



aims to promote the welfare of refugees & asylum seekers in and beyond the Lewes District by:

- raising awareness of issues relating to refugees and asylum seekers
- providing practical help and responding to local issues as they arise
- advocating and lobbying to improve the rights of refugees and asylum seekers

The group initially met in January 2002 for anyone interested in the issues of migration, asylum and safe refuge, from a perspective of human rights and civic responsibilities. LOSRAS became a charity and adopted its new name in October 2017.

Membership is open to all who share these aims, irrespective of personal affiliations or beliefs.

This year LOSRAS celebrates 20 years of active work.

Overview of the year: low points and highlights

Low points:

- The government-fuelled hostility to refugees and asylum seekers becomes even more brutal with the Nationalities and Borders Bill enacted through parliament.
- Russian invasion of Ukraine causes mass displacement of women and children – the UK government responds slowly and imposes a cumbersome visa system.
- The government response to people arriving by boat across the Channel becomes ever more inhumane.
- The policy of deporting refugees to Rwanda, orchestrated by Priti Patel is likely to be vigorously pursued by the new Home Secretary, Suella Braverman.
- Afghan refugees evacuated to the UK remain stuck in inappropriate hotel accommodation one year after they are forced to flee Taliban takeover of power. Afghans continue to remain in country at immense risk without UK government safe passage as promised.

High points:

- We celebrate our 20th anniversary.
- We continue to strengthen as a charity – consolidating existing activities post-Covid (e.g. in local schools, the Lewes Prison, local family support etc.) and with trustees assuming specific roles and responsibilities.
- Post-Covid we re-establish in-person meetings and events such as the annual plant sale and open meetings.
- We join the 400-strong Together with Refugees coalition against the Nationalities and Borders Bill.
- Despite the inadequacies in the Government response, Homes for Ukraine (HfU) is set up. To date, more than 900 Ukrainian people have arrived to host families in the Lewes District.
- We extend our reach by taking on an ESCC supported role advising and supporting the HfU scheme across the Lewes district.

Month by month...

October: A Together with Refugees orange heart campaign event was held locally to protest the Nationalities and Borders Bill. A group from Lewes also attended the London rally to protest the Bill. In October, a vigil held in Seaford commemorated refugee lives lost at sea; the deaths of BAME people at the hands of the police and the criminal justice system; and the disproportionate number of deaths of black NHS workers from Covid. The vigil was especially poignant given the deaths in November of 27 people who were attempting to cross the Channel to reach safety.

December: Zoom interview with Gulwali Passarlay who discussed the Anti-Refugee Bill in the context of his own journey as an Afghan asylum seeker, the journey he recounts in his book, *The Lightless Sky*.

January: Marks the 20-year anniversary of LOSRAS

March: UN Anti-Racism Day event in Newhaven - a large and local anti-racist alliance gathered in Newhaven harbour on March 20th to demonstrate against racism and the anti-refugee Nationality and Borders Bill. March also saw LOSRAS organise a well-attended meeting in the Town Hall to inform and support potential host families for the HfU scheme.

May: Successful fund-raising plant sale at the Linklater Pavilion.

June: Robyn Phillips of the Human Trafficking Foundation, gave an excellent talk at Friends Meeting House on Modern Slavery and the implications of the Nationalities and Borders Act. We held a 'Plant a seed stall' in Lewes precinct as part of Refugee Week.

September: Presentation on 'Rwanda: the Reality and Rhetoric' by Naomi Blackwell (Jesuit Refugee Service) and Majeda Korbane (Human for Rights Network) described the impact the policy is having on individuals facing potential deportation to Rwanda and the increasing use of detention. September also saw a large local turnout to protest the Rwanda Policy at the Royal Courts of Justice.

Local support work

Our work with families in the Lewes District continues. Families are more established but ESOL, homework tutoring, and general support continues to support eight families (40 people) across the district.

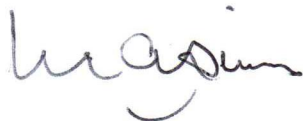
Homes for Ukraine: LOSRAS becomes instrumental in providing support and guidance to the HfU scheme. We have been liaising with Lewes Town and District Councils, ESCC and 3VA and updating information to hosts. We secure a grant from ESCC to organise a range of activities including supporting hosts and guests with ESOL lessons, holiday activities and general advice. We have now taken on the organisation of the English classes and are always looking for additional tutors. Hosts were asked to commit for an initial period of six months and for many this has now come to an end. There is therefore an urgent need for more hosts. While LOSRAS is not involved in the matching process, we can direct any potential hosts to the right place.

Foreign National Visitors scheme at Lewes prison continues to develop particularly since Lewes Prison came out of Covid measures. Over the year we have visited 20 foreign national prisoners fearful of deportation; some we see once, but many appreciate ongoing visits. Currently we are visiting six people. Sometimes we have been able to signpost prisoners to Immigration legal support, and we work in partnership with the Migration Law Clinic at Sussex University. We have a constructive relationship with the Diversity Lead, the Chaplaincy and the Librarians at HMP Lewes, and have been able to provide the library with materials to support the desperate needs of foreign national prisoners for legal information.

GRANTS	2022	2021
Hummingbird	500	500
Brighton Housing Trust	500	500
Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group	500	500
Enthum House	500	500
Migrant English Project	500	500
Brighton Voices in Exile	500	500
Asylum Support Appeals Project	500	500
K4k	500	500
Detention Action	1,000	-
	<u>£5,000</u>	<u>£4,000</u>

Being: General funds		7,117		3,815
Restricted funds (H4U)		13,415		-

Tony Sims – Honorary Treasurer



4th September 2022

Checked and confirmed correct by Heide Chaffey



14th September 2022