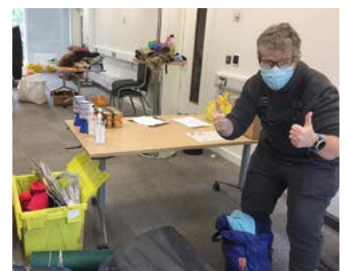


CAMBRIDGE CONVOY REFUGEE ACTION GROUP



Cambridge Convoy Refugee Action Group

Annual Report 2020 - 2021

Published 21 October 2021

available online at camcrag.org.uk/docs/annualreport2021.pdf

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CamCrag Trustees (on 21 October 2021)

David Adamson
Elizabeth Stephan
Karam Alkatlabe
Tony King
Ed Sexton

Terry Spencer
Ian Tod
Catharine Walston
Marissa Green (Chair)

Published 21 October 2021

Small Company Charity Provisions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities (FRS102) (effective 01/01/2016) and in accordance with the special provisions for small companies under Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

Cambridge Convoy Refugee Action Group

Registered Charity Number 1170180

c/o Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum

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Cambridge

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www.camcrag.org.uk



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INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR

I would like to begin by acknowledging the dedication, commitment, and energy of Elliot Harris who stepped down as Chair of Trustees and as a Trustee this year. Elliot's work with CamCrag has guided the charity over the past five years to the position it is in today. CamCrag work tirelessly to make a difference to the lives of refugees and Elliot was a huge driver in igniting and maintaining the passion we continue to nurture. Elliot stepped down so that he can focus on logistics through the Aid Hub and CamCrag wish him the absolute best of luck with all of his endeavours and look forward to moving forwards with him as an active and valued volunteer.

The unprecedented events of 2020-21 impacted all charitable organisations in ways we couldn't even imagine, and we had to adapt our way of supporting refugees with convoys becoming impossible. During the pandemic CamCrag formed a logistical network with other NGOs in the UK and overseas, which has enabled us to send donations in bulk to where they are needed (see the Donations section).

We intend to continue collecting and packing donations, and have funds allocated for shipment. Much of this aid will be sent to the eastern Mediterranean, where there are large numbers of refugees stuck in Greece, Lebanon and elsewhere. We also built up reserve funds during the pandemic due to decreased spending, and have formed a financial aid working group to investigate how to distribute these funds with the greatest impact. For example, we are planning on sending funds to legal aid charities in Greece.

As we recover from the pandemic, CamCrag is ready to face the challenges of the future, both the predictable and the unknown. We are resuming our convoys to Calais, giving people a direct way to help refugees on our doorstep and experience how volunteer NGOs operate. Coming on a convoy is the best way to directly understand the impacts of the refugee crisis and what lies at the heart of CamCrag. We will continue to ensure that convoys remain a priority over the next financial year.

Even with this encouraging update, it is vital that we remember the refugee crisis has not gone away. There are still refugees in Calais, Dunkirk and throughout Europe. Some are in camps, some sleep where they can but no matter where they are sleeping they are most likely traumatised, scared, and uncertain of their futures. No human deserves to live this way. Recent events in Afghanistan has once again brought the issue into media focus and has drawn attention to anti-refugee rhetoric in both the general public and governments in countries poised to accept even more displaced populations. This only highlights how vital the support of our volunteers and donors really is.

Next month CamCrag celebrates five years as a registered charity, and five years since the Calais Jungle was evicted. Since then a lot has happened, both in the world and at CamCrag. We have taken hundreds of volunteers to Calais on over 30 convoys, and they have worked for thousands of hours with the NGOs helping refugees on the ground. The wonderful people of Cambridge and beyond have donated over £150,000, the majority of which we have spent on direct aid for refugees. We have also had small policy successes. For example, last November Cambridge City Council agreed to resettle 200 more refugees in and around the city following an online petition.

Now it is time to look forward and, with your help, refocus our efforts on the lives of refugees who have risked so much to seek security, safety, and a life free from fear and terror.

Marissa Green

WHAT IS CAMCRAG?

