



## HAY, BRECON & TALGARTH SANCTUARY FOR REFUGEES

### GROUP MEETING

**Wednesday 23 March 2016 18:30. Gwernyfed Rugby club in Talgarth.**

**1. Minutes and matters arising from group meeting in Llangorse February 24th 2016**

Minutes approved and Report received and accepted.

**2. Youth/ schools**

Gwernyfed and Brecon high schools: No further progress, possibly due to concerns about merger.

*Christ College* are planning to hold an away day in September and Jeffrey is due to meet to discuss further ideas about learning about refugees. They might also support the earlier Brecon Respite Day. Possibly a Sudanese group might perform in Arabic to give ideas about how hard it is to understand without a common language. Jeffrey may contact *Atlantic College*. He knows the head and will discuss their involvement with Cardiff Oasis Centre. This might lead to similar links between Christ College and Swansea.

Jeffrey met Wayne on Sunday and learned about the Sudanese group and the City of Sanctuary Speakers team who will visit to talk with students. Jeffrey will explore the possible involvement of students in Away Days. He also mentioned about a student at Hereford college of Art who had started to collect boots and shoes and food for Calais and wondered if there were ways of stimulating interest in our students locally to become involved in this sort of way. Action Jeffrey.

**2b. Hereford refugee resettlement.** Jeffrey and Clare had attended a well-attended meeting at the Bishop's Palace in Hereford to discuss the arrival of Syrian families [approximately 60 people] in Herefordshire from September. Martin Samuels, Director of Adults and Wellbeing, spoke of the Council's plans. Jeffrey was given a slot to speak about the City of Sanctuary Movement.

The approach being adopted was described as rather bureaucratic, little or no civil society involvement, all agencies with involvement of established NGOs, but none with experience of refugees and no effort to consult City of Sanctuary.

**2c. Art & life stories.** Maggie reported that Swansea City of Sanctuary had staged an exhibition in the past about personal stories that might be available to view.

It was suggested that we could consider having an away day specifically for art and crafts with the emphasis on sharing skills. We should consult Wayne to ask if he knows of artists among the refugees in Swansea. **Action** Ailsa to do

IF PEOPLE WOULD LIKE TO FORM AN ARTISTS' SECTION OF HBTSR - **please email Ailsa.**

### 3. **Lobbying - letter writing**

Ailsa reported upon Chris Davies MP's response to the letter sent by members of the group about unaccompanied children. Others had had similar responses. Andrew was due to meet him and might take the opportunity to ask him further about his involvement. **Action Andrew**

We noted that the government's stance of refusing to admit unaccompanied children from Europe had been defeated in the House of Lords. It was hoped that this might be followed through in the House of Commons. We noted the views of the UNHCR representative to the UK who felt that concerted people pressure would and did change government direction. **Action** worth continuing to sign petitions and highlight positive stories

Sean reported his discussion with Simon Inkson. Powys County Council has been very slow to find suitable accommodation for Syrian refugees in Ystradgynlais. We need to press them to act and reinforce positive messages. **Action** Sean and Andrew contact the Cabinet member who leads on this.

Maggie reported that the BBC seems to be routinely using the term 'migrant' rather than 'refugee'. We should protest.

#### **Agreed:**

- To continue to promote signatures on relevant petitions
- To recirculate the draft letter for MPs to the group, updated if necessary
- Members to contact their Powys County Councillors to urge action on the Syrian refugee programme.
- Write to the B&R to urge Powys to act quickly.

**Stalls:** Agreed that we should set some dates for further stalls in Hay and Brecon to publicise the group, to provide information and to collect monies. Suggested that we get a list of Village shows during the summer and see if we can hold stalls at them.

### 4. **Publicity Twitter, website, Facebook, press**

As noted in the report we have 190 members on Facebook, 147 on Twitter and 252 on our mailing list and that there was some overlap in these groups. Jo continues to maintain the website with regular news items and the Facebook page has regular updates.

#### **Agreed:**

- seek press coverage of the Llangenny and Brecon respite days
- identify a positive story about how people do care and are concerned
- seek to publicise contributions made by the refugees (skills, volunteering, culture)
- Muriel to follow up BBC interviews with HBTSR members for their current series on refugees on the Today programme.

Clare spoke about the need to have positive stories about the contribution that refugees make to the community and the impact of enriching the culture. She shared her vision of using some of the derelict shops in the centre of Hereford to offer opportunities for refugees to work.

## 5. Respite days

Date	Place	Numbers	Detail
March 20	Llangenny	2 families of 6	Very positive experience and feedback. Volunteer baked cake to take to Swansea which was welcomed and shared there. All costs funded locally.
April 5	Craig y Nos Country Park	53	Ailsa: BBNP organizing activities. HBTSR paying for coach (£190 for 53-seater). £50 to be spent on food. Nikki, Khalfan, Sally, Maggie, Mike & Jonny to help with food preparation and welcome.
April 17	Brecon	49	Penny: Two venues (Muse & Scout Hut). 20+ in organizing group. Varied activities planned. £200 already collected towards coach cost
May 15	Elan Valley	49	Andrew: Welsh Water hosting + Elan Valley Trust. Fully funded. HBTSR volunteers can visit on day
June 26	Llangors		Melrose: Group forming to organize. Details to be worked out after Easter. Similar to Llanfihangel day but with emphasis on sport/outdoor
July 30	Talgarth		Virginia. It will be on the Saturday, 2 <sup>nd</sup> day of the Talgarth sports festival. It may be possible to ask families who have offered accommodation if they could take guests for the night before or afterwards.
August 21	Brilley	25	Carrie & Jo. Aimed at families (as with Llangenny). Inc. visit to farm
September	Christ's College		Jeffrey liaising. HBTSR will aim to be involved.
October	Bronllys	25	Sue: likely to be a day for families, focusing on the theme of harvest
	FARM VISITS		We will look for opportunities over the summer to take small numbers of refugees to specific farms who would welcome them

**Work placements-** Hiraeth Hope are working on providing work placements/apprenticeships/voluntary collaboration opportunities for refugees. We should ask amongst our group for people who might be prepared to give someone the opportunity to learn new skills or the experience work in UK. Brian offered to share his expertise as a carpenter and joiner and builder.

