

Upper Wharfedale Refugee Support Group Newsletter

Hello everyone,

A lot has happened in the last month and is reported in this newsletter. We hope you still want to be kept updated but if you wish to be removed from the mailing list please let us know by replying to this email. Alternatively if you know someone who is not already in the group but might be interested please pass this on.

Coming up

Firstly a new fundraising event:

Saturday 23rd January 2016 The Grassington Peace Group will be running a coffee morning at Church House Grassington from 9.30 - 12 noon and all proceeds will be for the refugees. There will be a raffle, tombola and homemade cake stall and donations for these will be much appreciated. Contact Jane Way on 01756 761333 or jane.way@outlook.com for more information.

and a reminder about the carol singing:

Tuesday 22nd December we will be carol singing in Tesco's foyer between 2 - 4 pm and the proceeds will be for the Refugees Emergency Appeal. Drop in/drop out at your own convenience.....the more the merrier! Carol sheets will be provided on the day. Contact Jane Way on 01756 761333 or jane.way@outlook.com for more information.

Fundraising and collection outcomes

Thank you to everyone who donated items and helped with the collection on 5th December. The link below will take you through to Peter Vetch's report on the Buckden website which provides an account of how the donations get from Upper Wharfedale to refugees in France and the UK:

<http://www.vetch.co.uk/buckden2/refugee%20collection.pdf>

The coffee morning at Church House, Grassington, on 27th November raised £534 for refugees and the money has been donated to Christian Aid who are already working on the ground in Europe and the Middle East.

On 5th December at the Dickensian Festival in Grassington the Christian Aid group raised £1,100 for the refugees.

Both Grassington events were a good team effort so thank you to all involved.

Update on organisational matters

There has been a considerable amount of activity over the past few months in Upper Wharfedale, Skipton, Bradford and beyond. Anne Vetch has disseminated information from a range of sources to those on the Upper Wharfedale Refugee Support Group mailing list and Jane Way and Karen Leaver have represented Upper Wharfedale on the Craven Refugee Support Network. In turn the Craven network now connects a range of groups including Upper Wharfedale, Settle, Malhamdale and Skipton.

At first communication was fairly straightforward but as more people have become involved and more activities have taken place it is not always clear who is doing what or how best

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people can help. We think the way forward is for Jane and Karen to act as the information hub for Upper Wharfedale and ensure information is disseminated to those in the Upper Wharfedale group. Karen has offered to be the main information point and to co-ordinate and filter information. We are proposing to communicate by way of newsletters such as this one rather than by forwarding every communication that is received. These updates will continue to provide information about how individuals or groups can help the refugee effort as well as what is happening locally and nationally.

The main email address remains the same refugees@upperwharfedale.net. Current links with schools, churches or other community groups will remain unchanged but if you do have some information to pass on, it would be helpful to do so through Karen using the above email address or contact Jane on 01756 761333.

Update on local and national refugee situation

The government has agreed to accept 20,000 refugees over the next 5 years. They will be offered 'Humanitarian Protection' which will entitle them to remain in the UK for 5 years. They will have the same rights as British or European citizens, namely to seek work, claim benefits and access housing.

Those chosen are or will be from refugee camps in countries neighbouring Syria such as the Lebanon and Jordan, primarily vulnerable families i.e. those already traumatised by war.

North Yorkshire expects to receive about 200 people over 5 years. Of these Craven is likely to receive 18-20 people, predominantly in family groups over 5 years. In deciding where to settle refugees Craven will take into account housing, school places, access to services, community cohesion and the cost of the provision of support. The Council will work in partnership with local agencies and voluntary groups and tap into local expertise.

In a briefing note for the council leader, Skipton was identified as the preferred location with Glusburn and Crosshills as other options. The council hopes to obtain private rented accommodation rather than social housing given the shortage of social housing.

Final decisions (including whether or not to accept refugees) remain contingent on reaching a satisfactory agreement with the Government on the reimbursement of costs.