

BEARR Trust Annual Conference, 24 November 2006

Outcast or Integrated?

the challenge of homelessness in Russia and Eurasia

by Nicola Ramsden, BEARR Trustee

Michael McCulloch, Chairman of BEARR, opened the conference by drawing attention to BEARR's current focus on homelessness. He also outlined the next Small Grants Scheme, which aims to help young people who are homeless or living in institutions to take a normal place in society. (See page 13)

Before turning to the main theme, the conference looked at the latest situation for NGOs in Russia under the new NGO Law. **Elizaveta Dzhirikova**, Director of the NGO Sostradanie, spoke on the new NGO law in practice. She emphasised the crippling effects the law was likely to have on many organisations, particularly veterans' associations which are ill-equipped to cope with its complexities. (See page 14) Responding to questions, Ms Dzhirikova made the following points:

- Foreign donations are tolerated when they meet basic needs such as medical supplies, or even information, but not for campaigns for legislative change, which are seen as 'political'.
- Despite the constraints of the new law, it would be wrong, and lead to a loss of self-respect, to hold back from political campaigning. There is little communication and cooperation between the government and NGOs in Russia, where the authorities both question the professionalism of NGOs and are unsettled when they prove to be competent.

Summing up this first session, Michael McCulloch commented that Elizaveta Dzhirikova's analysis had thrown into sharp relief the distinction between the role of NGOs in delivering social services, and their role in agitating for social change. The speaker had also shown how innocent words such as 'registration', and familiar requirements such as annual returns, can be interpreted differently in Russia. We all acknowledge that one function of NGOs is to create discomfort for governments – but how much discomfort can the Russian government tolerate?



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The conference turned to its main theme with an overview on Homelessness in Russia by **Dr Svetlana Stephenson** of London Metropolitan University. See page 5 for the main lines of her paper, and page 15 for a review of her recent book.

Much of the discussion that followed Dr Stephenson's talk centred on what is being done to change attitudes:

- Médecins Sans Frontières ran a campaign to draw attention to the numbers of homeless people who die in the winter cold, and shelters are now advertised in the Metro. But Dr Stephenson had not detected any significant change in public attitudes yet.
- The role of literature: there have been no Russian novels comparable to 'Black on White' which drew attention to the treatment of children in orphanages.
- The role of the media: there seems little possibility of a 'Cathy Come Home' in Russian, where the media continue to sensationalise the issue of homelessness, reinforcing rather than challenging stereotypes.

Homelessness among adults was explored by a panel comprising **Sergei Krivenko**, Board member of Memorial; **Jo Lucas**, mental health consultant working in Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia; **Rannoch Daly**, former prison governor; **Arkady Tyurin**, Director of New Social Solutions and of the St Petersburg street paper; and **Sarah Powell-Pisareva** of Poverty Solutions and the International Network of Street Papers.

Sergei Krivenko described the problem of housing ex-soldiers. Of a total Russian population of 140 million, 1.2 million are in the army and there are 180,000 former soldiers who have not been allocated apartments. They live in hostels and temporary barracks, or rent apartments – only partly reimbursed by the State. Since the possession of a home determines social status and access to welfare, many

former soldiers rapidly fall into a lower social category, despite long and often decorated military service. The problem was recognised immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union, but legislation dating from the early 1990s, under which soldiers with 20 years' service were entitled to an apartment, was never fully implemented because of lack of funds.

A new programme has started, aiming to provide 30,000 apartments a year in order to clear the backlog over the next 5-8 years, and new officers now have a special account which accumulates over 20 years in order to buy an apartment at the end of their service. The problem is that property inflation is outstripping annual funding, and there is corruption and a lack of transparency in how apartments are distributed.

Echoing Elizaveta Dzhirikova's earlier comments about the absence of NGO/government dialogue, Sergei Krivenko pointed to the resulting bad legislation, and decisions that lack flexibility or adaptability. Different agencies are working at cross-purposes. In the past, conflicts between government departments might have been resolved by the Party Central Committee. Now, there is a gap in communication, but NGOs have not yet emerged as the intermediary agent.

Jo Lucas described the hidden homeless in State adult institutions. These are often people with minor physical and mental disabilities, who should not be there. The most important way of helping them is to spread the belief that they can lead a normal life, given the right opportunities. Information and resources are then needed to make it happen, as well as properly trained helpers. (See page 7)

Jo Lucas gave another perspective on working with local authorities. Some of the difficulties arise because officials lack language skills, information, and the means to carry out research – they are in effect left behind.

Rannoch Daly described the exchange programme that began eight years ago between officers from Leeds prison and their counterparts in Ivanovo. The focus has now moved outside prison, to police and court processes and to what happens on release, when prisoners may find themselves homeless.

Much has been done to reduce overcrowding in prisons, partly by reducing the number of minor offences that carry a prison sentence. Numbers have fallen from 1.1 million to 800,000



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– apparently lower than in the US, a matter of some pride. The number of inspectors in the Penitentiary Supervision Service has been doubled, allowing supervision of criminals as an alternative to prison and more support for ex-prisoners.

