



HAY, BRECON & TALGARTH SANCTUARY FOR REFUGEES

GROUP MEETING

Wednesday 7th September 2016 18:30. Gwernyfed Rugby club in Talgarth.

- 1. Minutes and matters arising** Minutes approved and report received - included below

Report on activity since July 13th

- Sean, Lawrence and Ailsa *attended the City of Sanctuary [COS] AGM on 15th July and have reported upon matters raised.*
- *Sanctuary in Sennedd was supposed to be this week.*
- *Sanctuary in Parliament is 23rd November.*
- *March in solidarity with refugees is 17th September and there is a March in Swansea as well. Details on COS site.*
- *Stalls. Margaret and Pat Blake with others attended the concert at the cathedral which was an opportunity to give out information and they arranged for a stall at Brecon Show as another opportunity. Via the stall we made links with the National Trust who offered placements for people seeking refuge and we have passed on the Information to Swansea and Newport. Also a visitor offered accommodation to Share Tawe as a result of seeing our work. Margaret has a good information board and we have an up-to-date leaflet on the website.*
- *Penny Leonard is running a stall at Prom Fest Brecon 11th September and will value help.*
- *Publicity - A good write up on the Talgarth Sports festival highlighted our work. City of Sanctuary are promoting us as an exemplar for work that areas without refugees can do to support people who seek refuge.*
- *Fundraising - no events have been held this month but we had £1000 from City of Sanctuary to continue our work and a generous donation from Ludlow Quakers. Also money was given at Talgarth for food. Aldi, Coop and Morrisons have been generous in supporting our work by donating food and this has allowed for generous 'goody bags' and saved money on food at days out. The Brecon Food Bank gave us food for Talgarth respite day. We have insisted the Food Bank keep the profits from the concert at the cathedral as they are always so supportive of us.*
- *Fran from Brecon Volunteer Bureau has suggested a joint event for February*

- *Respite days - Reports on Talgarth sports festival [40+] people from Swansea and 2 from Newport], a family day in Talgarth [10 people], a day in Brilley [40+] and a picnic at Craig y Nos [65+ people including the 3 families from Ystradgynlais] are on the website. No adverse incidents but learning points are that:*
 - a. *It is hard to ensure good attendance during the week as there are many other competing issues*
 - b. *It is best to have a mix of individuals and families both to ensure numbers and the mix seems to work well with the men helping to look after/play with the children*
 - c. *Have wet weather plans but accept that the day will be most fun if it is not too structured*
 - d. *Cut the cake small as people like to taste most of them*

We are very grateful to the coordinators and helpers of all these days and to our partners in Swansea, to Talgarth sports festival and Talgarth football team and also to the Pontardawe Artists who came to Craig y Nos to paint, work with Clay, play music and facepaint and to Brecon Beacons National park staff and volunteers. We have had considerable feedback about how much both the people seeking refuge and their supporters value the opportunity to have a day out.

- *Hardship fund - a contribution to the Syrian families was given when we were told that they had no money due to delays in opening bank accounts.*
- *Goods - the Welcome boxes are now in Swansea with Nizar Dahan [Neezo] who will distribute these as needed. Clothing was taken to Cardiff but they sent much of it back as they have a surplus. We sent blankets and sleeping bags to Calais via Newport2Calais. For future we still need toiletries and non-perishable food and household goods but we don't need women's clothes. Small men's and children's clothes are still useful. Football boots are still being requested by Swansea - **does anyone have any links to Sport's wear/boots manufacturers who might consider sponsorship of UID football team?***

2. **Youth /Schools** - (a) the Head mistress of Christ College has been in touch to confirm that they will go ahead with an away day on 25th September, and were keen to stress they wanted to Support us and the refugees rather than to make demands. They wanted their pupils to have immediate contact with people seeking refuge so they were able to see them as real people and not as a political problem as portrayed in the press. They will provide food and transport for about 40 people and sports and possibly a walk. We will offer help via Melrose liaising for the next week and on the day Katy, Maggie, Virginia, Penny, Hilary, Robert, Melrose, Ailsa, Lawrence, Mac/ Erica are happy to attend to represent our group and maintain continuity.

(b) John Williams Head of Gwernyfed High School and Val Meredith who recently retired from Gwernyfed spoke about the desire to support and celebrate diversity at the school. Val has recently returned from a Trip to Northern Germany with pupils from Gwernyfed who attended an International Youth Week for Students 'Crossing Borders, Opening Doors'. She said that it was fascinating to hear how different

countries have reacted to the current crisis of displaced people and to speak to and learn from each other and some Afghan people who are seeking refuge. She mentioned how one young man had learnt English from watching films and spoke very well. The pupils have returned very keen to help and the Head will let them know about us and they can be encouraged to join our mailing list or Facebook page and help us with Away days and possibly fundraising. We talked about the speakers' project and how we can find people to talk about their experiences.

(c) Reverse Advent Calendar- Steve told us about this idea which is that instead of taking a sweet from a calendar on each day of advent people could be encouraged to put a gift such as shampoo, sweets, food, into a box each day which could then be taken to Swansea or Ystradgynlais to be given out after Christmas. We wondered if the high school might like to consider doing this. Steve is doing this with Llangorse cubs.

