



HAY, BRECON & TALGARTH SANCTUARY FOR REFUGEES

GROUP MEETING & ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday January 13 2016 18:30. Gwernyfed Rugby Club, Talgarth

A G E N D A

AGM

Annual report: A written overview prepared by Ailsa and Sean was presented. Mike reviewed our original aims and showed how we had worked upon all of these in the group's brief four months' existence:

- **Welcome refugees** – December Respite Day in Hay and plans for more; providing material goods to people seeking refuge in Swansea and Cardiff and in Calais; contacts in Swansea and Cardiff with organisations working with people seeking refuge; several members have been to drop in and refugee community centres/meetings.
- **Provide information to our own communities** – street stalls with leaflets, information sheets, welcome stickers, pledge form and petition [all now available on our website]; articles in local paper, Website, Twitter, Facebook; fundraising events; public meeting in Brecon Guildhall; appeals for donated goods.
- **Coordinate the efforts of all who want to assist refugees** – regular group meetings with 20+ in attendance; growing number of active members taking on specific tasks and responsibilities; coordination with other local groups [Rotary, Mothers Union, Hay Deli and others]; affiliation to City of Sanctuary and Wales Refugee Coalition; liaison with other sanctuary groups in Knighton, Llanidloes, Hereford and with individuals in Ystradgynlais.
- **Make our elected representatives aware** - met and/or corresponded with all our local AMs, Town & County Councillors and our MP; telling them that our experience has been that most people are welcoming and want a generous response to the humanitarian crisis and the plight of disadvantaged people in Europe, UK, Wales and locally.

Dilemmas as to priorities and division of our resources:

- Lobbying vs action
- Fund-raising and collection of goods vs organising Sanctuary days and direct support for refugees
- Supporting action within the UK vs supporting action abroad (Calais, Dunkirk, Lesbos, etc.)
- Supporting larger refugee communities in Swansea & Cardiff vs acting locally in S. Powys
- Respite Sanctuary vs longer term settlement
- Collecting goods vs collecting cash
- Passing on all funds raised vs retaining some for Sanctuary work

Treasurer's report: We have approximately £1,800 after all recent income and expenditure accounted for. We have had several very generous donations and a number of groups are fundraising for us - including a donation given this evening from Powys People First. Based on

experience of Hay, a Respite Day may cost up to £300 especially if we have to pay for travelling costs.

Election of officers: The four officer posts (Chair, Deputy Chair, Secretary, Treasurer) are elected annually to give the opportunity for others to take on roles but with no limitation on length of tenure. Mike re confirmed his desire to stand down. This was met with universal sadness and he was thanked for all he had done so far.

Officers elected:

- **Treasurer:** Lawrence Duffy
- **Secretary:** Ailsa Dunn
- **Vice Chair:** Sally McColl
- **Chair:** Sean O'Donoghue

Mike was thanked for his work. He paid tribute to the hard work of all, especially Ailsa Dunn as Secretary.

Minutes & Matters arising from Group Meeting in Talgarth 09/12/2015

Minutes were approved as a true record.

Matters arising:

- **Youth Work:** Melrose reported that so far she had no expressions of interest from the Young Farmers but was still awaiting some replies. There was a possible sporting link that would be pursued. She had initiated contact with the High schools. It was agreed that Jeff and Barbara would follow this up and co-ordinate work with schools, especially Gwernyfed, Brecon and Crickhowell High Schools, Christ's College and Coleg Powys. Crickhowell HS had been particularly proactive in their support of refugee issues.
- **Disclosure and Barring Service DBS:** we still need to consider training about work with vulnerable adults and children - Barbara agreed to consider this further.
- **Speaker about Syria:** we will see if Peter Coleridge is prepared to do a talk.

Respite Days

Hay 13/12/2015: Louise reported upon a very successful day enjoyed by all who were involved whether as organisers or attendees. People had been extremely generous in giving time, donating resources, and lending equipment and expertise to make this day so enjoyable. A report is available and can be emailed to group members upon request to the secretary and could be put on the website if desired. It should be a great help for organisers of future Respite Days.

Llanfihangel Talyllyn 24/01/2016: Jonathan reported his plans and the support that he has enlisted which is mainly from local residents. Group members are welcome to call in. Currently aim is to bring up to 40 refugees from Swansea, Transport in private cars being organised by Wayne.

Hay 08/03/2016 Women and Children's respite day: Louise and Ceri are hoping to arrange a Respite Day for women and children from Swansea and are visiting Swansea groups to promote the idea.

