



Registered charity no 1173570

Annual report 2023

HBTSR has been in existence for eight years in order to support and welcome people seeking sanctuary. We do this by offering days out, raising money to help individuals and groups who assist and/or support people seeking sanctuary and by campaigning for more humane asylum policies and laws. Throughout this year we have held Welcome Days and kept in touch with our supporters by e-mail, telephone and monthly group meetings on Zoom. The latter increases attendance in our widely dispersed rural area and has enabled colleagues in Swansea to join with us to plan and discuss needs. We have focused upon encouraging schools to become recognised as Schools of Sanctuary and were delighted that Powys Council has committed to working towards being a [Council of Sanctuary](#).

We have raised money to support individuals and families and have [continued to campaign](#) for people seeking sanctuary in conjunction with the Together with Refugees coalition.

We were privileged to be recognised by both PAVO and the High Sheriff of Powys for [an award this year](#), as well as one from the [Monmouthshire Muslim Community Association](#).

We were invited to be part of a group at Brecon Cathedral [to meet the King](#) and also to speak at the Powys Launch of [Council of Sanctuary](#) at Royal Welsh Show.

This year saw our long time Chair Margaret Blake step down. A new Chair, Tim Butler and additional trustees were appointed.

Welcome Days

These are mostly single-day visits to a particular community or venue, where people seeking sanctuary can enjoy a 'day out' in the countryside and share hospitality and activities with the local community. Many people benefit from these days out – not only people seeking sanctuary but also the host communities and the organisations who support them. There are great benefits in working together for a common goal and providing activities that local communities can access alongside visiting sanctuary seekers. Community cohesion and intergenerational working are immediate benefits that hosting areas have noted. New friendships have formed both within the local community and among people seeking sanctuary.

We were fortunate to secure a grant from PAVO Refugee Support Fund that paid for transport to three of our Welcome Days.

We have worked closely with Beacons for Ukraine and the Llandrindod support group to ensure that Ukrainian, Syrian and Afghan people living locally are invited to the Welcome Days and assisted to integrate and feel welcome in our community.

Most Welcome Day visits are held in collaboration with Swansea drop in support groups SASS and UID who compile lists of those sanctuary seekers who wish to attend – with frequent revisions as people drop in and

Throughout this document we have used the term 'people seeking sanctuary' to describe people seeking refuge/ asylum/ safety. We try to avoid depersonalising terms such as 'Asylum seeker' or 'Refugee'.

Abbreviations used in the report:

BBNPA	Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority	BSL	British Sign Language
DBS	Disclosure & Barring Service	DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
EYST	Ethnic Youth Support Team	IELTS	International English Language Testing System
NASS	National Asylum Support Services	NRPF	No recourse to public funds
PAVO	Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations	SASS	Swansea Asylum Seekers Support
UID	Unity in Diversity		

out – and help them to reach the departure point for transport. Many thanks to Thanuja Hettiarachchi who as undertaken most of this work.

Welcome Days 2023		
Month	Venue	Hosts – local communities with additional help from:
March	Llangorse	Llangorse Community Hall and School, Melrose East, Bernie Herman, Penny Scruby and Alison Eagle, Claire Elliott and Niki Jones, Emily Hedges, Taiko Mynydd Du
April	Penpont	Vina and Gavin Hogg, Margaret Blake, Jackie Oliphant, Fiona Cloke, Kate Thomas, Katy Cherrington, Claire Elliott, Emily Hedges
May	Craig y Nos Country Park	Bannau Brycheiniog National Park The Big Skill, Lis Lifford , Criw Craggy, Claire and Matt Elliott
June	Talybont-on-Usk	Henderson Hall, Talybont Talybont WI, Talybont Stores and PO, Rhiannon and Nick, The Star Inn, The White Hart Inn
July	Talgarth	Gwernyfed Rugby Club, Talgarth Football club Virginia Brown, Lynne Oliver, Melrose East, Grow for Talgarth, Tuesday Lunch club, Jacqui Wilding and Bronllys Wellbeing Park, Nicola Jones Sports Development, Talgarth Bowling Club, Shuffle and Roll Board Games, Rob Hughes of Talgarth Walkers are Welcome
August	Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Visitor Centre, Libanus	Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Francesca Bell, Aled Edwards, Jackie and Rob Thomas, Brecon Labour Party, The Big Skill, Melrose East
	Llangorse – Smaller visits from sanctuary-seekers supported by Newport Sanctuary: Climbing & Rowing ; Women's Group	Llangorse Community Hall and School, Llangorse Rope and Riding Centre, Lakeside The women so enjoyed their visit that they came back to sell items at the Llangorse Christmas Fair in December.
September	Assisted group in Carmarthenshire to organise their own Welcome Day	

