TAUNTON WELCOMES REFUGEES

CHAIR'S REPORT – Year ending April 2026

Over the past year we have seen an increase in violent public protest targeted at people who are immigrants to the UK, or seeking asylum in this country, and an increase in support for anti-immigration political parties. Government policy and legislation now aims to limit immigration and make it more difficult to achieve settled status.

At TWR we believe that people seeking refuge from the horrors of war and persecution deserve to be treated with compassion and respect and that offering a supportive welcome to them is of benefit both to them and to the host community. We continue to seek practical ways in which to do this.

TWR was founded to support first Syrian and then Afghani refugees resettled here on government sponsored schemes and on people fleeing from the war in Ukraine. This work continues but as people have become more integrated and with these schemes ending there are now fewer people involved. In recent years a large number of people seeking asylum have been housed in a former hotel and the focus of our work switched to supporting them. With the announcement of the imminent closure of this facility we are now switching our focus to the support of those in dispersal accommodation. We do not know what the future will be but sadly it seems unlikely be a future without the war, famine and persecution that forces people to uproot from their homelands and seek sanctuary elsewhere.

It is important that our work is co-ordinated with that of other bodies. To this end we have regular contact with the council and in particular work closely with Thrive who manage Hubs for displaced persons across Somerset. We meet periodically with the manager of the Displaced Person's team for our area and also have a regular invitation to the county wide multi agency meetings that occur every two months. This enables us to be better informed in an area where policy and practice can be changed suddenly and with little notice. Other partner working has included the outreach team at the Brewhouse Theatre, Prodigal Bikes who help us in finding bikes for our clients and for many years we have worked with RAFT who supplied 1300 orders for occupants at J24 hotel.

Befriending Circles for Settled Refugees

Supporting families with befriending circles was the key activity with which we started about 10 years ago. In the earlier days we had as many as 7 circles running concurrently. As our coffee and conversation offer started, the focus for some of our volunteers changed as the importance of improving English Language for day to day living became clear. Changes in Government policy also meant that the number of new families arriving from Syria reduced and then stopped whilst for a while there were new families from Afghanistan. The Afghan scheme has now also closed. We currently have three befriending circles that are active and these will probably close within the next twelve months. For the future there is an expectation that there might be two or three new families for which befriending support might be useful. These will be families from Afghanistan for whom it has not yet been possible to find housing. If the families want befriending circle support we will do out best to help. Apart from this, during the

year we have supplied one to one language support within four different families. This is an experiment which we are thinking of growing where we can.

Coffee and Conversation
We have continued to run Coffee and Conversation sessions twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays. There is a small management team to ensure the smooth running of both groups with the aim of matching our guests one to one with native English speakers. As well as the benefit of conversation there is also opportunity at the sessions for refugees to meet, socialise and support each other. Numbers attending have varied but averaged 15 per session and include both settled refugees and people seeking asylum.

In April 2025 we had a visit from the NHS Breast Screening Service, in June we took our guests to the Museum of Somerset for a guided tour and in March 2026 a team from Sari in Bristol came to talk to the group.

People seeking asylum
TWR has continued to visit the former hotel being used to house people seeking asylum in North Petherton twice a week on Mondays and Thursdays. The support mainly consists of helping residents fill out clothing request forms for Raft, writing letters to the bank to enable them to open a bank account, translating and explaining documents and general reassurance and emotional support. Since getting the news that the hotel will be fully closed in July, numbers have been dropping rapidly as people have been dispersed across the U.K.

We still have some locally dispersed asylum seekers attending Coffee and Conversation, but we are aware that there are many more people in the area who we have no contact with. Our challenge going forward will be making contact with these people and seeing how we can support them.

Refugee Week 2025
On 21st June 2025 we organised a party to mark Refugee Week. With some support from Taunton Town Council we hired the Castle House at the Museum of Somerset. Kotob Daoud played the oud and food was provided by our refugee friends and volunteers. The Community arts foundation GoCreate had a table where people could create badges and artworks to take home.
Many people seeking asylum housed at the former hotel came as well as many of our resettled families. It was a joyful event for all of us.

Theatre visit
In December the Brewhouse Theatre donated 30 tickets for the Christmas family show “The Nutcracker” and we were able to organise transport from the former hotel. “I am so happy to see this example of English culture” was the response of one man from Afghanistan.

Dunster Castle

In April we took a coach party of both settled refugees and families seeking asylum for a picnic and tour of Dunster Castle. The weather was pleasant, the picnic became a feast and friendships blossomed.

