

Refugee stories to be heard in Wales – in their own words

08/08/2014



Members of Oasis Cardiff

The project will be run by Oasis Cardiff, a registered charity based in Cardiff established as a centre providing support for refugees and asylum seekers.

Announcing the award, Jennifer Stewart Head of HLF Wales, said: “This creative project will help real stories be told, not just in Cardiff but throughout Wales. It will reach an audience who may not have contact with refugees, and will raise awareness of their stories, their rich cultural heritage and their positive impact on modern Welsh society.

“The story of refugees is part of the rich heritage and culture of Wales. For well over a century, refugees have found a safe home in Wales, especially in the ports and valleys of South Wales. In the nineteenth century, Jewish refugees fleeing persecution in Russia and Eastern Europe settled in our main city ports of Cardiff, Newport and Swansea.

The response was the same during the conflicts of the first half of the last century, as people sought refuge in Wales as a result of the First World War, the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. Jews fleeing Nazi persecution, and communities of Belgians, Spaniards, Poles and Italians have all added a rich complexity to the life and heritage of our nation.

“It’s time their story was told in their own voices.”

With the support of St Fagan’s National History Museum, and the advice of Amgueddfa Cymru, the two-year project will appoint a part time coordinator to work with refugees and asylum seekers exploring their roots in both countries, home lives, cultural traditions, arrival and integration with the Welsh community. This will include recording their experiences of past and current life, and collecting any relevant objects.

The Project Coordinator will work with volunteers from Oasis Cardiff and the refugee community over two years to support and develop skills relating to collecting objects, recording and archiving filmed interviews.

With Coordinator guidance, the volunteers will record their stories on camera and create information panels for exhibition purposes alongside a number of digital stories. These will all travel on a touring exhibition, supported by a related series of events, to a number of local authority museums around Wales.

The material will also be placed on the web, and will finally be archived at St Fagans: National History Museum.

Commenting on the award Reynette Roberts from Oasis Cymru said: “We are delighted that so many stories will now be brought to life through this award which will help give voice to many people whose voices have not previously been heard. This project will enable both host community and refugee and asylum seeker communities to remove the barriers separating them, and will add to the understanding of people who engage with the project.”

Commenting on the award, Assembly Member for South Wales Central and Leader of Plaid Cymru Leanne Wood said: “Congratulations to Oasis Cardiff on being awarded a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. I hope the project will lead to a better understanding of the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers among people as a whole.”

Notes to editors

Oasis is a registered charity based in Cardiff established in 2008 as a centre providing support for refugees and asylum seekers. They are managed by Trustees and have 6 board members.

Plans for the project include:

- Appointment of a Project Coordinator for two years (part time)
- Train five people in oral history (Oral History Society)
- Volunteers to attend training in digital technology training,(editing and camera work), exhibitions, archiving, interpretation and engaging with a range of diverse audiences.(Amgueddfa Cymru)
- Mental health training, and training in dealing with vulnerable adults (Oasis)
- Film stories and memories of a number of refugees and asylum seekers
- Produce a touring exhibition comprising panels and digital material
- Launch the exhibition at a local museum and then tour the exhibition around Wales.(Material to then be archived at St Fagans: National History Museum)

- Examples to be uploaded onto Amgueddfa Cymru's website and The People Collection Wales.
- Project evaluation (on-going throughout)