We organise volunteers who live in and around Cambridge to help refugees in Northern France and elsewhere.

We send regular convoys of volunteers to Europe, and we carry out activities in the UK to raise awareness.

We raise funds and organise donations of clothing and other items.

All the money we raise goes towards providing aid to the refugees or supporting our convoys.

Cambridge Convoy Refugee Action Group grew out of a FaceBook group set up in 2015 in response to the growing refugee crisis, and in particular the large number of migrants in Calais. Volunteers began to combine resources to organise trips to Calais to deliver aid they collected in and around Cambridge, and spend a day or weekend helping the NGOs working in the area.

Originally called 'Cambridge Calais Refugee Action Group', we changed our name in 2016 as our focus widened to the refugee crisis throughout Europe. In November of that year we became a charity and have continued to follow our founding aim of helping people to help others. We've run convoys, collected and sorted donations, and taken part in numerous fundraising and one-off projects, such as our sponsored sleepouts in Cambridge, or buying winter clothing and sleeping bags for Paris.

We fundraise not only to finance our convoys but also to provide direct funding to frontline organisations, such as Refugee Community Kitchen and WaterShed, particularly in response to crises when we can release funds faster than many organisations.

As a charity we are overseen by a board of trustees (see the inside front cover or the charity commission website for a list of our trustees). The trustees are responsible for the conduct and finances of the charity, and meet every three months. They oversee an executive committee, drawn from our volunteers, which runs the day to day operations of the charity, and usually meets monthly. Roles on the executive committee include the various coordinators of donations, fundraising, convoys and communications.

None of our trustees or volunteers are paid or receive benefits from the charity.

We are always interested in hearing from anyone who may want to become a trustee, or become involved in the administration of the charity in other ways: In the first instance please email volunteer@camcrag.org.uk

We would like to thank all of our supporters and supporters. In particular we extend a special thank you to the following who have helped us this year...

Revd Ank Rigelsford, Sheila & all at St Giles' Church

Beth from Safe Passage

Avalon from Distribute Aid

Craig from Refugees4Refugees

Adrian Matthews and Alexa Netty

The Shak Shack

Care4Humanity

People in Motion

Our World Collective

The Jumping Beans

...and thank you to these organisations for their continued collaboration, we look forward to working with you in the year ahead!

Distribute Aid

Collective Aid

Refugee Community Kitchen

The Aid Hub

The Calais Food Collective

The Daily Bread Co-Operative

The Daily Bread Co-Operative are once again able to receive small quantities of donations - find out more about donating goods and money at camcrag.org.uk/donating

CONVOYS

As we write this we are three days away from our first volunteer convoy to Calais since March 2020 when Covid brought an abrupt change to, well, most things. We hope this marks the start of us returning to our regular schedule of organising weekend trips every six weeks or so.

Our convoys leave Cambridge on Friday evenings and return Sunday evenings, usually made up of two dozen volunteers between a few cars. CamCrag arranges the car share and the youth hostel in Calais, and we pay for the ferry or train crossing, leaving volunteers to just pay for accommodation, a contribution to petrol, and food - though we often get an excellent lunch from Refugee Community Kitchen (RCK).

We usually work with either RCK or Collective Aid in Calais, and volunteers could be asked to do anything from chopping onions to fixing tents or sorting donations. Aid charities in Calais and Dunkirk continue to support about refugees and migrants and have been doing so in very challenging and restrictive conditions: So we are very pleased to be starting up convoys again to offer our much needed help.

Coming on a convoy is an excellent way of providing direct support to refugees, as well as understanding more about the crisis and how volunteer NGOs are responding to it. Charlie has been to Calais over three times and intends to keep going when he can:

"I know how rewarding on a personal level the experience is. My most personal reflection would be how difficult it must be for the thousands who risk everything to flee from situations we cannot comprehend, suffer deprivation and despair continually on their journey only to be met and treated with next to no compassion when they arrive.

Anything that organisations such as CamCrag do to help alleviate these difficulties is incredibly important. Being able to offer assistance to the long term volunteers who selflessly give up everything to spend months helping others feels very rewarding."