Arkady Tyurin spoke with first hand experience of being homeless for 11 years. He and Sarah Powell-Pisareva described the action taken by his New Social Solutions, and her Poverty Solutions, partly through street papers, to deal with homelessness. (See page 9)

The final subject of the conference, Children and Young People, was examined by a panel consisting of **David Maidment** from Railway Children; **Liza Hollingshead** of Ecologia Youth Trust; **Hannah-Louise Mobbs** of Love's Bridge in Perm; and **Irina Kirillova**, Director of NABAT in Kazakhstan.

Introducing the speakers, BEARR Trustee **Yuri Goligorsky** noted that the Russian government had demonstrated its alarm at the rapid decline in the population – at a present rate of 700,000 a year – by introducing measures to increase the birth rate. However, it was questionable whether the state could adequately provide for the current population of children.

David Maidment outlined the results of research commissioned by Railway Children in Moscow. (See page 7)

Liza Hollingshead spoke about the Kitezsh Children's Community, a 'foster village' for orphans after they have left their orphanages. One Kitezsh village is complete, providing homes for 40 children in 10 foster families, and another village is being developed. So far, 90 children have been looked after in Kitezsh – a small inroad into the one million children in state orphanages.

Kitezsh helps mainly the 95% of orphans who are 'social orphans', who have a living parent but have been removed from their family, or been given up, because of problems such as alcoholism. At maturity they are expected to return to their family (in contrast to 'true' orphans, who are theoretically entitled to a pension and accommodation). Homelessness almost inevitably results. Kitezsh helps to support these children into higher education or vocational training, a task that needs energy and resources now that further education is no longer generally free. The BEARR Trust and Baker Botts are currently funding seven students who began their further education this year.

Kitezsh has potential as a training centre for fostering. Many of the children have suffered abuse, and foster parents have had to learn that love alone is not enough, and that

they will be pushed to the limits by children testing for the point at which they will be rejected. Ecologia has sent experts in play and art therapy from the UK to Kitezsh; this has also helped the adults who work there to understand more about the children they are helping.

Hannah-Louise Mobbs gave an encouraging account of good working relations between Love's Bridge and the local authorities in Perm. From the establishment of Love's



Jo Lucas (speaking), Daryl Hardman and Rannoch Daly

Bridge's first centre for street children, opened in 2001, there has been a good dialogue with the authorities. As a result, Love's Bridge has continually refocused its work to meet local needs. After the local government opened five shelters for young street children, Love's Bridge redirected its efforts to helping older teenagers, and opened a centre in 2003 to provide skills training and courses in independent living. With government cooperation, the centre is working successfully, and the training has been extended to teenagers still living in state orphanages. Love's Bridge has now returned its attention to younger children, this time focusing on early intervention to resolve family disputes and reduce truancy and solvent abuse. She concluded that successful intervention depends on choice – the children must want what is being offered. Handouts don't help in the long term, and the development of independence in children is vital.

Irina Kirillova also described more constructive working relations between NGOs and the government in Kazakhstan. NABAT deals with the problem that businesses refuse to recruit children from orphanages. By providing psychological and vocational training, NABAT teaches orphanage children skills, self-respect and responsibility, and then helps them to look for a job. (See page 10)

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The following points were made in discussion:

- Even 'true' orphans with state support beyond maturity are vulnerable to fraud and may lose their apartments. The state pension may also discourage them from working to develop a truly independent life.
- Orphans who move into adult homes because they are deemed incapable of living without help are treated badly.
- Statistics must be collected to demonstrate that fostering is cheaper and more effective than institutional alternatives.
- The spread of HIV may galvanise the authorities into action and possible collaboration with NGOs. In Odessa for example, 22 street children of a sample of 30 tested positive for HIV. The local government was quick to respond and is now funding a project to help street children. HIV statistics are also needed urgently.
- Some speakers believed it was pointless and even dangerous to campaign for changes in the state orphanage system. Others believed that the baby house system must be tackled by giving support to mothers at the point when they would normally give up their child. The existing institutions are self-serving, benefiting from per capita payments. There appear to be no mechanisms to change this, and little media interest.

Michael McCulloch opened the concluding session by noting the complexity of actions needed to deal with fundamental economic and social change. Many institutions affect and are affected by the issue of homelessness. The increase in government revenues from oil and gas has provided a cushion, but the problem could become much worse in an economic downturn. The partial boom has in some ways lessened sympathy for those outside the system; many people are too busy securing their own futures to bother about those left behind.

Sustainable change can only come from within, but there is still scope for international partnerships developed in a spirit of collegiality and humility. There is still a large gap between the many individual initiatives and the scale of the homelessness problem. How much sharing and learning is going on?

Irina Kirillova commented that NABAT's work is consciously regarded as a pilot scheme with the potential to expand; press coverage is always sought. Elizaveta Dzhirikova said that there is a myth that foreign organisations support extremism, but we must not be brow-beaten into providing only material aid – legislative change is needed or nothing will change. Hamish Heald from Love's Bridge believed that decisions must be made locally, but continued moral support from outside was still of value.

Jo Lucas wanted to reframe the question as 'Why are we still there? 15 years on, are British NGOs still needed in Russia?' Michael McCulloch replied that we ask



David Maidment

ourselves that question every year, and yet it seems that interest in cooperation remains, though its nature changes.