Brecon April-May 2016 Penny and Andrew hope to arrange this. Penny would be delighted for any offers of support and will hold a brief meeting to discuss this further on 28th January 7.30.

Llangors June 2016 Rachel may work with others to run an arts and crafts activity Respite Day.
Expressions of interest please.

Talgarth 29-30/07/2016: Talgarth has a summer sports weekend when many sporting facilities are available to try free of charge. A group coordinated by Virginia plan to organise this Respite Day, including walking, story-telling and possibly craft opportunities. It may be arranged over two days with an overnight stay so accommodation offers may be called upon.

Bronllys September 2016? Sue is hoping to organise.

Offers of help with any of the away days will be welcome

Caravan offer

A very generous offer of a refurbished vintage caravan has been made to our group to use for respite holidays. After detailed discussion decided not to accept the generous offer: It was unlikely that we would make sufficient use of a caravan; care, maintenance and long-term parking might be problematic; feedback from Swansea that they had not identified anyone with immediate housing need for whom caravan might be suitable either. **Agreed** to thank donor and pass on details to them of 'Caravans for Calais' (<http://caravansforcalais.org.uk/>).

Selection of refugees & transport

Wayne Yare a volunteer in Swansea has agreed to try to arrange transport from Swansea and to help to coordinate who will come on the away days and will give advance details of the visitors' likes and needs. We are extremely grateful to him for this considerable extra work on top of all his other activities.

The group was delighted that so many local communities were offering to organise Respite Days, mobilise their own volunteers, showcase local facilities and give the opportunity for local people to see the human face of this crisis. More offers of help with away days will be very welcome.

Agreed that all Respite Days should highlight 'reciprocity', giving refugees the chance to participate fully and to demonstrate and teach us their own skills, interests and cultures.

Finance

A detailed discussion of Retaining funds for Respite Sanctuary work vs making donations to other organisations. **Agreed** that we should retain enough funds for the next 3 Respite Days (£300 x 3 = £900). **Agreed** to donate £900 immediately to Share Tawe who are struggling to support asylum seekers who receive no state aid (the category of those initially refused, refused on appeal, but who cannot be deported because there is nowhere safe for them to go). Confirmed that our donation should go to the registered charity of which Share Tawe is a part. We did consider smaller amounts to other worthwhile causes but felt that a larger amount to one group might be better.

Agreed to continue with fundraising activities. There may be potential for a north-African fundraising meal with cooking organised by refugees/asylum seekers from Swansea. **If there is any one of our supporters who would like to be involved with Fundraising please do get in touch.**

Goods

- **Collection points:** we remain very grateful to the Lib Dem constituency office, Brecon Guildhall and St Mary's Hay for their kindness and tolerance in acting as drop-off centres for goods.
- **Storage & packing:** We have the store in Hay possibly until the spring but may have to move out earlier if the owner finds a letting. Thanks to Hay Castle Trust for this. This store has been invaluable for sorting and packing and is still holding quite large amounts of bedding,

kitchenware and clothing. We will need to try to find another store if we continue to collect items. The BBNP store in Brecon is for storage only and unsuitable for sorting and packing. Sally was thanked for her hard work. **Agreed** to publicise need for a suitable packing and storage space when it is clear that it is needed.

- **Welcome packs:** (Sally). We have 6 household packs (several boxes each) in the BBNP store in Brecon. Initial expectation of use for arriving families has proven unrealistic: all Syrian families on the resettlement programme have basic household goods, etc., provided by local authority or housing provider. Our packs will now be used for families in Swansea who are identified as in need by a Foodbank volunteer. We are seeking storage in Swansea to facilitate distribution.
- **Clothing:** we have supplied clothing to Swansea and Cardiff and at the away day. We will try to sort some for the next Respite Day. Some donated clothing is unsuitable (too large, or too much for women, not enough for men). It was **agreed** that unsuitable clothing would be offered to other charities helping refugees [e.g. Oxfam or Red Cross]
- **Toiletries:** these were very popular at the Respite Day - they are much in demand. **We will appeal for more to be donated.**
- **Toys & children's things:** (Margaret) 70 packed gifts were given out in Swansea and 30 in Cardiff before Christmas, but some were returned and are in storage. The local women's refuge do not need them. We will keep some for use for children to play with on away days, some for new, incoming families. Some of surplus may be sold to raise funds.
- **Food:** we require food for the meals on Respite Days, for Respite Day refugees to take away, and for some of the most needy refugees in Swansea and Cardiff (Wayne has reported a substantial need). Pat will ask Brecon Foodbank if they have any short date things that we could have, Sean agreed to ask the Hay Coop, Jonathan the Brecon Coop and Pauline the Talgarth coop. We will supply a list of suitable items. *** see below.0
Mike warned that for the most needy refugees one-off donations are not a solution and we may not yet have the capability to provide regular supplies. Money may be more useful.
- **Stationery:** (Ailsa) - we have purchased some ring binders and paper for the Swansea English learners and **donations of paper would be appreciated.**
- **Computer equipment:** Sean has taken a number of computers, scanners and printers to Swansea where they hope to establish an internet café for refugees. Resettled families, including Syrians, may need computers so **any old computers will be welcomed by Sean.**
- **Clothes for Calais:** (Ailsa) Waterproofs, tents, etc. are being collected by SHARP, for Calais, Dunkirk, etc. Paul at BBNP is coordinating collecting items they require. We await further information and may put out an appeal for this for Calais.
- **Sports kit** - Barbara reported on her collection of sports gear. **Individual donations scarce, especially of trainers and football boots.** Leisure Centre unclaimed lost property is a promising source. She has also made a links with a group of footballers who raise funds for sporting links and may help. Gwernyfed Rugby Club may have boots to donate.

