

## BRITISH HUMANITARIAN AID NEWS JUNE 2017

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### AID DONATIONS

We would like to offer our sincere thanks to all those, whether they be individuals, schools, churches, organisations, communities or businesses that have continued to support us so generously this year.



Collection at E.Suffolk W.I. AGM

In December, we sent out a lorry of aid and in March a further two despite struggling with a lack of funds. The last of these was really a question of self-preservation as the warehouse was too full to accept your generous collections. These are greatly needed as the problem of the “internally displaced persons” has not gone away. It would be good to send out a further lorry in June, but of course this depends upon our funds. We have employed a company that specialises in advising on finding grants and have hopefully applied to 18 organisations. It will be interesting to see whether these are more successful than our own previous efforts.



BHA Warehouse

### AID DISTRIBUTION

Chernihiv Region is still trying to cope with 14,000 of these refugees. In addition, the economic situation has continued to worsen with almost all prices rising steeply. As expected, when the minimum wage rose to 62p(!) per hour. in January, there were many who either lost their jobs or had seriously reduced hours.



Aid distribution Gorodnya

In Chernihiv Region around 55%, including pensioners, do not have work and with no increase in pensions it is considered that about 80% of the population live below or near the poverty line. During the April visit a lorry load of aid was distributed to several Districts by BHA.

Recently, several people have asked “Why do you send aid to Ukraine”. Over the Christmas holiday period our website was revamped and a new video added which deals with the current problems.

Chernihiv Aratta continues to be an invaluable support in all dealings with the authorities, especially when dealing with the farcical regulations imposed on handling and distributing aid. They have also opened a day club for young handicapped adults, many of whom also attend the weekly PHAB drama group.

### REORGANISATIONS

It has been decided to completely reorganise the administrative structure of the Districts. In typical Ukrainian fashion, they appear to have issued no firm plan as to how the restructuring should proceed. The existing village councils are expected to be abolished to be replaced by one representative. The villages will then be combined into sort of sub-districts with a council formed from the village representatives. It was interesting, therefore, to talk to the people currently responsible in the communities in the various Districts that we visited.

The approaches differ widely! In one place the Social Service workers believe they are awaiting their redundancy notices when they are replaced by a “telephone information service”.



Village family Korop District

In another, the district will be split into two “communities” and they think there will be social services for both. In a third, there will be three sub-districts apparently served by the existing services. As with most plans that are announced, there appears to be no one with the responsibility of overseeing that these changes improve the quality of life of the ordinary citizen.

As a great deal of our work is done through the existing Social

Services, Territorial Centres for the Elderly and Village Councils Aratta and BHA are now going to have to work out how we cope with the new situation. The scrapping of salaried village councils appears to be purely a money saving exercise.

### VAGANICHI HOME



During March, we were able to have a meeting with the Head of Gorodnya Region, her Deputy and the Planning Officer. After all the work that had supposedly been done by our local contact, to sort out the land attached to the home, it was interesting to find that these people were unaware of our project. Positive steps have now been taken, in that they have agreed that the home would be of benefit to the region, and that a mapping of the village is underway. That should resolve the land problems.

It is now fairly certain that the village's church community will take on the responsibility for the home. There is about a month's work needed to finish the conversion of the school building.



Staff bedroom at Home

### TRANSPORT

While we actually send the aid to Ukraine on hired 40 tonne trucks, the distribution of the "cleared" aid

in the region is problematic. Our current approach is to go out when all the paper work is completed and to deliver the loads to the agreed destinations ourselves. While this is a hassle it does have the great benefit of our being able to monitor the levels of enthusiasm and competence of the recipients. In the middle of last year, following consultations between Aratta and the Chernihiv Customs, I went ahead and personally bought a decent left-hand drive van to export to Ukraine.



The aim of this was twofold. By removing the 3200ml round trip it would save both the equivalent of a month's unproductive driving and also the considerable cost of the fuel for such journeys. Imagine my horror when we submitted the documents and were informed that I had been given the wrong information and would be liable for huge import tax. It took a long time to get them to sort this out but eventually it was and the van was imported into, and licenced, in Ukraine in April.



The old van, following a gearbox rebuild, was then recovered from Ukraine. As it had been out of the UK for nearly a year I booked it

for an MOT. Although it had driven back from Chernihiv, apparently without problems, the combination of age (10yrs), mileage (250,000) and the appalling roads had taken their toll and led to a massively expensive MOT fail. In view of the work it has done I suppose I should not have been surprised.



Into the unknown!

### PARENTS' VOICE CENTRE

It was a shock to find that the promised roof repairs had not been carried out and that much of the initial redecoration had been spoilt by water seepage following the winter snows. However, it was a great joy to see the various modifications, to improve access and facilities for the several wheelchair users, were well underway. We have helped with much of the furniture they needed and have made a contribution to the alterations.

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