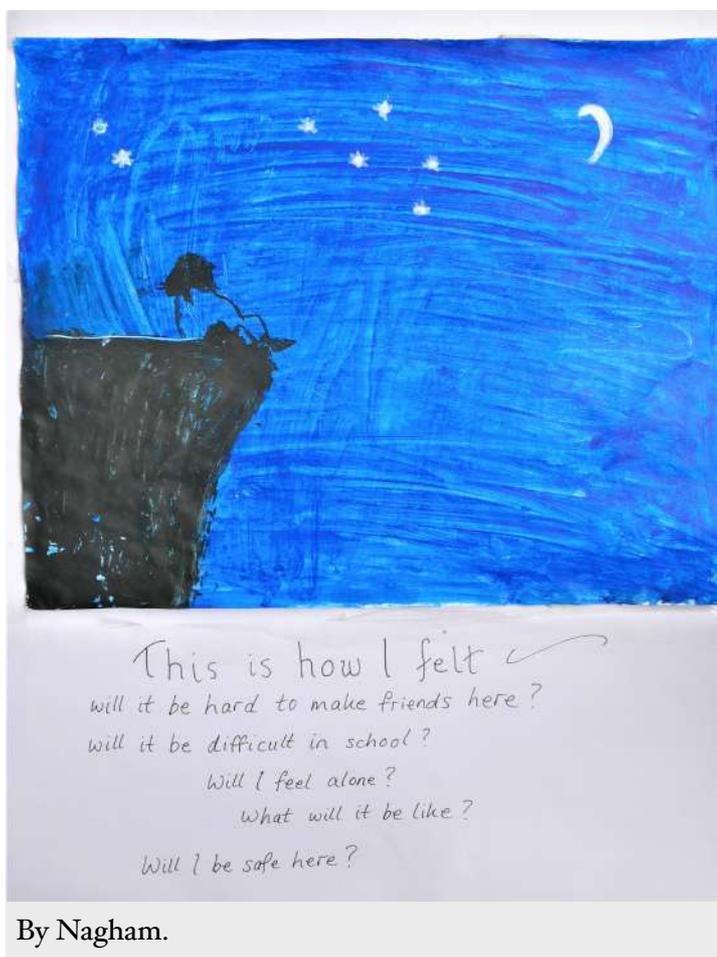


Welcome to our Spring Newsletter, MAY 2020

Since our last Newsletter, July 2019, life for everyone has changed. Just as we were about to send out our latest news in November, the election was upon us, so we postponed. Then we were poised to pick up again as we emerged from the election, Christmas and into the New Year, and then Covid-19 was upon us, so once again, things had to be re-prioritised and the Newsletter put into suspended animation.

But we have been busy all through that time, behind the scenes and as has been possible - please check in our [website](#) for ongoing up-to-date reports. You will see that there is still a great deal going on, including current campaigns you may like to join (see more below).

Thank you for being a supporter of Hastings Community of Sanctuary and welcome to this snapshot of many (though not all!) of our activities in the months since July 2019. We hope you will explore the links (just click on them!) to our stories and share with us in building our narrative of welcome in these challenging days.



June and July 2019: PechaKucha and Refugee Tales

After June's many events (see [here](#)), including the enchanting [PechaKucha evening](#) at the De La Warr Pavilion co-curated by the Refugee Buddy project, July 2019 saw the final day of the [Refugee Tales](#) 5-day walk along the south east coast, highlighting the issue of Indefinite Immigration Detention. The packed [culminating event](#) in Kino Teatr was hosted by author Kamila Shamsie, and included deeply moving testimony from refugees who told their stories.



Walkers on Refugee Tales.

July and August 2019: Working with young people at the National Citizenship Programme

In late July and mid-August, we were invited to speak about issues of asylum to two respective cohorts of young people, totalling 160 students, attending the National Citizenship Service summer programme at Sussex University. One group continued with a special project to explore these issues further, including an interview with a local person seeking asylum in Hastings. See our report [here](#), and their own culminating excellent article which they published in our local press [here](#) and also in the EU European Youth Portal [here](#).