Tatiana Perevertseva-Birch believed that many more Ukrainian and Russian businesses were now open to charitable action. Francis Callaway, who worked with NABAT to persuade businesses to offer jobs to former orphanage inmates, and Richard Servian and Daryl Hardman all found that businesses usually give in kind, rather than parting with money. Daryl Hardman noted that businesses were mostly interested in local issues or in the boss's particular interests.

Barbara Profeta offered participants a final interesting thought: perhaps there is no need for foreign NGOs to generate any more new projects in Russia, since people are developing coping strategies on their own. Instead, our efforts should concentrate on spreading information throughout the regions on what is happening elsewhere.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

A fuller version of this report may be found at: www.bearr.org/en/node/53.

Articles by a number of conference speakers feature later in this Newsletter and can also be found at the same web address.

Conference photos: Daryl Hardman and Ceri Utting. A further selection of photos is at www.bearr.org/en/image/tid/112

The BEARR Trust is grateful to Baker Botts in Moscow, and British Airways and Caspian Services in Kazakhstan, for support for this conference.

Focus on homelessness

Unregistered and forgotten: homeless people in Russia

Homelessness as a public issue has a relatively short history in post-communist Russia. Up to the end of the 1980s, homelessness was never formally acknowledged by the state. When apprehended on the streets, homeless people, or *bomzhi* as they are now universally called [an abbreviation for *bez opredelenного mesta zhitelstva* – without fixed abode], were arrested, cautioned, incarcerated or deported for violation of passport rules, vagrancy or a parasitic way of life.

This punitive approach to homelessness has proved to be very durable. With the exception of the human rights community (which tends to see homeless people as victims of discrimination) and the few academic researchers writing on the subject, the 'expert' literature presents the homeless

as pathological individuals. They are assigned physical and mental conditions that make them unable to function in society. They cannot be credited with full rationality and their behaviour is often explained through a combination of subconscious urges and psychological pre-dispositions.

Svetlana Stephenson
Senior Lecturer in Comparative Sociology,
London Metropolitan University

This brutally direct representation of the supposed dangers posed by street homeless people is not just a demonstration of the absence of 'political correctness' in Russia. Homeless people are portrayed as outside the public body and posing a range of problems for society (rather than as experiencing problems themselves).

Homeless people seem to present an insoluble dilemma to the Russian administration. Having no place of residence, they fall out of the welfare system, which is still largely based on residential registration. People without registration are denied jobs, access to social security and any civil and political rights. In Moscow homeless people who cannot prove that they are past residents are even denied access to shelters for the homeless.

There is little reliable data available on Russia's homeless population. Various organisations give estimates

Grigorii, 44 years

- Manual labourer; ex-Moscow resident; ex-prisoner
- Could not get back his passport and *propiska* on release from prison. Worked for several months on a farm, but then the militia discovered that he did not have documents and forced him to go away
- Having come back to Moscow, lost his leg in a road accident
- Now lives in a shelter in Moscow and earns his living by begging.

Alternatively, their actions may be seen as serving some malicious purpose – to exploit other people; to sponge off the decent public; to undermine the very foundations of society.

The author of 'Homelessness' in the Russian Social Encyclopaedia writes, for example:

The most destitute and hopeless segment of the homeless people ... beg, rummage through rubbish, steal, carry infectious diseases, set fires and create moral discomfort for members of the public (Mirsagatova, 2000).

Sharif, 22 years

- Labour migrant from Uzbekistan
- Worked at a construction site without an official contract
- Was violently beaten up by skinheads on the street, had a head concussion and multiple traumas.
- Refused admission to hospital.
- Lost his job and hostel place.
- Lives on the streets.



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ranging from 3 to 4 million people. According to NGO data, about 12% of homeless people in Moscow and 7% in St Petersburg have higher education, while 30-50% are ex-prisoners. The causes of homelessness seem to be largely linked to the disintegration of key Soviet structures and systems (national and ethnic formations, the command economy, the migration regime etc). These macro-level changes affect particularly harshly those individuals who have lost touch with the stabilising structures of family and work. Ex-prisoners, children brought up in institutions, migrants, workers with irregular employment histories, alcoholics and the elderly are particularly vulnerable to homelessness. Recent changes to housing legislation (including

provisions allowing the eviction of social housing tenants for non-payment or antisocial behaviour) threaten to bring a further expansion of the homeless population.

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Feodor, 38 years

- A qualified builder and decorator, ex-Moscow resident
- Victim of housing fraud
- Lived at the construction site or stayed with friends in-between jobs for eight years.
- Became unable to work after damaging his arm
- Was placed in a shelter (as he was able to prove his past registration in Moscow)

Zinaida, 50 years

- Evicted from her Moscow flat by relatives
- Heavy drinker
- Lives in a cellar at the Moscow University, where she used to work as a store-woman.
- Earns her living by begging.

A fuller account of Dr Stephenson's presentation at the BEARR Conference is available at <http://www.bearr.org/en/node/53>

The 'hidden homeless'

Jo Lucas, Kastanja Consulting

Street children are the homeless people who catch the hearts of donors and charities. And maybe with good reason – as many say: children are the future of any country and can be prevented from falling even deeper into the nether worlds of prison and drug abuse.