Shared Roots
On the 18th April 2026 Taunton Town Council organised an event called Shared Roots as part of their City of Sanctuary commitment. They hosted a party at the Brewhouse theatre in Taunton, food was supplied by refugees and cake provided by the Without Borders cafe. GoCreate had various arts and crafts activities to take part in. Andy Spragg from the Sanga house led an impromptu Tai Chi session, which helped to break the ice! TWR helped by organising the refund of bus tickets to enable people to attend from Bridgwater and Wellington.

IT Training
In March and April we teamed up with COSMIC, an IT training company who delivered a seven session course covering basic IT skills to a small group during our coffee and conversation sessions. The skilled trainer was able to tailor the course to the needs of the individuals all of whom made dramatic progress and gave very positive feedback.

Training
During the reporting year, we delivered one volunteer training event in October, attended by approximately 10 participants. Following the training, most prospective volunteers expressed interest in undertaking a range of roles within the organisation during post-training interviews.
The majority of participants preferred to support the twice-weekly Coffee and Conversation sessions in Taunton. As only a small number of new volunteers expressed interest in supporting newly arrived families through befriending circle work, the Volunteer Management Group has decided to postpone further volunteer training until September 2026.
We will continue to encourage prospective volunteers to consider the befriending role as part of our commitment to strengthening this important area of service delivery alongside the established Coffee and Conversation sessions.

Safeguarding
We take our safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. Our safeguarding lead renewed her Advanced Child Protection update in November 2025. Since April 2025 she has delivered 6 online safeguarding refresher courses to volunteers.
There have been 4 safeguarding concerns logged since April 2025, 2 of them were raised with other agencies.

Volunteers
TWR is a volunteer based organisation. Everything we do is based on the hard work, dedication, compassion and warm heartedness of our amazing group of volunteers. Our volunteers have varied backgrounds and a range of skills but we all share a desire to live in a compassionate society and a determination to work towards achieving it. At present this group runs to about 60 including our Trustees. Some are able to contribute

to Coffee Session and to have worked at the hotel, whilst others support families. We also have support with fundraising, questions of how the law applies for refugees and asylum seekers, IT and with organisational aspects of the work we do. Whilst much of this work is energising and enjoyable occasionally it may spread over into more harrowing areas and the load that some volunteers have carried has been considerable. To all of them we offer our very considerable thanks.

Eddie East and Simon Forrester June 2026

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of	Charity Name Taunton Welcomes Refugees		
On accounts for the year ended	31 March 2026	**Charity no (if any)**	1183921
Set out on pages	1 - 2 (remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)		

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31 March 2026.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

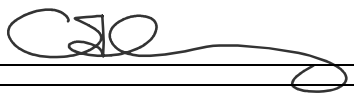
Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (other than that disclosed below *) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

* *Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:		**Date:**	23/06/2026
Name:	Christopher Cherry		
Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):	FCCA		
Address:	3 Marco Polo House, Cook Way, Taunton, Somerset, TA2 6BJ		

Section B	Disclosure
	Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).
Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.	

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Taunton Welcomes Refugees	1183921

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	01-Apr-25	To	31-Mar-26

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Individual Donations	2,070	-	-	2,070	1,165
Institutional Donations	565	-	-	565	2,053
Grants	-	37,805	-	37,805	17,461
Gift Aid Claim	-	-	-	-	565
Cards & Calendars	-	-	-	-	213
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
***Sub total** (Gross income for AR)*	2,635	37,805	-	40,440	21,457
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	2,635	37,805	-	40,440	21,457
A3 Payments					
Co-ordinator	-	12,667	-	12,667	12,824
IT	-	-	-	-	45
Volunteer Meetings	156	861	-	1,017	1,124
Management	38	638	-	676	832
Other	73	-		73	331
Fundraising			-	-	-
Publicity			-	-	-
Conversation Taunton	245	5,646		5,891	8,421
Conversation Bridgwater				-	-
English for Ukrainians		4,535		4,535	12,609
Asylum Support	-			-	119
Grants to Clients	426	452	-	878	-
Refugee Week		417	-	417	-
Minehead	-	-	-	-	225
Sub total	938	25,216	-	26,154	36,530
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	
		-	-	-	
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	938	25,216	-	26,154	36,530
Net of receipts/(payments)	1,697	12,589	-	14,286	- 15,073
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	2,112	896	-	3,008	3,008
Cash funds this year end	3,809	13,485	-	17,294	- 12,065

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

B1 Cash funds

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
	Main account	3,789	13,485	-
	Public account	20	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	3,809	13,485	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

B2 Other monetary assets

Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-

B3 Investment assets

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
Projector		152	-
Display Boards		144	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

B5 Liabilities

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
	Robin Peeler	