3. **Lobbying** - solidarity with refugees 17th September (<http://www.swruk.org/>) - This march is happening in London but Swansea are also have a meeting in Castle Square from 10.30 to 12.30 to coincide with this (<https://www.facebook.com/events/1162926417079874/>).

Also various campaigns are being planned by both City of Sanctuary and Refugees Welcome about the unaccompanied children in Calais (it was agreed we should consider writing to our MP about the need to reunite family members from Calais with family here). Roger agreed to help us draft a letter

Refugee Action are pleased their campaign about access to English courses has meant some additional funding has been given. But there is still more to do and City of Sanctuary is planning an additional campaign and will send draft letters out soon. Also they continue to campaign against indefinite detention.

4. **Stalls** - Penny is at Promfest with our banner, leaflets and bucket and will welcome any help
5. **Publicity, Twitter, Facebook, Website** - we have been complimented upon all our social media and website activity. People especially liked reading the feedback from our guests, which confirms we are providing a helpful service both to people seeking refuge and to their supporters in Swansea. We will ask Wayne and Maria to let us have any additional feedback if they can. We were pleased to have some publicity in B&R including a mention of our first year anniversary this week.
6. **Respite days** –
 - A brief discussion about the away days over the summer. We have tried to capture organisers' tips on the website (<http://hbtsr.org.uk/how-can-i-help/away-days>).
 - **25th September - Christ College Brecon** - details above (Melrose will liaise in Ailsa's absence)
 - **October 9th – Bronllys** - Gez reported on behalf of Sue with help from Lynne and Philip about the plans for Bronllys. An exciting day is planned

including music, walks, sports and food. Virginia will help with food from Supermarkets and the Churches harvest festival donations will also be available.

- **October 29th Landmark trust** - To be further explored and this may link to a dry stone walling competition. Virginia may help to liaise upon this as she knows the building. Suggestion that we liaise with Arts Alive about this day.
- **November 22-29** - possible trips to Caerphilly castle via Lumen Prize. This is in the very early stages of planning but may involve separate trips from Swansea, Newport and Cardiff to Caerphilly castle to see this exhibition and the castle.
- **Trefecca** - no further news yet but Janet is liaising.
- **Llanfihangel-Nant-Bran** - is in early stages of development but may involve an accessible place.
- Katy is working upon another possible day.
- We will welcome other offers.
- Lawrence and Gez will discuss how he could be funded to do MIDAS course which would mean we had additional minibus drivers especially for Ystrad.

7. **Hardship fund details** - We will change the wording to a more accurate 'Subcommittee' rather than 'trustees.' Expenditure of £200 endorsed by group. Agreed that we can pay for a monthly bus pass to enable our Arabic translator to help with English and we may try to claim back from the council who offered to pay traveling expenses.
8. **Finance and expenditure** - We have a good balance despite spending £970 on transport in the last month. We will continue to try to raise funds and to share monies with other groups helping refugees. Lynne and Philip agreed to check with Anna May if the children in Calais school needed more money for resources.
9. **Fundraising** –
 - It was agreed to link with Brecon Volunteer bureau on 4th February for a 'world music day'. Steve offered to help find bands.
 - Sean suggested another event at the Globe with a local Choir who have offered their services.
 - Virginia is discussing with Rachel an event in Talgarth to raise funds
 - Rachel offered to work with Gwernyfed high school to arrange a fundraising event.
10. **Goods** - Virginia has agreed to be coordinator of donations from Morrisons and Aldi. This will save multiple approaches to them and she will liaise with others to help to collect and distribute. We may be able to send some to Ystradgynlais families possibly via Ams' shop and otherwise Maria and Wayne may help us by meeting in Ystrad to take donations onwards. Others will help with transport. Store users group to be formed to help coordinate collections from Lib Dems' office, St Mary's Church Hay and Talgarth Library and to plan transfer of stored goods. Katy may be able to help with football boots.

11. Ystradgynlais - We have now met the three families and they have been on an away day. We have been asked to help with English conversation and Janet has agreed to coordinate our efforts together with Maggie. We discussed some of the difficulties but also the friendliness of many locals and the way that the families are trying to integrate e.g. during a flood at the weekend the men helped to try to divert the waters and some have signed on with the volunteer bureau. Three more families are due before the end of September. We have been greatly helped by Ams at the Old Temp Fish Shop and also a man seeking asylum in Swansea who speaks Arabic and English and will try to work with us and the families.

12. Groups –

- Artists - nothing to report except we value all that is done at away days. And how much we valued the Pontardawe artists groups help at Craig y Nos.
- English teaching - we are using as many people as have volunteered their time to help with the families in Ystradgynlais pending intensive ESOL course starting.
- Therapy - we will have a short presentation on listening skills from Maggie and Philip at the next meeting.

13. Charitable status is being worked upon.

14. Meetings attended - Steve is kindly attending the Welcome Summit coordinated by Citizens UK in Birmingham at the weekend.

15. Any Other business –

- Share Tawe have asked about some possible admin help at a distance. Katy agreed to discuss what was wanted with Margaret.
- An Asylum seeking man from Swansea is doing the Cardiff half marathon and may be seeking sponsorship. Sean will send out details.

16. Date of next meeting - October 12th at the Rugby Club