However the soul of a country can also be read by the way it treats adults with disabilities, including mental health problems. In the countries of the former Soviet Union there are thousands of adult 'hidden homeless', trapped in internats or boarding houses. These places are usually literally out of sight and out of mind.

Only relatively recently have staff begun to admit that they exist and to begin the work of improving, restructuring and possibly closing them. One major problem, as in the UK, is that whole communities depend on them. The mono-company towns that are familiar in the industrial sector are replicated here but as mono-institutional communities. In one small community in Ukraine there is an internat for 'children' with psycho-neurological problems, many of whose residents are actually adult, with a staff roll of around 120. The Director is the major employer in his community.

But only around 20 of those staff are working with the 100 or so residents; the rest are involved in the farm and maintaining the buildings.

The second major block is staff assumptions about the capacities and potential of the residents. They often assume they are 'invalids' and incapable of taking decisions or being involved or contributing to the community. In one small project in Georgia we were able to give small grants¹ to mental health groups providing an alternative to the institutions by supporting people in their communities. The picture on page 7 shows one where people with psychiatric diagnoses built a greenhouse on land they had been given near their centre. They can now grow fruit and vegetables, supplement their diet and income, and also feel an enormous sense of achievement. This increasing self-confidence of both staff and 'users' means people have more control over their lives and can contribute to society rather than being passive recipients of services.

This passivity is compounded by the impact of institutionalisation on both staff and residents. I facilitated a day with people living in an internat in Slovenia whose

¹ Thanks to Coordaid, Netherlands, who provided the funds and to the Social House in Guria, Georgia, who implemented the project.

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Director was offering them the chance of working with him on plans for a new and different kind of service. They had for years been promised renovation of their run-down buildings, and funding had finally been made available after many delays. The residents and other staff found it almost too difficult to look beyond their dream of glass in the windows, decent bedrooms and clean bathrooms to smaller and more community based provision, as the institution was all they knew. The thought of closing the place that had been 'home' to them all for years was too difficult to contemplate, however uncomfortable and damaging that institution.

I have been involved with a number of programmes looking at the restructuring and closure of such institutions for adults with mental health problems and learning difficulties. There are some good examples in Slovenia, Croatia and Russia where institutions have either closed or been restructured to provide a very different life for the residents. My experience suggests that input is required at a number of levels once someone senior enough has decided that change is necessary and that people – both staff and residents – can be trusted to make decisions and have some control over their own lives. A complex process has to be implemented, including the following elements

- Extensive and intensive work with the institution staff to enable them to develop the skills to support the residents into new settings
- Work with the local authorities to find alternative accommodation
- Work with families to enable some to return to their family and community

- Work with residents, who will often find the thought of leaving too frightening to even contemplate
- Work with the local community to enable them to accept the residents as fellow citizens
- Challenging, when necessary, the corrupt practices that have built up over the years.

These change processes are complex and painful, and involve challenging many assumptions and stereotypes. However the impact on the lives of the individual residents concerned is always significant and justifies all the effort.



Photo: I. Goguardze

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Addressing the plight of railway children

*David Maidment, Chairman,
and Emilie Smeaton, Research Manager,
Railway Children*

Railway Children is a UK NGO working internationally to develop and fund initiatives by partner organisations to support street children. It focuses in particular on early intervention, ie making contact with children when they first run to the street and offering support if possible before such children are exploited, abused or corrupted by their street experiences. It was founded in 1995 and currently works in ten countries, through over 40 NGO partners at

nearly 120 locations, mainly railway stations and their environs, and reaching out to around 24,000 children a year.

It has been working in Russia for around four years in the Moscow region and in Chita (Siberia). Railway Children is a member of the Consortium for Street Children.

One of its Moscow partners is NAN (No to Alcohol and Narcotics).

In 2005/6 Railway Children commissioned NAN and another NGO working on the Moscow streets, MSF (Belgium), to carry out some action research to identify the needs of street children found at six of Moscow's largest train stations

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and also at a number of key metro stations. It had been estimated that around 500 children a month arriving unaccompanied, mainly by train, were being picked up by the authorities.

The aims of the situational analysis carried out with these street children were to:

- identify some of the characteristics of this group of children;
- identify appropriate and effective approaches or interventions to meet the needs of street children;
- map service providers working to address issues relating to street children.

The street children employed a number of survival strategies, including begging, theft and selling sex. Drug use was common, with widespread polydrug use. Substances used included: alcohol, varnish, glue, Butarphanol, heroin and cannabis. Some children became part of a gang who created 'homes' in permanent and secret locations in, for example, basements, attics, elevator shafts and under railway platforms.

Findings from the analysis in Moscow led to the conclusion that the violation and lack of children's rights in Russia are primary causes of children

1. Further awareness-raising is required, firstly, to highlight the needs and experiences of street children which would enable appropriate rehabilitation programmes to be developed in Moscow; and secondly, to raise awareness amongst service providers of what services at present exist for street children.
2. Partnership working should be developed between service providers to develop a rehabilitation process that includes: street work, daytime centres, social lodging houses, shelters, employment services, foster parent schools and parenting support.
3. Engagement and initial interventions with street children should begin on the street, as any intervention that starts in the children's own environment is more likely to be successful and lead to further interventions being set in place.