Welcome Days 2023		
Month	Venue	Hosts – local communities with additional help from:
October	Llangynidr	Llangynidr Village Hall, School, Red Lion Pub, Church & Chapels, BBNPA & Usk Astronomical Society, Jean Barnes, Mike Gatehouse, Melrose East, Emily Hedges, the Gibbs family, Tessa, Graham, Emily, Kate, Yolanda Sidler, Liz, Kirsty Davies, Jane Durrant, Maryna, Loretta, Lily Peel, Simon Lancaster, Justin & The Hallelujah Joes, Tim Butler, Val Fraser,
October-November Visit 1 , Visit 2 , Visit 3 , Visit 4	Hay on Wye Castle – Visits by sanctuary seekers from Three Counties Hotel, Hereford	Hay Castle & Refugee Art Exhibition. Drovers Cycles, Anna and Luke, Miv Smith, Mike Jones, Carl Fox, Stuart Lifford, Andy, Aaron, Jamie, Tom True and Mari Fforde
November	Hay School	Hay on Wye School Hay on Wye school and PTFA, Hay Castle, Three Tuns, Gay on Wye bookshop, Richard Morris, Josh Boyd-Green, Bernie Herman, Lynne Oliver, Claire Armstrong, Christina Campbell, Alex Benfield

Reports are available about each of the visits on [our website](#). Our thanks to all those communities and organisations who made these visits possible. All events involve many others from the communities and HBTSR members, as well as those listed here. Many more contributed food and other goods.

Hardship fund

Established in the early days of HBTSR to meet urgent or one-off needs, and guided by a small group of advisers, we can usually respond to Hardship Fund requests within 24 hours. All decisions are subsequently discussed at HBTSR monthly group meetings. Individuals are asked to apply via one of the sanctuary seeker support groups we work with (in Swansea UID and SASS) who help us to assess and balance local needs.

Direct payments

<i>Month</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Detail</i>
February	£45	Bus pass for one child
		Bus fares for vulnerable man Football kit for one
April	£140	Train fares for a Ukrainian family
June	£50	Cash plus a bag of groceries for a woman moved from Swansea, whose Aspen debit card was not renewed for more than 3 weeks.
	£41	Registration and kit for young footballer (club waived weekly subscriptions)
July	£135	Birth project run by a member
September		Face paints and left-handed scissors for an asylum childcare group
	£245	Kit required for a catering course
	£350	Bus pass for travel to College

Our Hardship Fund has had fewer calls for direct payments since we set up the devolved hardship funds allowing decisions and money to be made available on the spot by people who know the need.

Devolved Hardship Funds

These funds are supported by periodic block grants made by HBTSR. The organisations which receive and administer individual payments send in regular reports to HBTSR group meetings and these are included in our minutes. We have found that making money available where and when it is needed allows dignified and speedy help.

SASS Hardship and Shoe Fund

During the pandemic we provided a monthly sum of money for phone top-ups but with WiFi now being provided in many of the homes and a return to in-person teaching, the need was much less.

However there was a need for small sums of money to help with immediate food poverty especially at weekends when food banks are closed. There were also needs to meet some urgent solicitor fees and provide clothing. Thus the phone top-up fund became the SASS Hardship fund, administered by three volunteers. A monthly report is sent in by Maria Nicholas.

In addition Maria identified a need for shoes as many new people arriving invariably had either inappropriate or very worn footwear. She found a mail-order footwear company with bargain prices. Giving people new shoes rather than secondhand ones restores a degree of dignity and sense of self worth.

Moving-on Fund

This was set up in March 2021 to help people with newly granted refugee status with the expenses of setting up a new home. Grants could be up to £200 per Family/Person to be spent as needed. This fund was to help people for whom previously we might have found household goods but had been unable to help due to the pandemic. Applications are made via volunteers and the usual agencies.

With the return to more normal life we have started some limited deliveries of household goods. Only 2 grants were made this year.