October 2019: Lift the Ban Campaign

On October 15th, a motion to endorse permission to work for people seeking asylum was recommended by the Lead Member Cllr Glazier to the full meeting of the East Sussex County Council. After his brief statement in support of Lift the Ban's call to the UK government 'to consider giving people seeking asylum the right to work, unconstrained by the shortage occupation list, after they have waited six months for a decision on their initial asylum claim', the motion was carried unanimously in a show of hands. This was a very welcome development in the progress of gaining cross-party support for people's right to work after 6 months, and when they have skills they wish to contribute and which we need here, as is so often the case. See our brief report of this important milestone [here](#).

Meeting with Shadow Home Secretary

In October, we also met with former Shadow home Secretary Diane Abbott on her visit to Hastings in October, and were able to voice our concerns and discuss matters of policy in Home Affairs; see our report [here](#).

Regional City of Sanctuary Gathering



Alex Ntung, keynote speaker, expert by experience.

On 26th October we hosted the Regional City of Sanctuary South East Gathering. See [here](#), and [here](#), for enthusiastic reports of this rich day of sharing experience and hearing from different expert speakers, attended by people from CoS groups from across London, St Albans, Brighton and many places in between.

January 2020: Collection for Calais, Open day for [Refugee Buddy Project](#)

On 25th January 2020, an OPEN DAY was held by the [Refugee Buddy Project](#), for people interested in joining various activities within the Project, including campaigning, buddying and working in the OPEN Café. The day included the collection by [Hastings Support Refugees](#) of food and clothing for delivery to Calais to help people in desperate conditions there, and also food for the Hastings Food Bank. The Calais collection was driven over and delivered just in time before everything changed, borders closed, and everyone was locked down.

February 2020



In February, Jane Grimshaw, co-founder of Hastings Supports Refugees, was [honoured in our local press](#) as a community legend for all her work over the past 5 years in raising awareness of refugees' situation across the Channel, and her hands-on work in direct and practical ways to help so many of those arriving here. See more [here](#).

March 2020

On 3rd March, Jay Kramer, our lead on the Lift the Ban campaign, represented HCoS at the national gathering of coalition members. [Here](#) is her report of that important meeting.

General, and Campaigning

Our wonderful Festival by the Lake was planned for the [end of Refugee Week](#) 2020, on 21st June, but sadly must of course be postponed. As soon as we know when we have a new date, we will update our information. A reminder of last year's Festival [here](#)...

The [Refugee Buddy Project](#) continues its ongoing work in supporting families arriving via the Syrian Resettlement Project, in all the activities from the OPEN café, and in their [campaigning](#). See [here](#) for how you can support their current campaign to change the narrative from hostility to welcome! This has arisen in response to the arrivals along our south coast of people seeking refuge in the UK over the past few months, some landing in or near Hastings. We have consistently expressed our support for these groups; see our recent joint statement in April, [here](#) and [here](#). [Press reporting](#) of our response, calling for empathy, has been supportive.

We have been intensifying our National Campaigns work, in particular concerning the Immigration Bill now going through its various stages in Parliament. This offers a chance for all the work done over the past few years nationally to bring in changes widely agreed to be necessary; in our [Hastings Immigration Bill Campaign](#) we are focussing in particular upon the right to work of people seeking asylum ([Lift the Ban](#)) and [ending indefinite immigration detention](#).

We are also supporting at this moment a multi-organisation campaign to increase financial support for people seeking asylum, many of whom simply cannot manage in the current Covid-19 crisis. If you could consider writing a brief letter to your MP to add your support for this campaign, we would be most grateful. Please see [here](#) for how to do this.

We are all continuing to work in many ways across our community as best we can in this unprecedented time of disruption and, for our new fellow residents, particularly stressful and difficult times. If you would like any more information about our work, please email info@hastings.cityofsanctuary.org

For enquiries about the Refugee Buddy Project: Hastings, Rother & Wealde please email info@therefugeebuddyproject.org

For enquiries about OPEN Creative Café and Gallery Space please email khadija@therefugeebuddyproject.org