Photo: Robin Hammond

In addition, the project ensured access to service provision for the children participating in the analysis and started promoting inter-agency working to meet the needs of street children.

The children described how they ran away to escape physical, sexual and emotional abuse and general neglect. Parental substance misuse featured heavily in many children's experiences and made it impossible for them to remain in the home. The children ran away from a number of backgrounds, the majority from home but some from state-run child care institutions and foster parents.

living on the streets. The analysis also found that the present structure of service provision for homeless and neglected children lacks any outreach programme to engage with children in their own street environment and that present service provision does not meet the needs of a significant proportion of children living on the streets. In addition, there was a lack of awareness amongst service providers of the services for street children provided by other organisations.

A number of recommendations followed from the findings of the analysis. They were grouped into three main themes:

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Sponsor a cycle ride in Vietnam!

Francis Callaway, one of BEARR's most enthusiastic supporters, is going on a sponsored cycle ride round Vietnam in the autumn, and kindly donating the proceeds to BEARR. Details will appear on the BEARR website and in the next issue of the Newsletter. Contact info@bearr.org for more details, or phone 01892 752184 to offer sponsorship.

From street to strategy

creating 'new social solutions' to homelessness

People create most of their own problems. I'm no exception. In August 1995 I found myself in St Petersburg without a roof over my head, without family, money, job, documents or prospects. But, as Russian writer Sergey Dovlatov said, 'Life goes on even when it is absent.' And my life went on.

For 2½ years I woke up every morning not knowing where I would find a roof over my head for the next night. But I can't say that it was terrible. It was not the be-all-and-end-all, but just a problem to be solved which, like any other problem, can be solved if you want it to be.

I started working as a porter, then became a journalist. In March 1997 I joined the Russian street newspaper *Na Dne* (The Depths) as a freelancer. Then I was asked to start a street newspaper in my native Siberia: in January 1999 the first issue of *Na Dne v Sibiri* (The Depths in Siberia) was published. And my life was divided between St Petersburg and Novosibirsk.

In September 2000 I became editor-in-chief of *Na Dne*. But the Siberian project continued, until my main Siberian partner decided to go back to his German homeland.

In 2003, the non-commercial partnership, New Social Solutions, was created and *Na Dne* became the street magazine *Put Domoj* (Journey Home). I remained as editor-in-chief, then became executive director.

New Social Solutions (NSS) was created to expand the street newspaper movement in Russia, and to improve the re-integration of socially excluded people into society.

Please note that, to us, 'charity' doesn't mean rich, clean, sober and kind people sharing goods and services with poor, dirty, weak and drunk human beings. We mean the courage to work with people who are not very successful and to help create the conditions for changing lives.

NSS's work has four main strands:

First is the development of an alternative employment system through publishing and distributing a street magazine. Our vendors are St Petersburg's homeless, who get half the cover price. With no official registration in the city, the vendors officially have no right to work, but NSS wanted to give them social and medical insurance. So in September 2006 three of NSS's best vendors became official employees, giving them great security.

Most of NSS's vendors, being old and physically or mentally damaged, will stay with us until death do us part. Our plan for the future is to build or buy a house for 15-20 vendors in the suburbs of St Petersburg, where they will be looked after properly. Several vendors already have private sponsors, organised through Poverty Solutions, NSS's UK partner.

Arkady Tyurin,
*Director of New Social Solutions
and the street paper Journey Home*



Russia in action at the Homeless World Cup

NSS's second project relates to human rights and the need to express oneself to overcome loneliness and isolation. Over the past three years, vendors have attended an art studio with an art therapist. Their work has been exhibited in St Petersburg, Buenos Aires, Athens and Moscow.

Two years ago we gave disposable cameras to homeless night shelter inhabitants and asked them to photograph life around them. 127 pictures were exhibited at the State Museum of Urban Sculpture in St Petersburg, under the name 'Eyes of the Street'.

This series of exhibitions contributed to our third, EU-funded project, 'Changing public opinion towards homeless and other socially excluded people'. Research two years ago showed that only one person in three in St Petersburg was ready to help homeless people. We want to change the opinion of the other two thirds. To achieve this, NSS organises high-profile media-friendly campaigns. Last winter, we used old clothes, frozen, to erect 100 statues 'in memory of the homeless who died or will die this winter'. The media coverage was great. At the end of March 2006, homeless people, with our help, presented a gift to the city – a bird-box, which was fixed to one of the trees at the State Museum of Urban Sculpture. At the same time they presented a copy of *Book of the Homeless*. This was written by a street musician, a former policeman, an old hippy, a

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doctor, an African refugee and a homeless man – passing on their priceless knowledge of how to survive on the street.

Our fourth project is 'Social integration through sport'. We know that football – with its team spirit, challenges, respect for opponents and rules, and eternal optimism – is the best model for life. We also know that love of football is great for breaking down social barriers. So we organised a homeless football team, which has represented Russia at all the Homeless World Cups since 2002. And we won the 2006 Homeless World Cup in Cape Town!