EYST Urgent Accommodation Fund

In 2022 we were able to respond to increasing concerns within EYST about the number of people who become street homeless and destitute as a result of their asylum claim. Despite working closely with ShareTawe, there are no quick fixes and no surplus accommodation. EYST provides information to the Council to prove that the asylum claim is being worked on and that EYST will apply for NASS support when

appropriate. After a few days, the council usually offer a room while EYST work further on the person's asylum case.

The fund allows EYST to book a B&B room for a couple of nights while statutory services sort things out .

“To have an emergency pot that we can use at our discretion (for those moments when we've exhausted all options) is a dream.”

Bus pass project

Between February and April we spent £1,500 on bus passes to allow children living more than 2 miles but under 3 miles from school to have a weekly bus pass. This was very ably managed by Catherine a worker at EYST. There is [a detailed report](#) on our website.

We tried to use this report to show the need and the benefits but the council and Senedd have not continued their support for this scheme.

Asylum Justice Sanctuary Fund

For the last two years we have made substantial donations to Asylum Justice Sanctuary fund to help them to obtain documents needed in people's cases. We have regular reports included in our minutes about how the money is spent.

We also hold some money donated specifically to help with legal cases such as to pay for reports, fares to travel to hand in paperwork, translations etc. This money is ring-fenced with decisions on use made by a small HBTSR group which can draw on the expertise of support group volunteers in the cities. The fund was used once this year to assist with legal support for a man in detention and helped to obtain his release.

UID small electrical equipment fund

Pre- pandemic we used to collect items and deliver them. However, some of the items needed are available new at a reasonable price. Giving money that can be used to buy the items where they are needed has seemed very sensible.

In addition in June we bought 15 Geobook Laptops via the Corporate Social Responsibility arm of XMA which cost £1,200. These were distributed via SASS and UID .

Courts support group

People seeking sanctuary are understandably very anxious about attending immigration tribunal hearings and we have been able to offer moral support this year by accompanying four individuals. We have a leaflet on our website explaining our role as observers and for morale support. SASS have identified a need for sanctuary-seekers to practise for interviews and hearings and we have offered to help with this.

Other Activities

At the start of Lockdown in March 2020, ShareTawe asked if we could accommodate a man who would otherwise be homeless or placed in a hostel/dormitory. A local holiday cottage owner agreed to make this available and HBTSR was able to befriend, help with subsistence and ensure that he has been safely accommodated. Since April 2022 he has lived with a generous local host family.

Friendship and support

Many HBTSR members keep in touch with individuals met at welcome days and we have maintained contact with support groups. We are told that this is greatly appreciated.

A Friendship Quilt began as a lockdown project, designed to support people seeking sanctuary based in Swansea, whom Emily Hedges and her friend Jenny Chippindale met at one of the Welcome Days held in Hay school. When the pandemic put an end to face-to-face meeting to sew and embroider, Emily devised the Friendship Quilt where everyone could work individually on their own squares and, once lockdown was over, join together to complete the project The quilt is now [on display at Hay Castle](#) where it is much admired and [available for members of the public](#) to sponsor individual squares.

Goods

Until the start of lockdown in March 2020 we continued to be given large amounts of clothing, bedding, toys, household and kitchen items that were of use to people seeking sanctuary both here and abroad. In March 2020 we stopped collecting goods as none of the support groups was open and so we had nowhere to send items. We have not restarted as most support groups have their own supplies now.

Ty Mawr Lime continue to provide us with a warm, secure storage area where we have been able to keep things that are needed for Welcome Days and occasional items needed by Support groups .

Stores Group

Sue and Carola have continued to visit the store to check that items are in date and sort any suitable items to be transported.

Bicycles

Over 60 bikes have been donated this year to Newport Sanctuary. Drover Cycles , Sean, and Lawrence have continued to collect bicycles which are conveyed to Newport by Vanessa. We are very grateful to everyone who has donated bicycles and given storage or transport. These bikes have allowed so many people freedom to travel.

Newport has a regular bike maintenance session and now has city centre premises offering a secure bike park and space to refurbish and maintain bikes. They credit our support for helping to start and maintain this popular activity.

Drovers Cycles held [a bike repair day](#) for some residents of the Three Counties Hotel, Hereford, and 13 bikes were subsequently delivered along with helmets, lights and locks

Sewing Machines

Tools for Self Reliance Cymru are kindly able to let us have machines that are not suitable to be sent to their partners in Africa and other kind people have also donated machines.