"We were really impressed by the scale of what's being achieved by a small number of people and limited resources."



Volunteers on our March 2020 convoy, the last one we were able to hold until September of this year

It can be daunting if you are considering coming for the first time, but Maggie and Sara, our Convoy Coordinators, will answer any questions you may have and guide you through the application process.

Adrian and Claire reflected on their first convoy:

"We were both really impressed by the scale of what's being achieved by a small number of people and limited resources. Even though we were first timers we were kept busy and felt as though we were contributing for the short time we were there."

Maddy also thinks it is a valuable experience for learning more about the crisis:

"Being in Calais makes you realise what an amazing difference people working together can make, providing hot meals and clothing to people in need. I loved being a part of it and everyone should go so they can understand what is behind the news."

You can find out more information, including the dates of future convoys, on our website at camcrag.org.uk/convoys

If you have any questions please do email us on convoys@camcrag.org.uk

STOP PRESS! Registration for our next convoy on 12 to 14 November is now open via the website. We have one more provisional convoy weekend planned for 2021 on 17 to 19 December.

VOLUNTEERS

All our volunteer activities during the year July 2020 to June 2021 were severely limited by COVID restrictions. We were prevented from sending any convoys to Calais and we managed only two face-to-face fundraising events. However, it takes more than a pandemic to stop our wonderful volunteers and, be it online or in the virtual world, they have continued to support us throughout.

The one consistent activity throughout the year has been the collection, sorting, washing, mending and parcelling up of donations, ready for transport to Calais, Greece and Lebanon. During the summer and autumn of 2020 our supporters held fortnightly collection days in various churches in Cambridge. The November lockdown prevented us from working together indoors and ended collection days: So, early in 2021, we set up the new local collection hub system.

Throughout we were amazed how many were prepared to collect donations in their sheds and spare rooms, and how many of our volunteers came to help transport, sort and pack them. A very special thank you is due to the small but determined group of volunteers who, right through the worst of the winter lockdown, spent hours in a cold shed either alone or with someone from their household bubble packing donations.

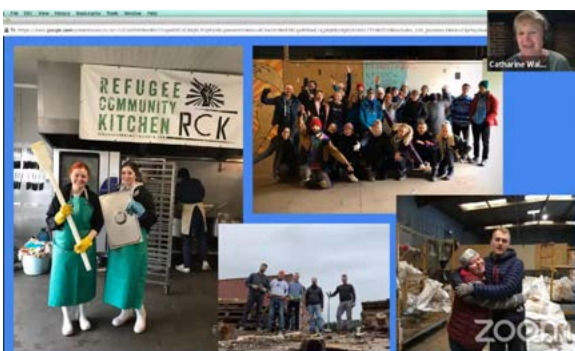
Now that COVID restrictions have relaxed, we are planning more varied fundraising activities and are resuming our convoys to Calais. Refugees in Europe have had a particularly tough time during the past year, and they need our help, and so CamCrag needs your help. We need people with ideas for fundraising events, and people to help them come to life. We need people to come on our weekend convoys to Calais, particularly if you have a car. People with experience of and contacts in the media, activists, IT fans who love spreadsheets and websites. People with sheds.



You can register your skills and interests on our volunteer database, so we can contact you when we have an opportunity that we think you may be interested in: The link is on the front page of our website, or email volunteer@camcrag.org.uk.

You will be joining over 160 other volunteers who give their time to help refugees through CamCrag.

You can also contact the various coordinators (convoys, fundraising, donations etc) to find out more about what is involved, their email addresses are throughout this report and on the website.



Without volunteers, none of what we achieve is possible. They collect, sort and pack pallets of banana boxes full of donations, arrange and run our fundraisers, do our admin, manage our website and other communications.. We always welcome more help: Every hour you can give helps us to help more refugees!

FUNDRAISING AND EVENTS

INTRODUCTION FROM OUR GIVING COORDINATOR

Throughout 2020, Covid-19 has made already unbearable conditions worse for refugees. With the inability to run convoys, CamCrag volunteers and supporters have pulled together to support refugees from their home towns. This has included individual donations, especially on Facebook and online through our website. We also raised a substantial amount through our 'Pallet of Fish' fundraiser, providing refugees with vital immune boosting food.

