A brief update about the Blandford Welcome Group

· Just to remind you, the BWG was set up by a group of parishioners, with a view to welcoming and integrating a refugee family fleeing a dreadful war-torn existence into the local community.

· Before we are considered a viable proposition by the Home Office to receive a family, one of the pre-requisites is to raise (or demonstrate that we can raise) a minimum of £9,000.

· So far, through events such as the barbecue (back in August), a talk at an Ecumenical Service in the town, a stall at the Yuletide Festival and through regular donation, we’ve thus far raised just over £1,600.

· The project has now moved beyond just our parishioners. We are working with the other local churches, together with an organisation called Blandford Cares, who do tremendous work for the poor and under privileged.

· We’re also currently working closely with the Blandford School, who have offered through their very supportive Head Teacher, use of their facilities to stage a Film Night or two, where we hope to have a showing of films such as Love Actually, Notting Hill and Four Weddings & A Funeral, followed by a Question & Answer session with the Producer, Duncan Kenworthy, who lives in Durweston. We are working hard to try and make that happen, so watch this space! The school have also offered to stage some fund-raising events by the wonderful students there.

· We’re also applying to charities and foundations for any grants that may be available.

· We have a Quiz Evening, via Zoom, a week on Saturday, 5 February at 19.30. Anyone who wishes to take part, entry is £10 per link (per team), via the BWG website. You go onto the donate menu of the site, donate £10 and that will generate a receipt to your e-mail, which can then be forwarded to me, to guarantee your entry. It’s a fun quiz, in aid of a good cause, so no-one needs to be an Einstein to take part!

· Thank you to everyone here today who has helped at any of our fund-raising events (such as the barbecue or Yuletide Festival) or has helped simply by attending the event or who has donated prizes or bottles.

· Talking of the the website, thank you to Steve Richmond for all his time and effort in building the website for us. Also, thank you to Adrian Fisher for producing a lovely leaflet, which encapsulates what the project is about.

· Finally, should anyone wish to make a regular donation or a single donation to the fund, this can be done very easily via the website.

To clear up one doubt, this is not a project officially of the Catholic parish in Blandford, and as far as Fr. Francis knows not one destined to help one religion exclusively. He would have nothing to do with a refugee resettlement scheme that was exclusively for any group that expressly excluded any other group. As far as he knows the British government intends its scheme to benefit any in need and is not favouring any people over others, regardless of religion. It is a humanitarian initiative to help anyone who needs help in this way. People in need are people in need, not any type of people.

· Finally, finally, should anyone wish to become more involved with the project, please let Marie Fisher, Anthony Reed, or Fr. Francis know either after Mass or at anytime.