

We stand Together with Ukraine

(Waddesdon Hall update)

This project has grown enormously. Just highlight the main activities:

Collection of the donation to Ukraine

This is still ongoing and we use the hall meeting room to organise the donations. Collections are on weekly basis and 4 volunteers are involved permanently.

Community Hub (previously called Tuesday Coffee Morning)

The first session was run on 26/04/22 and since then we have run 19 sessions. These sessions were run by volunteers and we estimate that in total circa **200 volunteer hours** have been put into this. Furthermore, donations of tea/coffee/cakes and biscuits have helped out. The only costs involved with this were the hall hire and transport. In partnership with Bernie the Bus, the Hall received a grant from the Heart of Bucks Foundation to cover the hall hire cost and transport of the refugees to the Hall. This grant covered the period April 2022- September 2022.

Moving forward for the Community Hub:

The Ukrainian refugees asked me if the Hall can keep the Community Hub (which have moved to Thursday evenings) going as they feel it provides a safe place that they have every week to share experiences and build support amongst themselves. Additionally, they ask if during this time they could use both the meeting room and main hall.

The plan is that the community group will meet in the meeting room and they would like to run yoga classes and set up a drama group in the hall. I discussed this project with the Rothschild Foundation and asked them to support this initiative with a grant to cover 10 months of this project.

All support groups are run and based on volunteers; no other cost is involved other than the cost of hire. Every Thursday we have volunteers at the hub that provide every kind of support: from filling in the forms for the refugees; giving advice on activities or just to provide a listening ear and share in laughter and crying. All my volunteers that work closely with the refugees (where some of them are very vulnerable) are DBS checked and trained in how to deal with trauma. I have a close group of 5 of them that are sharing the responsibilities.

Therapy sessions and Workshops

From May to August therapy sessions and workshops were run at the hall. We were very fortunate that the sessions were run by a therapist with war trauma experience and this service was very popular and in high demand. For the therapy sessions made available to the refugees, the hall was granted **£2,000** from the Heart of Bucks Foundation and **£5,000** from the Rothschild Foundation, totalling **£7,000** towards the therapy sessions.

This part of project proved to be very successful for the refugees but is also very expensive to run, and funding finished earlier than expected.

Moving forward for the Therapy sessions and Workshops

After the money to fund this part of the overall project ran out, I had a meeting with the Rothschild Foundation and we discussed the needs of the project and its continuity. We agreed that our current therapist wasn't able to guarantee continuity and we are ready to work closely with other charities that provide different types of service and work with refugees. For example, we are in touch with the Stephen Spender Trust who deliver creative translation projects. They are currently running a language programme with the Ukrainian group in Chesham funded by Bucks Council, and may be able to bring the same support to Waddesdon with funding from the Rothschild Foundation.

The project is run in schools and with community groups and brings Ukrainian refugees and their British hosts and friends together to share and translate Ukrainian poetry and books. The project creates a wonderful safe space to share culture and develop language skills. We are talking with Waddesdon Secondary School and Waddesdon Primary to work together on that project.

Ukrainian Independence Day

On Wednesday 24th August, a new **Ukrainian Memorial Garden** was opened by Lord Rothschild at the Hall. A Kalyna Tree, the national symbol of Ukraine, was planted by Lord Rothschild's grandson, Edoardo Tomassini, as part of the commemoration.

In addition, the Ukrainian community held a fete to celebrate **Ukrainian Independence Day**, inviting the local community to thank them all for their continued support during their integration into the UK. Over 120 people joined the party, sampling national Ukrainian dishes, drinks, live music, art exhibition and a craft display.

It was a very moving and emotional event, and I personally am delighted that we had a special Guest of Honour present, giving his time to the event.