BBNP need volunteers to help with paths, maintenance, etc.

**Action** Ailsa to Ask Wayne if he could provide details of skills, qualifications and interests of refugees so that we can seek to match them. **GROUP** to let Ailsa know of any offers of work experience-please!

**Cardiff:** It was agreed in principle to offer away days to Cardiff if we have community offers in excess of the one a month (the present capacity for Swansea).

**Safeguarding policies, code of conduct and Guidelines** are being worked upon and will be brought to the next meeting for discussion and adoption and possibly shared with Brecon group prior to their

away day to test out. **Action** Small group to discuss including Aideen, Barbara and Stuart with others on committee

6. **Finance and expenditure.** Lawrence reported that we have a balance of £1,624. Bank account is still awaited.

Members **agreed** the expenditure of up to £250 on a multi-function laser printer for the Unity in Diversity group and attention was drawn to the Facebook posting today of the group with some laptops provided by us.

**Agreed** a budget of £30 for Sally and co to buy essentials needed in Swansea each month. **Also** that the committee could spend up to £200 if needed between meetings with agreement of 3 committee members.

**Agreed** that we would aim to keep enough for 2 away days in our account at all times so we can continue to offer these

**Agreed** to consider further the request from Cardiff Oasis group for support for Accreditation of their English teaching which would mean people studying with them could be given a certificate and thus allow them to progress quicker into work. Currently waiting lists of over a year from accredited course with colleges. Are there any educational charities that might provide a grant?

7. **Fundraising –**

- (a) Two Male voice Choirs are holding a concert at the Hay festival. 27th May - all proceeds will come to us!
- (b) The concert at the Globe on 17th June will also have raffles and donation boxes. Prizes may be requested
- (c) Catering at the film festival - people thanked for their support. Amount raised still awaited but it did raise our profile.
- (d) Ben Rawlence has offered to help us later in the year and he is speaking at Hay library soon.
- (e) Brecon Guildhall - Nikki suggested that we see if there was an opportunity to involve the south Powys Youth Orchestra in a concert possibly with any refugee musicians who might be persuaded to perform. **Action** Nikki to enquire with orchestra. Ailsa to ask Wayne and David Meredith
- (f) Hay festival- we hope to have some Bucket collections and will do the African stall on 29th May and consider if we can have a presence on the approach road to the festival. **Action** *please see if you have things we could sell, crafts, bric a brac or cakes on the stall.* Also we will need volunteers to man the stalls and hold buckets Also Ailsa and Lawrence hope to meet Peter Florence soon to discuss other opportunities for refugee involvement at the festival.

8. **Goods** collection points - We will move from our Hay store soon as it will be needed for rental. We still have 2 storage areas in Brecon thanks to Ty Mawr and the National Parks. We are very grateful to Hay castle for their help and kindness.

We can still use the Liberal Democrats office and St Mary's Hay for drop off points. Thanks to both for their ongoing help and kindness.

We have sent two car loads to Calais with our own supporters [Jo and Carola] and contributed to 2 further deliveries via the Parsnipship and Billy Charity.

We have sent several carloads of clothing and kitchenware to Cardiff and Swansea recently.

- *Food & toiletries* ongoing need for away days and to send to Swansea
- *Laptops*, still needed
- *Sports kit* some more on offer
- Sally noted that *Sanitary towels, Nappies and Rucksacks* were currently requested items. **Agreed** we would update the list of needed items and send this soon. List also on Website

#### 9. **Links with Swansea**

Eugene, Antonia, Muriel and Sean attended a drop in session of Unity in Diversity to explore the person and consider how best to portray this. Eugene drew some of the people and noted down their story and Antonia drew with some of the group. Muriel is planning a photographic project with digital stories. They were impressed with what they saw and Eugene reported a dark moment when seeing the people he had described as almost obsessively polite and kindly as possibly appearing scary when out on the street and certainly vulnerable. They will explore the opportunities for art work at away days and look at opportunities for publicity. They will also see if there are any artists amongst the refugees who might want opportunities to work together. Andrew mentioned that a house might be available for artists to rent ? Near Rhayader

We would wish to continue to work closely with Swansea as a priority but would be happy to help Cardiff and indeed other areas with Refugees.

#### 10. **Arrival of Syrian families/ Ystradgynlais.** As discussed above we would try to highlight our concern about the delay in resettlement as families in the camps are living in squalor and have been selected as they are at risk.

**Action** - all to consider writing to councillors. We can draft a letter if needed.

Andrew agreed to talk to the Cabinet member on the council who has responsibility for the resettlement.

b Ystradgynlais were reported as possibly seeking a merger with us but they may prefer to share experience and support as other areas do. **Action** Maggie will try to ascertain

#### 11. **Any other business,**

There is a link starting with local poets and Swansea.

The English teaching group have consensus that travelling to the cities regularly was too far and too big a commitment but would do supply teaching if needed. Agreed that Skype sessions might help some people and this could be offered.

Date of next meeting 27th April Probably at Rugby club