facilitate delivery including Trevor, Lawrence, Colin and Maggie.
- **Store users group report-** we have things that we can send down soon and have also sent a list of items in the store to Maria and Wayne for info.

12. Ystradgynlais - the families seem to be settling well. We will be able to give Christmas gifts to them via the schools boxes and if Christ College want to hold a Christmas event we will invite them. Maggie reminded us that there is a group of Syrian refugee families in Neath who might benefit from contact/support.

13. Groups –

- **Artists** - Antonia has offered some art Equipment that we will check if is wanted in Swansea or if we could use for away days
- **English teaching** - nil to report
- **Therapy** - as above.

14. Charitable status - Application being submitted soon.

15. Meetings attended - nil.

16. Any other business –

- Rachel is making a 3 course meal at Booths restaurant on Tuesday 29th November and Ben Rawlence will be taking Q&A about his book City of Thorns and giving a follow-up on what has happened to the camp. The meal plus the talk with Ben is £20 and all money raised will go to Medics4Timbuktu maternal Health Project.

17. Date of next meeting - 11th January and will be an AGM