

UWRSG update

Illegal Immigration Bill

Many thanks to everyone who wrote to Julian Smith, signed petitions, or otherwise indicated opposition to the Bill. Other groups in the Craven area were also involved and there is a substantial number of people who are opposed to its cruelties. Although JS voted for the bill in its third reading, the work is not complete, and I will write to him again when it returns to the Commons. It is currently being debated in the Lords.

Welcome Day

We had hoped to have a welcome day in June to celebrate Refugee Week and the Great Get Together (the Jo Cox Foundation). Due to so many commitments in June, it will now take place on 29 July at Buckden House. The plan is for Upper Wharfedale. Bradford and Skipton families to 'get together' for a day (from about 11am – 4pm) of fun, food a walk and music. All residents of Upper Wharfedale are welcome! Please let me know if you would like to be part of this.

We also need some help! If you can help with providing food for the day, help with entertainment, organising the day or just generally being a welcoming face, we would love to hear from you. There is a meeting at Buckden House on 17 May at 2.30pm to discuss this further. Please join us if you can (please contact me first).

National Park and National Trust



Outdoor
volunteering oppor

As well as Buckden House, the National Park and the National Trust are keen to welcome refugees (and other groups who may have difficulty accessing the countryside) to the dale. At the meeting on 17 May we can consider the part the Upper Wharfedale community can play. Also, attached is an email and flier about volunteering with underrepresented groups in the National Park. You may be interested, and it gives an idea of what can be achieved.

Craven District of Sanctuary

Craven became a District of Sanctuary (DoS) in February of this year, following a unanimous vote in the council in June 2022. Although the 'district' as a political and administrative entity is no more the work of the group continues, supported by the new County Council. The group comprises all the Craven refugee support groups and County Council staff.

The launch of the DoS will be at Skipton Library on 16 June at 3.30pm and will last about half an hour. Throughout Refugee Week there will be a display at the library which will include the work of the group and the various local refugee groups, information about refugees and a display of books about refugees and displacement.

Upper Wharfedale Refugee Support Fact Sheet

We have been producing the annual fact sheet for about six or seven years now. It changes slightly each year depending on what the current issues are but has broadly remained a statistical analysis of refugee flows from the global to the local. It is always well used. This year, and in future years, it will be published under the banner of the Craven DoS. This is to enable wider and greater reach and to make our contribution to the work of the DoS. The fact sheet will be available from the start of

Refugee Week in electronic and paper form for distribution. Please let me know if you have people or groups who might be interested in a copy. The source data will also be made available (online).

Refugee week

Refugee Week is **19-25 June** and the theme this year is 'compassion'. There are several events on during the week. There is the library display (above) running throughout the week.

On **20 June at 7.30pm**, also at the library, there will be a celebration of refugees through stories, poems and artwork (please contact me if you would like to go and need a lift). On **Saturday 24 June from 10-4pm** the Skipton Refugee Support Group will run a stall outside the library (helpers are very welcome).

On **June 19 at 7pm** there will be a Craven DoS Zoom session which will include a presentation (from me) on refugees, asylum seekers, small boats and anything else 'you wanted to know about refugee and asylum matters but were too afraid to ask'. It is aimed at providing information to aid understanding but also to enable people to ask questions about things they are unsure about (the kind of questions people have been asking me all year) – Why are there so many young men on small boats? Do people have to stay in the first safe country? Why does an asylum application take so long? Are Ukrainians refugees? Please get in touch with 'Angie Pedley' angie.pedley@gmail.com to book a place.

The Parishes of Upper Wharfedale and Littondale will focus on Refugee week in their June edition of the link [link_562_2023_05.pdf \(upperwharfedalechurches.org\)](#) and

[Home – Yorkshire Bylines](#) will also cover refugee matters nationally and Refugee week events in Yorkshire.

If you have a Refugee Week event that you would like to publicise, please let me know.

Ukrainian Refugees

It is now over a year since Ukrainians began arriving in the UK. Many have now moved on from hosts and are settling into their own accommodation. The support from local people has been outstanding. Many people have acted as hosts and their neighbours and friends have supported them and their guests. The Ukrainians are now supporting each other, and hosts and volunteers are less involved than previously. Although there have been quite a few difficulties along the way, not least the long waits for visas and to get into the UK, once the scheme was up and running it has been remarkably successful. There are still problems especially in terms of move on accommodation. It shows what can be done when the UK puts its mind to it.

Bradford Immigration and Asylum Support Network (BIASAN) and fundraising

There are few refugees in Upper Wharfedale (and they move on to more urban areas for better access to work, training, public services and support from their compatriots when they can) and our major role has been in fundraising, providing information and ensuring refugees are welcome as visitors. We partner with BIASAN in Bradford. We support their efforts, as they can do more than we can to support refugees directly. We have collected a considerable amount of clothing, furniture and household goods, raised funds and had welcome days. Our Christmas toiletries collection is for BIASAN.

BIASAN is struggling to raise the funds it needs to undertake its activities. Many of their supporters are also suffering under the cost-of-living crisis and corporate donations have dropped. The demand is greater than ever before, especially for food and baby provisions and 'cash' in destitution cases.

Also, the BIASAN 'store' is currently in a building due to be demolished next year and the store will have to move – a costly exercise in itself, but the costs of renting a new space may be beyond reach.

UWRSG is helping BIASAN to tackle these problems, but it would be really helpful if we could do some fund raising directly. Is there anyone in the network who could lead on this or put on an event? Or are people able to use an existing event and donate proceeds to BIASAN?

Donations can be made to Co-op Bank BIASAN Support Fund. Sort no 0892 99 a/c 65698716 or via Local Giving Biasan Bradford. If you do donate directly, please let me know (if you are happy to) as it is helpful to know if what we do is useful.

Christian Aid Week 14-20 May

Christian aid provides humanitarian relief and long-term support for poor communities worldwide, while highlighting suffering, climate change, tackling injustice and championing people's rights. It is working in some of the world's most vulnerable and unstable countries and with people who have fled their homes. It is working in Afghanistan, Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan.

Donations can also be made directly into the Upper Wharfedale Fellowship of Churches Christian Aid Account, sort code 20-78-42 account number 43851834, or <https://www.justgiving.com/page/joanna-clarke-1680712499802>

Volunteers

There is a lot going on and people are doing many things to support refugees and asylum seekers. If you want to do more, or have ideas, please get in touch and we can always find ways for you to help! As always, please share this update and if you want to know more, please get in touch. Stella@stellaperrott.com