



Sorry for the lack of news, we've been busy!

Since the last newsletter in September, a lot has happened. *Somerset Supports Ukraine*, a new charity set up by the (now) previous Lord-Lieutenant of Somerset, Annie Maw, welcomed bids from projects that had failed to get County Council funding, and our bid to them received a very positive response. They did not have the funds to pay for everything we asked for but they gave us enough to ensure we can carry out our core functions for the next six months.

Next we received a discrete phone call asking how we'd feel about having a Royal visitor? We said yes, of course, and then learned quite how much planning and organisation was required...!

A Royal Visitor!

So it came about that on the 9 November, St Andrew's church in Wiveliscombe hosted the most wonderful tea party. In addition to about 100 Ukrainian guests, hosts and active supporters, Wivey welcomed the present and previous Lord-Lieutenants of Somerset, the High Sheriff, the Chairs of the County and District Councils, the Heads of our local schools and community organisations plus, of course, Her Royal Highness Sophie, the Countess of Wessex.

Everyone who spoke to the Countess found her to be warm, well informed, and a joy to meet: she was very affirming of what we have all been doing. The whole occasion showed the Wivey area at its best, and will be remembered for a long time to come. The hospitality team at St Andrew's pulled out all the stops and offered delicious Ukrainian and British refreshments, all beautifully presented, and the *In Ecclesia* choir sang the very moving *Ukrainian Prayer*.



As well as the affirmation of such a visit it was a great opportunity to communicate the joys and challenges of life in a rural area such as ours to all the civic guests: we hope that some tangible outcomes result from this as well.



Other News

68 Ukrainians have now arrived in the Wivey area through the *Homes for Ukraine* scheme, though one family of three has returned to Ukraine. Three families have moved into rented accommodation, leaving 21 families or individuals with hosts. Although the war on the ground has been going well for Ukraine, particularly with the liberation of Kherson, life for civilians remains difficult as power supplies and other infrastructure targets are targeted by missiles, leaving many homes without heat or electricity for long periods of time.

Some families are reaching the end of the six months they committed to: there is an ongoing need for accommodation to rent AND for new UK hosts to accommodate new arrivals from Ukraine and those having to move on from their current hosts. If you are in a position to help, please do get in touch.

Meanwhile the English lessons and welcome hub remain well attended and highly valued by all who attend. Looking ahead, Christmas will be an especially poignant time for our guests, and we are looking into a Christmas party and bilingual carol service. There is always lots to do, so if you can help in any way please do send us an email or come along to the Thursday cafe. Let's give the last words to the Countess of Wessex; we were moved to hear her say

Had the shoe been on the other foot, we would all be looking to friendly countries like Ukraine to take us in. You are providing something beyond any monetary value and I thank you.

First sent on 14 November 2022 Wivey Welcomes Refugees

Wivey Welcome Refugees is a Community Association formed on 01/04/22 with the aim of coordinating the welcome for refugees across the wider Wiveliscombe area. We are affiliated to Taunton Welcomes Refugees, registered charity no. 1183921 . Peter Pearson (Chair), Mirren Boyle (Secretary), Tom Fox (Treasurer), Steering group: Mark Blaker, (Town Council Refugee Champion), Dr Rosie Riley, Ann-Marie Paterson, Eddie East, Julia Hatfield, Tony Hartmann

If you would like to support our work financially please either make cheques out to 'Wiveliscombe Welcomes Refugees' or BACS transfers made to sort code 30-98-97, account number 85902463. If you would like to gift aid your donation please ask us how to do this. If you would like to subscribe to our newsletters, please email us at wiveywelcomes@gmail.com

Photo credits this week Martin Valuks. The rainbow appeared shortly before the Countess of Wessex!