In September 2020 Newport Gap Sanctuary asked for our help in finding sewing machines and materials to start a sewing group. This has continued to flourish and is a source of informal English conversation and teaching.

A similar sewing group is planned in Swansea. 13 sewing machines were taken to SASS in October.

Christmas and Eid presents.

We gave £1000 each for Christmas gifts, party or food to UID, SASS, Newport and to the Hereford support group. Over 300 gifts from schools and supporters were taken to Swansea for distribution. A donation was given in April to Monmouthshire Muslim Community Association via our trustee Adil Gatrad to buy gifts for Eid.

Schools of Sanctuary

Encouraging local schools to become [Schools of Sanctuary](#) has become a particular interest for HBTSR this year. We have a small group of Trustees and supporters who are committed towards taking forward the recognition of many of our schools. We are helped in this by the Church in Wales [encouraging all its schools](#) to apply.

Five schools in our area (Brecon High School; Clyro, Hay on Wye, Llangattock and Ysgol Mynydd Du primary schools) have started the journey towards becoming Schools of Sanctuary and Cradoc, which was the first primary school in Wales to be recognised as a school of Sanctuary was re-accredited in July. We involved schools in a [writing and art competition](#) for Refugee Week and held a very successful [awards evening](#) on 16th June.

Llangors Primary school was recognised as a school of Sanctuary following an inspection in November 2023.

Fundraising/ Awareness raising activities

Our generous supporters have ensured that we continue to be able to support people seeking sanctuary in south Wales and more recently also in Hereford where more than 100 men seeking asylum are accommodated in a hotel.

We have benefitted from donations at weddings and funerals, closure of trusts and also from Regular monthly direct debits. Donations were also collected at many of our Welcome Days.

Fundraising events and activities included:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Details</i>
May	Hay Festival	Bucket collections & street stalls
July	Royal Welsh Show	Stall jointly with Beacons for Ukraine
August	Talybont Show Brecon Show	Stall jointly with Beacons for Ukraine
	Llangynidr Show	STALL
Christmas 2023	Various	

Hay Festival of Sanctuary

Hay Festival is re-applying to be recognised as a Festival of Sanctuary. We were again able to assist the Festival with planning charity collections as well as having a number of collections for ourselves. Thanks to the generosity of the many people attending we were able to raise a substantial amount for our activities. A local sanctuary-seeking man acted as a steward at the spring festival and enjoyed the experience. Thanks to Penny, the Box Office team and Hay Festival Chief Executive and Trustees for all their help and support.

Homes for Ukraine, Wales Super Sponsor

We have worked closely with Powys County Council and the Ukrainian resettlement programme. We are pleased that the council has recognised and worked with the various support groups for people seeking sanctuary across the county. We worked closely with Beacons for Ukraine and helped them to run a Ukrainian Christmas party and an information session with our Regional MS. Welcome Days now always include Ukrainians living locally and we have maintained and updated a page on our website with Ukraine-specific information.

We hold/administer monies for Beacons for Ukraine that were donated following fundraising in Crickhowell.

We were involved in an [Oral History project](#) run by Rhiannon and Olha on behalf of Beacons for Ukraine. This is for use by anyone who wishes and is a useful resource about seeking sanctuary.

Lobbying, Awareness raising and Education.

Throughout the year we have continued to highlight important petitions and causes. We have been helped in this by the fortnightly briefing of Asylum Matters and the regular updates for Lift The Ban Coalition and Together with Refugees.

We have regular correspondence with our MP and regional MS.

We have repeatedly drawn attention to the Nationality and Borders Act and the Illegal Migration Act in conjunction with the 'Together with Refugees' coalition. Our activities are described on our website, [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

We also helped to curate an exhibition of contemporary refugee art at Hay Castle from 22 September to 16 November including some works by artists living in Brecknockshire and Swansea. Some details of the exhibition are in the reports of visits by refugee groups to this exhibition.

[For Refugee Week](#) Theatr Brycheiniog hosted an exhibition of work from Llangorse school about Sanctuary. We held an awards ceremony for pupils who entered our refugee week competition and a celebration of quilting at Hay Castle. In addition we had a Welcome Day during the week in Talybont.