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Arkady Tyurin (right) and Alexander Menus install the bird box

A brighter future through vocational training

Today there are more than 75,000 orphaned children in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Many are not prepared for the realities of adult life. Many find themselves on the street. They are at high risk of being drawn into organised crime, maybe terrorism, and of becoming infected with HIV.

In 2003 Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan introduced regulations requiring orphans to leave their institutions at the age of 16. In effect, they were put out on the street without any means of survival. This situation forces many teenagers into crime. Others commit suicide.

Seeing the destructiveness of this, Kazakhstan has ratified a law stating that homeless orphans can stay on at their orphanage until they are 18. This means two more years without having to worry about board and lodging, or earning a living. But after that?

In Kyrgyzstan, at the age of sixteen, orphans go ... nowhere. What do you think – in today's post-communist society can a boy or girl of 16 to 18, alone, find decent housing and a

livelihood? Even children know the answer is 'no'.

To address this widespread problem Kazakhstan has begun to build Youth Houses. These give children not only a place to live but also the opportunity to find their place in life under the guidance of experienced adults. Moreover, the state provides scholarships for those who continue their studies.

However, the biggest Youth House in Kazakhstan can take only 100 children and, in Almaty alone, every year up to 100 children leave each orphanage. Many fall on hard times.

The problem is that few of us realise that we all are partly responsible for the tragic fate of these children.

To build a good life one must have a good job, which requires training. But the skills orphans are currently taught are often not marketable because they use old technologies and outdated equipment. Very often, then, the children waste two or three years, and the state wastes a lot of money.

***Irina Kirillova,
President, NABAT (NGO),
Kazakhstan***

After analysing the problems of orphans leaving specialised institutions, the NGO Alumni Research Association developed the NABAT project. NABAT promotes a complex approach, including short-term (up to one year) vocational training – to international standards – in work skills which are in demand and well paid, combined with rehabilitation and adaptation programmes. All these will make children ready for independent life.

The project obtained support from local and overseas programmes and institutions with an interest in this problem. The NGO NABAT was set up by members of the international community in Kazakhstan to develop and manage the project.

More Youth Houses have been established throughout Kazakhstan. Also, the NABAT project and the efforts of the international community

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have led to state professional training programmes addressing vulnerable groups of people, including orphans.

In Kyrgyzstan, in 2003 UNESCO initiated a project – the Rehabilitation Center Ak-Kanat in Lyceum #43 in Zhanazher in the Socolupski region – to deal with the rehabilitation of homeless children and their adaptation to normal

life. There, using agricultural skills, previously homeless children, like those in the NABAT project, create their own better future with their own hands.

For more information, and to download the social film NABAT, visit the NABAT website: www.nabat.freenet.kz.



Trainees working at VIP Parquet Ltd

CONTACT DETAILS

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NABAT would like to thank the Delegation of the European Commission in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, TACIS Bistro program, for support with training and equipment for programmes in wood processing, carpentry and plastering; the International Research and Exchange Board (IREX), Washington, for support for the NABAT film, CD and website; ExxonMobil Kazakhstan Inc, for facilities and materials for teaching plastering and dry finishing; ChevronTexaco Inc, for lab equipment and modern sewing machines; and Caspian Service Group and British Airways, for support for Mrs Kirillova's participation in the 2006 BEARR Conference.

The BEARR Trust seeks a new Chair

The BEARR Trust's present Chair of Trustees, Michael McCulloch, intends to stand down during 2007. We will be seeking a new Chair to lead us in building up our networking and facilitating role and attracting new resources.

The Trust's priorities, recently reviewed, are to:

- work with smaller organisations committed to reform in the health and social sectors
- facilitate networking and exchange of information
- encourage sharing of experience and learning
- help organisations working in the region to identify potential partners
- provide seed funding to assist selected organisations to launch or extend partnerships
- lobby and seek wider support for the role of smaller organisations.

Role and responsibilities of Chair

- Lead trustees in fulfilling responsibilities in accordance with requirements of Charity Commission, relevant legislation, and the Trust's deed
- Ensure effective and efficient administration of the Trust
- Chair trustees' meetings (minimum 4 half days a year)
- Chair the Annual Conference (full day in late November)
- Guide, and as necessary lead or contribute to, trustees' work programme between meetings
- Represent the Trust publicly and to donors, partners etc
- Play an active part in fundraising

Experience and qualities sought

- Experience as trustee, chair, or senior executive of an NGO, ideally with international activities; or comparable board experience elsewhere

plus some of

- Knowledge of/interest in Russia and/or other countries of Eurasia
- Knowledge of/interest in health and social welfare sectors, especially role of voluntary organisations
- Fundraising experience and/or contacts
- Flexibility to vary personal role from articulating Trust's mission and priorities to doing more hands-on administrative tasks

Most trustees, as well as fulfilling their formal governance role, take on responsibility for a particular aspect of the Trust's administration or activity. The role of Chair is likely to appeal to someone who is similarly inclined, and who can devote one to two days a month flexibly to developing the trustee body and to building up financial resources.

If you are interested, please send your CV, together with a covering letter, to The Trustees, The BEARR Trust, 2nd Floor River House, 143-145 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3AB, or by email to chair@bearr.org, marked 'Chair of Trustees'.

