



HAY, BRECON & TALGARTH SANCTUARY FOR REFUGEES

GROUP MEETING

Wednesday December 9 2015 11:00. Gwernyfed Rugby Club, Talgarth

Introductions showed that we have many active volunteers, several retired counsellors, several retired social workers, several retired doctors, a midwife tutor, a Quaker, representation from Rotary, Mothers Union, WI, someone who lived in Syria and Lebanon for years, good geographical representation including from Ystradfellte.

1. **Minutes & Matters arising** from Group Meeting in Talgarth 11/11/2015
 2. (b) How to attract younger people. ACTION – A to discuss with sons and friends and contact Young Farmers.
 - (c) Form completed.
 3. Meeting with MP to be on the 18th December with Chair, secretary and group member
 - a) (b) Donations- the bank account is still being opened and cheques will be sent when the bank finally gives us an account.

If people want to set up a **direct debit to pay money regularly to Share Tawe** then please contact share.tawe@gmail.com as they are on the verge of having to close for lack of funds and do such marvellous work with destitute **asylum seekers**.

- b) Christmas stalls - we attended the Lights switch on in Hay and sold books, gave out some info and had donations and Sean is organising a group to be at the Hay fair trade market on 12th December to do teas and coffees and biscuits. 10-4 and Volunteers welcome (this was a great success despite the rain).
 - c) (a) A DRB not needed if children accompanied but also may be dealing with vulnerable adults. ACTION do group training on vulnerable adults and children B L agreed to coordinate this with SI and A N
 - (e) Local Syrians don't want to join our group as yet. ACTION PC agrees to do a short briefing for us on Syria at next meeting.
2. **Collections of goods (welcome packs, clothes, toys & storage)**
 - (a) Welcome packs: - we have 4 kitchen packs and 3 bedroom packs ready but so far we have no news from Swansea about when they will want them. We may need different items when/if we help with welcome packs for the new arrivals in Ystradgynlais. This would be subject to the people in Ystradgynlais wanting us to join with them.

We have been given an extension upon our sorting and packing store in Hay Castle and have storage at BBNP but may still need other space to sort and pack in future. We may not need to collect many more household items except for existing refuge seekers.

(b) Clothing we have sent 2 lots down to Swansea, one via Ian and 1 Via the volunteer Maria at the drop in centre. Need small sizes men small medium and 41-43 shoe size and women 8–10 only

(c) Toys. We have packed over 50 soft toys and a number of other items for the Swansea Bay asylum seekers children's party. We will have some toys left that may be used for playing with on the away days and also to give to children who visit or who may be housed in Ystradgynlais in the future.

ACTION - await info from Mr Inkson about packs. See if we can find sorting and packing places for when we have to move. Consider transport needs.

3. First Respite Day Trip, Sunday December 13

Details of the planned day were shared and it was noted that an away day is likely to cost about £300 even if the community minibus is used and venue is free as food and petrol and gifts cost. The minibus costs 60p a mile. (Stop press - this day was extremely successful thanks to Lou and Ceri and their group of volunteers. Everyone enjoyed the day and I hope to be able to send out more info shortly. Do look at our website as we may have photos there soon)

4. Powys County Council's Syrian Refugee settlement programme

Simon Inkson, Head of Housing, Powys CC who is heading up a multi-agency group [Housing, education, adult and children's services, health board, community safety and police, and PAVO and Welsh Refugee council] that is planning for the Syrian resettlement programme for Powys joined the meeting to inform us of the plans and gave the opportunity to answer questions.

Powys have agreed to take 6 families from the Syrian refugee camps on the government resettlement programme into Ystradgynlais by March and are likely to monitor this carefully before taking about 6 families into Newtown so that they can check that services work well and people are settled in properly. He explained that they had chosen the areas as they had housing there that was not subject to long waiting lists, that there were school places available and that Ystradgynlais would be first as there were good links to south Wales so better access to translators, etc.