We have worked with schools to encourage them to become recognised as Schools of Sanctuary and hope to celebrate these awards publicly.

Website and social media

The website is maintained by City of Sanctuary and Ailsa with help from Mike and Paul. It contains all our newsletters, reports, event write-ups, policies and links to other groups.

<i>Channel</i>	<i>Followers/Subscribers at 1 December 2023</i>	<i>Maintained by</i>
Facebook	1,200	Public group with posts approved by Steve and Ailsa
Twitter/X	1,228	Maria – this remains an active campaigning resource
Instagram	114	Alex
Email	515	Subscribers to our newsletters, which are written by Ailsa with details of meetings, activities, updates, and petitions.

Graphic design: Neil and Cate continue to help with design of our leaflets and posters to ensure that we have a consistent, recognisable and effective visual presence.

Administration.

Meetings: All are welcome to attend our regular, monthly Group meetings (currently by Zoom, though this is reviewed regularly). Meetings hear and discuss reports on activities, income, expenditure, any issues, plans and seek views and aim for consensus about future work.

Policies: all are on our website and are reviewed annually by the Chair and trustees. We have over 500 people on our mailing list who receive regular mailings .

Bank account: a new account was opened in August as the local Branch of Barclays closed.

Officers and Trustees: are appointed at the AGM with Trustees able to co-opt additional as needed. Trustees have met three times this year and have kept in touch regularly.

HBTSR Roles & Responsibilities

Post Holders as of December 2023

<i>Post</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Appointed</i>
Chair	Tim Butler		Jan 2023
Vice Chair			
Treasurer	Lawrence Duffy		
Secretary	Ailsa Dunn		
Trustees	Ailsa Dunn	Secretary	June 2017
	Lawrence Duffy	Treasurer	June 2017

<i>Post</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Appointed</i>
	Melrose East	Risk Management & Welcome Days	Dec 2017
	Val Fraser	Press	(*Nov 2021) Jan 2022
	Adil Gatrad		(*Nov 2021) Jan 2022
	Claire Armstrong	Support	Jan 2023
	Lis Lifford		Jan 2023
	Rowland Jepson	Schools of Sanctuary	Jan 2023
Safeguarding Lead	Dr Aideen Naughton		
Hardship Fund advisers	Mike Gatehouse		
	Lynne Rogers		
	Lawrence Duffy	Treasurer	
	Tim Butler	Chair	
Webmaster	Paul Funnell		
Stores Group	Sue Richards		
	Carola Tipton		
	Ailsa Dunn		
Social Media	Steve Buzza	Facebook	
	Ailsa Dunn	Facebook	
	Maria Duggan	Twitter/X	
	Alex Benfield	Instagram	
Fundraising	Rachel Giaccone		
	Jane Dodds		
Welcomer/Information Officers	Margaret & Pat Blake, Lawrence Duffy, Melrose East, Mike Gatehouse, Adil Gatrad, Penny & Andrew Leonard, Philip Oliver, Sue & Gez Richards, Lynne Rogers		
Risk Management	Melrose East		
Courts Support Group	Sarah Andrews, Claire Armstrong, Janet Bodily, Hilary Bright, Virginia Brown, Maureen Douglas, Lawrence Duffy, Ailsa Dunn, Maria Duggan, Melrose East, Allie Exton, Corinne Harris, Jonnie & Tina Hill, Rowland Jepson, Angharad Kuck, Lis Lifford, Ellie Lonsdale, Kirsty Morgan, Philip Oliver, Pauline Paterson, Barbara Price, Reg Price, Sue Richards, Lynne Rogers, Clare Shirtcliff, Neil		

<i>Post</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Appointed</i>
Legal Fund Group	Tim Butler, Lawrence Duffy, Maria Duggan, Rowland Jepson, Philip Oliver, Mark Seymour, Marilyn Thomas		
Policies	Mike Gatehouse & others		
Transport Group	Hilary Bright, Tim Butler, Lawrence Duffy, Val Fraser, Trish Fretten, Adil Gatrad, Tina & Jonnie Hill, Gaynor & Jim Hooper, Trina Lodge, Jim & Clare Milner		

Please let us know if you'd like to take on or assist with any of the roles listed above.

Thanks to all our supporters and friends for all that you have done this year to help raise the profile of and to directly help people seeking sanctuary.

Ailsa Dunn 31 December 2023