Thank you to all our fantastic donors, and, of course, to those who have been supporting us continuously through either regular or single donations.

We have now moved from using KindLink to JustGiving: You can donate online at www.justgiving.com/camcrag. If you had a repeat donation to us through KindLink, please cancel it and set one up on JustGiving.

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

The last year has obviously been very quiet, due to restrictions and lockdowns during the coronavirus pandemic. Despite this, we managed to organise fundraising events, both online and offline, which raised over £8,300 (excluding gift aid).

We are extremely grateful to everyone who supported these events, and especially to the large number of volunteers who helped with the organisation. The fundraising team is always looking for new ideas, and for new people to get involved: Email volunteer@camcrag.org.uk to get in touch.

Thank you also to all those who organise their own events or sponsorship and give the proceeds to us, in particular we would like to thank Ank Rigelsford and all at St Giles' Church for donating the proceeds of a collection after their Thanksgiving Concert last year.

Auction of Promises, November & December 2020

As the country (and most of our operations) were locked down, we held an online auction of gifts and promises. Thank you to the two dozen people who offered their items and time, everything from artwork, pottery and cakes to language lessons and dog-walking time. In total we raised £2,008.

Winter Fair, December 2020

By December we could meet again and, despite covid restrictions and a rainy start to the morning, we saw a good turnout for our winter fair at St Giles Church. The sun did eventually break through, and visitors enjoyed stalls selling hot drinks, homemade cakes, crafts made by refugees in Greece, Christmas cards and CamCrag ponchos. We also held a raffle for a magnificent hamper, and in total raised £1,256. Thank you to everyone who contributed their time, talents, crafts and cakes.



The Winter Fair was our first time real world event since the pandemic began

FUNDRAISING AND EVENTS

Pallet of fish fundraiser, Winter 2020/21

In December, Calais Food Collective (CFC) reached out to CamCrag to fund the purchase of sardines, as they were concerned about the standard of nutrition among the refugees they support in northern France. Our online appeal raised £1,500 to buy a pallet of 4,000 tins of sardines. We went on to fund the purchase of a similar amount of sardines for CFC later in the winter. A big thank you to Deb and everyone at Care4Humanity who arranged the purchases and helped with the logistics.



Scavenger hunt, April 2021

With people beginning to go outside once again, we arranged a scavenger hunt around Cambridge, taking in sites that highlight facts about the history of Cambridge and refugees in the UK. Contributions from participants came to £120.

Summer party, Ceilidh and camp out, June 2021

June wasn't the weather we wanted for our first gathering in several months, but around two dozen people aged four to 70 came to our ceilidh and camp out held as part of Refugee Week. Attendees were treated to some excellent music from The Jumping Beans and an outdoor meal cooked on site (with food based on Refugee Community Kitchen's delicious recipes). Half the attendees camped out for the night, and we managed to check several tents bound for refugees sleeping rough in France as well as raising £200 for the charity.



Details of future events and fundraising drives are published on the [news](#) and [events](#) pages of our website.

Music, food, fun... and some unpleasant camping conditions at our summer party and ceilidh

*We have
switched
from using
kindlink to*

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to ebay or not to ebay...

We get some brilliant donations – but some are a bit strange, and some are definitely more valuable as re-sale items than they would be in camps.

Donations have included wedding dresses, designer handbags, glamorous high-heeled shoes, impractical leather jackets and cool street wear with inappropriate slogans.

So donations co-ordinator Izzie put the best items up for sale on ebay in March, raising some cash for the charity.

Much as we will happily sell similar items in the future, we would prefer it if people only donated what is on our needs list on the website. If you have questions, email donations@camcrag.org.uk

DONATIONS OF AID / PONCHO PROJECT

DONATIONS OF AID

Despite the logistical difficulties of the past year, CamCrag sent over 700 boxes of aid to Europe and beyond, and we will be sending more in the months ahead.