More information about the BEARR Trust can be found on our website: www.bearr.org

SMALL GRANTS SCHEME

BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme 2006

‘Meeting the Stars’: deaf children’s project in St Petersburg

We reported in the last Newsletter on grants awarded in 2006 to *HealthProm* in the UK and to the NGO *Help* in St Petersburg for projects to assist deaf children in Russia. A short report on the *HealthProm* project is in that Newsletter. The full report is available at http://www.bearr.org/en/resources/deaf_children/Altai. Here Raisa Gurevich outlines the St Petersburg project.

Preparations for the festival ‘Meeting the stars’ took place in the children’s homes and orphanages of St Petersburg in September and October 2006. The aim of the festival was to showcase the talents of gifted and able children with limited hearing living in the homes and orphanages in St Petersburg. It took place in four stages:

1. Information about the festival was sent to the institutions explaining the aims, conditions and nomination process. The first round of selection then took place in general children’s homes and orphanages, and in special schools for children with limited speech and hearing.
2. On 26 October a second selection round involved professional members of the jury and also sign-language interpreters.
3. The Gala Concert on 28 October involved the winners of the competition, plus a clown and a specially invited master of ceremonies.
4. Medals were awarded to the children who came first among the young orphans and among those with limited hearing and speech. Others received valuable prizes. All the children received gifts, and were also given ‘encouragement’ prizes for taking part.

We would like to have held a similar festive occasion for blind children.

Our long-term plans, if a UK or other partner can be found, are to continue to help children with disabilities. Such children like to sing and dance and laugh, but in

Russia they are usually branded as ‘invalids’ and put on one side for their whole lives. It is difficult to change attitudes, to convince people that these are simply children with individual characteristics.

We would like to organise a centre where specialist professionals could run workshops for these children to develop their vocal skills and give them the chance to try choreography, acting and other creative studies. Here they could live apart and be active in a creative profession. We would like to prepare a creative group that could tour cities in Russia and abroad, demonstrating to other children and adults that they can do many things. Perhaps they might even visit your country. We hope that our project will interest partners in your country. Let us take this up together!



Photo: Liliya Yakunicheva

CONTACT DETAILS

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St Petersburg Charitable Medical Society ‘Help’
St Petersburg, а/я 122
191014 Russia
tel: 8-10-(812)-275-04-19, 8-921-186-94-54
email: viktras@bk.ru
<http://www.rsoft.ru/Offices/charity/help.htm>

Short term contracts with international organisations

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) maintains a database of UK experts willing to be seconded to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other international organisations to work on projects in various countries. When an organisation asks for a secondee to do a job the UK wishes to support, the FCO picks will nominate the strongest candidate from its database. A successful UK candidate

will be offered a six-month contract by the FCO with the possibility of extension. They then work for the international organisation.

The FCO has around 250 secondees abroad at any one time with the OSCE, UN, EU or bilaterally with individual governments, working in areas such as:

- prevention of people-trafficking
- democratisation and elections
- gender equality and minority rights
- human rights

- rehabilitation in post-conflict situations
- tolerance and non-discrimination.

Requirements: good qualifications and a strong CV. Speakers of Russian and languages of the Caucasus and Central Asia are in particular demand. For some examples of secondees’ work see www.fcocasestudies.fco.gov.uk.

Those interested should send their CV to OSCESecondments@fco.gov.uk.

BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme 2007

Addressing homelessness in Russia: achieving a wider impact

Under its Small Grants Scheme 2007, the BEARR Trust invites proposals that seek to achieve a wider impact on the challenge of helping young people who are homeless or in institutions to take a normal place in Russian society.

What are the aims and criteria of the Scheme?

The BEARR Trust dedicated its Annual Conference in November 2006 to the challenge of homelessness in Russia and Eurasia. Presentations described initiatives and projects that seek to improve the future for particular groups of homeless in the region (for a full report see the Trust's website at www.bearr.org).

However, the Trust believes there is a large gap between such initiatives and the scale of homelessness. The 2007 Small Grants Scheme aims to bridge that gap by supporting activities that involve one or more of the following:

- Encourage sharing of experience and learning among Russian NGOs involved with the homeless
- Disseminate good practice more widely
- Facilitate cooperation and/or coordination among Russian NGOs working with homeless people
- Draw on successful projects to improve awareness, to influence policy, or to engage public institutions in addressing homelessness
- Propose other, imaginative, ways of achieving the Scheme's aim.

Who can apply?

European non-governmental organisations active in Russia and/or Russian NGOs. Partnerships are encouraged.

How much money is available?

The BEARR Trust expects to have available about £5000 during 2007, which will be payable in instalments rather than as a single grant. The Trust may wish to support more than one initiative through the scheme, so proposals within the range £1000–£5000 are requested. Awards will be made on a matching basis, and not exceed 50% of the overall cost of a proposal.

The BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme 2007 is funded by a grant from the Moscow Office of the law firm Baker Botts

How does an organisation apply for a grant under the scheme?

Send an application to the BEARR Trust by 15 March 2007.

The application may be sent by post to:

Small Grants Scheme 2007
The BEARR Trust
2nd Floor, River House
143-145 Farringdon Road
London EC1R 3AB

or by email to info@bearr.org

What information is required in the application?