He explained that the government resettlement scheme is well funded and so would not negatively impact upon the council's saving plans and will not reduce services to other residents. The council will commission integration support from bodies such as British Red Cross or the Welsh Refugee council and this will help with ensuring the refugee's finances are properly sorted, school integration is smooth and they can commission counselling if needed. They will look for employment opportunities and opportunities to volunteer to enhance integration. They will furnish the housing which may come from their pool of social housing or housing association or privately rented accommodation. They have been instructed not to provide any luxury items [such as TV and computers] and there is a need to consider that integration into the community might not be enhanced by over-provision of goods when neighbours might have little. However with that proviso there is nothing to stop us from providing items that the government decide are luxuries as e.g. TV might help with learning English and also help with learning about our culture, computers would allow links with home, family and learning.

English language tuition will be provided as part of the planned support but additional support may be welcomed. Some are likely to speak English anyway.

There was discussion about how to prepare the community for the arrivals and to dispel any myths and ensure a welcome. There may be a school based welcome event. We can offer to help with awareness raising stalls in Ystradgynlais and with accessing speakers from Swansea City of Sanctuary to help educate the school children about the current crisis. Ystradgynlais may not want help.

Mr Inkson said that a single day survey across Powys in November showed that there were no rough sleepers in Powys.

There is a newly formed Syrian Association Wales. There is a move to increase the number of areas taking other refugees and asylum seekers in Wales as currently people are only dispersed to Wrexham, Newport, Cardiff and Swansea.

ACTION Mr Inkson agreed to keep us informed and suggested that PAVO might coordinate the NGO involvement. He agreed to send us the list of items they would be providing and the list of 'luxury' items they would not be providing. He stressed that they would not place people on 'sink estates' although he stressed he did not think there were such estates in Powys.

We agreed to work via our small number of supporters in Ystradgynlais and others from nearby and be directed by them about how they feel we can best help.

5. **Sanctuary in Parliament** – report of City of Sanctuary meeting, December 1
A brief report was given but details are on our website of the briefing document and areas of concern (<http://hbtsr.org.uk/2015/12/01/sanctuary-in-parliament> and <http://hbtsr.org.uk/about-us/issues-explained>).
6. **Sanctuary in the Sennedd**, Thursday December 10. People encouraged to book and attend. Mike will do a brief presentation about our work. [Stop press - Mike spoke well and William Powell tweeted a photo and said how proud he was to be associated with our group and the concept of respite sanctuary was well received].
7. **Meeting with Chris Davies MP**, Brecon, Friday December 18, 12 noon we will report back but if people wish to attend please let us know.
8. **Finance**: bank account is still in progress. We have had a number of generous donations but we have spending plans for much of it.
9. **Membership** (now 201), website is in very good shape and well worth viewing regularly as items are posted each week. Facebook page has over 110 members & twitter 56 followers.
10. **Short reports**:
 - a) Quakers - GB reported upon the activities of Quakers in the Welsh marches and the possible availability of a residential house for short breaks and possibly some funding.
 - b) Speaker on Syria - PC agreed to give a short briefing to our next meeting
 - c) Out of Chaos exhibition - Mike reported upon a meeting he had with the director of the Jewish council for refugees who may be interested in our activities.
 - d) E-mail from BBC Religion & Ethics - approached us about a possible film they may make about Christians support for refugees. Mike explained that we were a group

that was non-denominational, multi faith, and no faith and that we probably were not able to assist.

- e) Meeting with AA from Italy - The twinning town with Talgarth - hope to try to get a group of small rural towns together across Europe to put in a bid to develop ideas for resettling refugees. We have given an expression of interest.
- f) We have links with similar groups in Knighton and Llanidloes and share info with Malvern. S told us of a group starting in Hereford and kindly agreed to attend a meeting on our behalf and report back.

11. **AOB** Mike suggested that our next meeting be our first AGM and an opportunity to elect officers now more people were in the group and to take stock. Mike indicated his desire to stand down as chair. This was met with sorrow.

12. AGM, date & venue of next meeting: Gwernyfed Rugby Club 13th January 2016 at 6.30pm