At first the pandemic made it almost impossible to collect donations (from our drop off locations or donation drop off days), or get them to refugees, as there were no convoys to Calais. Over the year we have adapted our operations and, thanks to numerous individuals and several aid organisations, we are now part of a logistical web extending from the UK across the continent.

Throughout last autumn and winter our brilliant volunteers sorted and boxed donations before putting them onto pallets and lorries. Working with Distribute Aid we sent aid to Greece in October 2020, and in December contributed donations to a truck heading from Scotland to Calais. More aid was sent to Calais in the spring of 2021, and to Lebanon in the summer. We intend to continue sending aid this way to wherever it is needed, working with partners such as Distribute Aid and the Aid Hub.

In January 2021, with no immediate possibility of holding donation drop off days, our volunteers once again stepped up and agreed to act as local collection points. Working with Our World Collective we now have a network of collection points that covers not only the city but most of South Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. The donations are then transferred to our storage shed for sorting and boxing, before being loaded onto trucks as and when our partner organisations can provide them.

Recently we have teamed up with the Lebanon Free Shop and Feed the Hungry Coventry to transport aid to Lebanon. The Free Shop currently has around 2800 beneficiaries per month and are looking to double that so there is plenty of need for our donations. By the end of October we hope to have as many as 9 pallets of clothes, shoes and hygiene items on their way to Lebanon.

Although we sadly cannot currently collect donations at the Argyle Street Housing Co-op, the Daily Bread Co-Operative is once again collecting both physical donations and loose change, for which we are very grateful. Or you can take your donations to your local collection point: Email donations@camcrag.org.uk to find out where it is. Rest assured, you should not have to travel far, even around the villages, to donate any tents, sleeping bags, toiletries or warm clothes.

Before you bring your items please check camcrag.org.uk/donating to see what we are (and are not) accepting.

THE PONCHO PROJECT

By November 2020 we had adapted the Poncho Project to make the production line covid safe, with people working on different stages of the process in their own homes or small bubbles.

We had a great team, with people taking on all sorts of different jobs, including cutting out, pinning, sewing, delivering and collecting blankets, and there was a lovely community feel on our chat group with people sharing photos and encouraging each other. Our new ponchos for refugees are a lovely deep blue colour and very soft and warm!

Huge thanks to Kirsten who hosted a pick-up and drop-off point, and to all the volunteers who took on a role: We managed to make 400 ponchos which have since been distributed to the refugees living in and around Calais.

We have a very limited supply remaining of our ponchos for sale through our Ponchos4All project: See camcrag.org.uk/ponchos for all the details.



Our wonderful new blue ponchos! If you want to get involved with the Poncho Project email

ponchos@camcrag.org.uk

One silver lining of the pandemic has been a huge increase in interest in volunteering, which has been reflected in social media traffic to our accounts and subscribers to our newsletter.

The Facebook group now has 2,700 members, mostly from Cambridge, but many from all over the world. Significant numbers come from the USA, France, Germany, Italy and Spain and even a few from Australia! The number of followers of the official CamCrag Facebook page continues to increase by about 200 each year, and is now over 1,500.

Our monthly newsletter goes out to over 700 subscribers, which is particularly encouraging as most of our new sign-ups happen at the University's Freshers Fair when we usually recruit some eager first-year students, something we were not able to do in 2020. Our Instagram and Twitter feeds have continued to be updated regularly. Traffic to our website remained reasonably constant through the pandemic at about 1,000 visitors each month.

When we didn't have events to publicise, we advertised online fundraisers, reported on developments in Calais and Greece, and encouraged everyone to volunteer with RCK, Collective Aid and Calais Food Collective, who really struggled to keep going over lockdown as the local authorities in Calais took the opportunity offered by the pandemic to impose new restrictions on distributions and even access to water and sanitation.

CamCrag members were involved in the Cambridge Must Act campaign in August and September of last year. This was part of a broader Europe Must Act movement to focus the attention of politicians on the conditions in the Greek camps, a disgraceful situation highlighted by the fire in Moria camp in September 2020.

