

Upper Wharfedale Refugee Support Group – Update – August 2022

Events and Fund raising

An event was held in Skipton as part of the multi-city **kite festival** to express solidarity with Afghans as we mark the one year anniversary of the Taliban take over. All proceeds from the event will go to women in Afghanistan with the government matching donations.

The Peace Group coffee morning at Grassington raised over £400 to be split between local support groups. The money will be used in UW to support Ukraine refugees (see the item re transport below).

Refugees welcome in Buckden

We have two refugee welcome days in Buckden - **21 August** and 04 September. If any one feels the urge to **bake a cake, a traybake, or biscuits** that would be much appreciated. Also, we are grateful for the use of the Venturer bus for transport but would happily accept any donations for **diesel**. Please get in touch with me if you can help.

Heber Farm will also be hosting two refugee mums and children next week in one of the pods which will be a very welcome break. If there are other holiday homeowners who can offer short-break accommodation please let me know.

Ukraine refugees: update and transport

There is now a quite a group of refugees in Upper Wharfedale and the Craven area (the latest family arriving last week) and good connections have been made between all guests and hosts. A number of Ukrainians have already found work and children were settling into school just before the holidays.

Tanya, one of the guests, is a talented seamstress & dressmaker and is now taking orders through her business, Princess Britain - for everything from new commissions to alterations to upcycling. She's got 20yrs + experience. Link here:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100082064811998>

UWRSG has raised some funds for transport for hosts or guests to enable contact and support but a couple of families are living in areas without public transport and so are entirely reliant on hosts or volunteers getting them to where they need or want to be. We're looking at ways of increasing independence including car hire or purchase (Ukraine driving licences can be used in the UK). If anyone has an old car ready for the next stage in its life or has a car sitting idle or would be prepared to consider a car share, please get in touch with Nicky: nicola.corp@mustardmanagement.com . Also, are there any mechanics out there who might be prepared to make good an old car if one is donated?

Ukraine refugees: landlords

Although it is just a few days since the last Ukraine family arrived in Upper Wharfedale it is about four months since our first arrival. You may remember the government scheme asked for a six-month commitment from hosts and that commitment will be coming to an end soon. Many of those fleeing from Ukraine hoped to be back home in a few months but this now looks optimistic and more permanent arrangements need to be made. While some hosts are prepared to continue, others are not and many properties are not suitable for hosting long term; both hosts and guests need space for themselves. There is a pressing need for self-contained accommodation.

Ukrainians are either working and so self-funding and/ or entitled to state benefits for housing. Housing benefit payments are usually below the 'market rate' for properties in the dales but, if

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there are any landlords who would be prepared to rent property to Ukraine refugees please get in touch with Nicky: nicola.corp@mustardmanagement.com .

City (district) of Sanctuary

Craven District Council has approved, in principle, a proposal to become a district of sanctuary. More work needs to be done on a district wide plan before final sign off. The various local groups, including UW are part of this process and we are keen to ensure refugees are welcome and welcomed here. On 15 September there will be a Zoom presentation on City (district) of Sanctuary at 7pm (details will follow) which will provide more information. We need to think about what we can offer and what our commitment in UW and Craven should be. If you are interested, please keep the date free and sign up when the details are publicised.

Upper Wharfedale Refugee Support Group: the Future

As we say on all our leaflets and information sheets UWRSG is a ‘**network** of individuals’ who do what they can to support refugees. Over the past 7 years a great deal has been achieved by many individuals just getting on and doing stuff and the sum of these efforts has been considerable. There has also been a huge amount of support from people who are happy to provide ad hoc help but don’t want to make a regular or sustained commitment, or who are unable to do much because of their own circumstances but continue to offer support.

We have functioned with very few meetings, no formal structure and support from Skipton Refugee Group in managing raised funds.

Two things have made the picture just a bit more complicated. One is a substantial donation which required some thinking through rather than single person decision and the extension of our work and network following the ‘Homes for Ukraine’ scheme. We think the time may have come when we need to bring a bit more order (and accountability) to our finances and also to think ahead given the changing refugee environment. Perhaps even plan for next year?

So, I am **seeking your views about a meeting!** If we were to arrange a Zoom meeting for later in September how many of you would you be interested in attending? It would be for anyone who wants to know more, wants to support refugees or has some thoughts/ ideas for the future. It would not commit anyone to future action!

Spread the word

Every time there is a new crisis (Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine), more people become aware of the refugee situation world wide and some make contact with us. Please pass this update onto people who you think might be interested and might wish to either know more or become involved.

Wishing everyone all the best for what is left of the summer.

Stella

Stella Perrott
Buckden Barn
Buckden