Work with Swansea and Cardiff

Agreed that we wish to continue these strong links.

Arrival of Syrian refugees

- Follow-up to meeting with Simon Inkson, Head of Housing at Powys CC. Mr Inkson has requested that members visit the council Facebook page and respond positively to the council's decision to resettle Syrian refugees. <https://www.facebook.com/powyscc/?fref=n/f> we will also ask him for further feedback upon progress.
- **Ystradgynlais:** we have several members with links and contacts there. **Agreed** we should continue to offer support but be careful not to impose upon them in any way. We have said

that we will stand ready to help if they wish and certainly may be able to offer the skills of members if desired.

Counselling group

(Hilary) Hilary reported that she had made contact with people who had offered counselling or allied therapeutic skills. These were unlikely to be used for a while, but she hoped to arrange a meeting to bring the group together, map skills and plan how best to use them when required.

Accommodation offers

Many members initially offered accommodation for refugees and we have not as yet found any group or individuals who want to take up the offers. We may need to ask if members want us to look for takers more actively. Respite plans in the summer may include some requirement for accommodation for a weekend which would provide a means of taking up some of the generous offers.

Publicity (Press incl. B&R; website; Facebook; Twitter)

Eugene Fisk suggested possible projects to help people to 'see' the human person and their stories, using art, photography and other means. Agreed a group of Antonia, Eugene, Muriel and Rachel to work on this. The end-product (cards, posters, an exhibition?) may be a good awareness-raising and fundraising tool.

Jo was thanked for her work on the website and Twitter and we can use these and Facebook to send out our requests as well as the papers.

Designers Neil and Cate offered to revisit our posters to help publicise our existence and we can try to put these in as many public places as possible. **This may require all members to try to find somewhere to display information.**

English teaching

Mac and Erica agreed to act as coordinators of a TEFL group to plan how we can offer English language teaching (possibly supplementary to that some refugees and the Syrians will receive via local authorities). We reviewed a simple pictorial English dictionary bought by Pat and Margaret. Wayne to be asked if this is what he wants. Would dual-language dictionaries be more useful and, if so, are they available for relevant languages?

Lobbying

- **Sanctuary in the Sennedd, 10/12/2015 (previously reported)**
<http://www.welshrefugeecouncil.org/news/16122015-1115/sanctuary-in-the-sennedd> we were present and made useful contacts. Mike spoke eloquently about the group. William Powell our local Am and Talgarth Representative on the County council was present and is passionate and well informed about refugee issues.
- **Meeting with Chris Davies MP 18/12/2015. (previously reported)** We made little progress. **Agreed:** seek to meet again in a few months, ask Mr Davies if he wants to join our mailing list and be invited to Respite Sanctuary days.

Agreed: Mike and Andrew to help coordinate our lobbying work, especially with the forthcoming assembly elections.

AOB

None.

Date & venue of next meeting

Gwernyfed Rugby Club on 24th February at 6.30

Shopping list of items requested

- Pasta
- Rice
- Potatoes
- Mayo
- Toiletries
- Canned tomatoes
- Sweet corn
- Onions
- Carrots
- Fresh or tinned Fruit
- Tinned fish
- Shampoo
- Washing powder
- Detergent
- Washing up liquid
- Eggs
- Plain flour
- Cooking oil
- Sugar
- Coffee
- Black tea