The local campaign and online petition of over 500 signatures resulted in a pledge by Cambridge City Council to resettle more refugees in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, and an expression of support for the relocation of refugees from the Aegean islands if a legal mechanism ever makes this feasible.

The public consultation on Priti Patel's New Plan for Immigration was launched in March 2021 with a very brief 6 week period for groups and individuals to respond. We organised a webinar with Cambridge Refugee Resettlement Campaign and Solidaritee, the Cambridge-based student-run group which specialises in funding legal aid for refugees, on how to answer the complicated and misleading questions in the consultation questionnaire.

There have been strong objections from a wide range of expert groups, including UNHCR, legal firms, service providers and volunteer charities, to these discriminatory proposals. The results of the public consultation were only published after the unaltered proposals had become the Nationality and Borders Bill and had reached the second reading stage in Parliament. In June 2021, CamCrag joined the coalition campaign, Together with Refugees, to fight the Bill.

We are always looking for people to join our comms team and help with the website, social media, coordinating campaigns with other organisations, press relations, designing flyers and posters, and publicising our events: Email volunteer@camcrag.org.uk

See links to press coverage at camcrag.org.uk/mediacoverage

For press enquiries please email publicity@camcrag.org.uk

Subscribe to our e-newsletter at camcrag.org.uk/newsletter

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS

Although the amount of money donated to refugee charities has fallen since the refugee crisis was at its height in Europe (and the media) in 2015 and 2016, and despite the pandemic, we received over £8,000 in donations last year. We also raised almost £7,000 from online and 'real world' events which, given restrictions over the last 18 months, represents a fantastic effort from the fundraising and events team. After much work we also finally tracked down, processed and reclaimed almost £8,000 in gift aid from HMRC, meaning in total we received just over £25,000 for the financial year 2020/21, comparable to previous years.

The lack of convoys and reduced poncho project activity reduced our outgoings. It was also very difficult during the pandemic to make effective well audited purchases for refugees, and indeed to get them delivered. We have, however, spent over £3,500 on the logistics of moving material donations and aid, and we expect to continue spending similar amounts of money on this over the year ahead. We are actively looking for NGOs that could make best use of our funds over the next year and this, along with the resumption of convoys and other activities, means we expect to reduce our surplus cash funds over the year ahead.

We do, however, always keep a £4,000* contingency so we can respond to emergency situations quickly, such as the fire at Moria in September 2020, and to ensure costs for already planned convoys are covered.

ACCOUNTS

For the period from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021. All figures to the nearest £

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Receipts							
Donations (cash and bank transfers)	8,474	-	8,474	11,416	16,895	16,303	23,435
Fundraising events (organised by us)	1,805	5,075	6,880	11,034	6,248	14,090	11,754
Sale of cards & external merchandise	611	-	611	895	87	157	307
Sale of ponchos	560	-	560	306	1,799	890	-
Gift Aid	7,989	-	7,989	253	2,134	-	-
Shipping refunds fr. other charities	970	-	970	-	-	-	-
Administration	-	-	5	5	3	-	-
Total Receipts			25,484	23,909	27,166	31,480	35,630
Payments							
Cost of events	108	-	108	1,167	895	25	627
Cost of cards & external merchandise	593	-	593	1,438	131	71	101
Purchases of items for refugees	1,348	1,978	3,326	18,909	12,132	22,692	20,139
Convoy costs	-	-	-	4,684	4,171	2,908	5,043
Collecting & shipping material aid	537	2,996	3,533	-	-	-	-
Production costs for ponchos	1,754	-	1,754	3,111	5,709	5,272	-
Administration	334	-	334	1,072	957	927	168
Total Payments			9,647	30,381	23,995	31,894	26,078
Net of receipts / (payments)			15,837	- 6,472	3,171	-415	9,552
Cash funds last year end			7,540	14,012	10,841	11,256	1,704
Cash funds this year end			23,377	7,540	14,012	10,841	11,256

*The charity has no assets besides cash funds, and no liabilities. * in some printed copies this figure is incorrectly given as £5,000*



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registered charity number 1170180
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