The application should be not more than two pages of A4. It should include information on:

- The NGO applying for a grant, its mission and objectives
- Any partner NGO, its mission and objectives
- Objectives, short and long term, of the project proposed, and a brief description of the activities to be supported
- Why the NGO needs a grant from the BEARR Trust, what it will be used for, and how it meets the criteria for the 2007 Small Grant Scheme, set out above
- The proposed total project budget, showing separately the amount requested from BEARR and the contributions to be made by the applicant NGO and other sponsors

What happens after an application is received by the BEARR Trust?

The Trust will acknowledge applications as they are received and contact applicants for any further information or clarification it needs. Trustees hope to review shortlisted proposals at their meeting on 5 April. The Trust will then announce which proposals have been successful.

Jobs for disabled people in Moscow

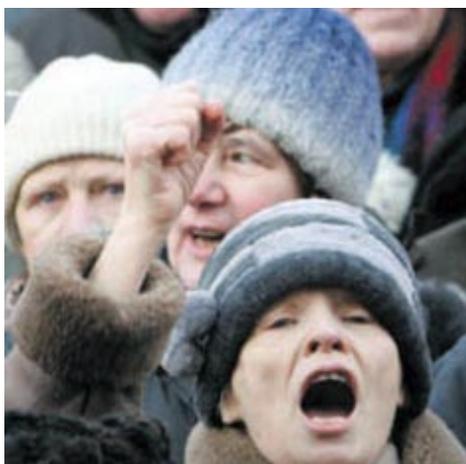
A US firm in Moscow would like to employ disabled Russian staff in jobs for which they are suited, eg receptionist, driver, translator, secretary, interpreter. They have been unable to find such staff. Does anyone know of any agency looking for jobs for the disabled? If so, please contact info@bearr.org.

NGO LAW IN RUSSIA

Veterans' NGOs in Russia and the new law on NGOs

by *Elizaveta Dzhirikova, Director of Sostradanie*

Under the new law on NGOs, the rights which were hitherto protected by the law on NGOs of 1996 have been abolished. All NGOs now have to obtain registration in order to function – not just as a formality – and are thus under the total control of the authorities. In addition, the law covers not only NGOs but also other not-for-profit institutions and religious organisations.



The new law is especially difficult for social organisations delivering assistance to groups such as war veterans, many of whose members are now elderly and infirm. Organisations of victims of political repression, former ghetto internees, children who survived Nazi concentration camps, and associations of prisoners of war from World War II are finding the law particularly burdensome. Previously, recognising their importance as guardians of the national memory, the state had allowed them simpler auditing procedures; now they must comply with the new strict rules.

The law was allegedly intended to protect against terrorism, money-laundering and the activities of western intelligence agencies, and reduce the influence of foreign capital over political processes in Russia.

But the true reasons were fear of 'orange revolutions' and the desire to impose strict state control over any independent public initiative.

What veterans' activities could possibly be of concern to the state authorities? To answer this question, we have to go back two years, when another monstrous law was passed, Law No 122. At the time the wave of protests by pensioners helped to soften the law's provisions, under which responsibility for pensions would have been transferred from federal to municipal level.

Among the leading protesters were the veterans' organizations, including former inmates of Buchenwald or Dachau. Ninety-year-old ex-prisoners planned to don concentration camp uniforms, assemble at the Monument to the Unknown Soldier and throw their medals into the fire as a symbol of their indignation at the humiliating terms of the new law. The impact of this was unpredictable and potentially damaging to the authorities. The elite would have been shown up in the eyes of the population. Three days later the planned changes were reversed: pensions returned to federal auspices. Similar demonstrations planned by former child prisoners also led to their benefits being swiftly restored.

These huge crowds of elderly people, whom nobody had previously taken seriously, frightened senior officials. But the new law will make it easy to put them in their place. Many



veterans are old and infirm. Their strength lies in their numbers and their common ideas and experiences. If they are unable to form organisations, this strength will be destroyed.

How will the new law destroy veterans' associations?

First of all they will not be able to handle the re-registration procedures which are complicated, incomprehensible and frightening. Second, along with the usual checks, the registration authorities may at any time demand from the NGO all sorts of documentation about their activities. But many NGOs have not kept a lot of paperwork. Now it will be easy to paralyse the work of an 'incorrect' organisation. Third, the authorities now have the right to refuse to re-register an organisation for arbitrary reasons.

The law has given rise to serious social contradictions. Its drafters say that it will not harm 'genuine' NGOs, only those that break the law. Experts, however, consider that the new rules are in breach of the Constitution, open to challenge, and unjustified.

The President has said he supports the new law, which will help to 'protect the political situation in Russia against external interference' and prevent the financing of extremist and terrorist activity. Members of the Duma, believing that NGO activity in Russia needs greater state control, mostly support the law. NGOs and their representatives in the Civic Chamber, in contrast, feel strongly that the restrictions are unjustified, give excessive powers to the authorities, and allow the state to exert undue pressure on useful public initiatives.

CONTACT DETAILS

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Elizaveta Dzhirikova, Director of Sostradanie, is also a member of the expert group on human rights of the Civic Chamber under the President of Russia

Crossing the Line Vagrancy, Homelessness and Social Displacement in Russia

by **Svetlana Stephenson**

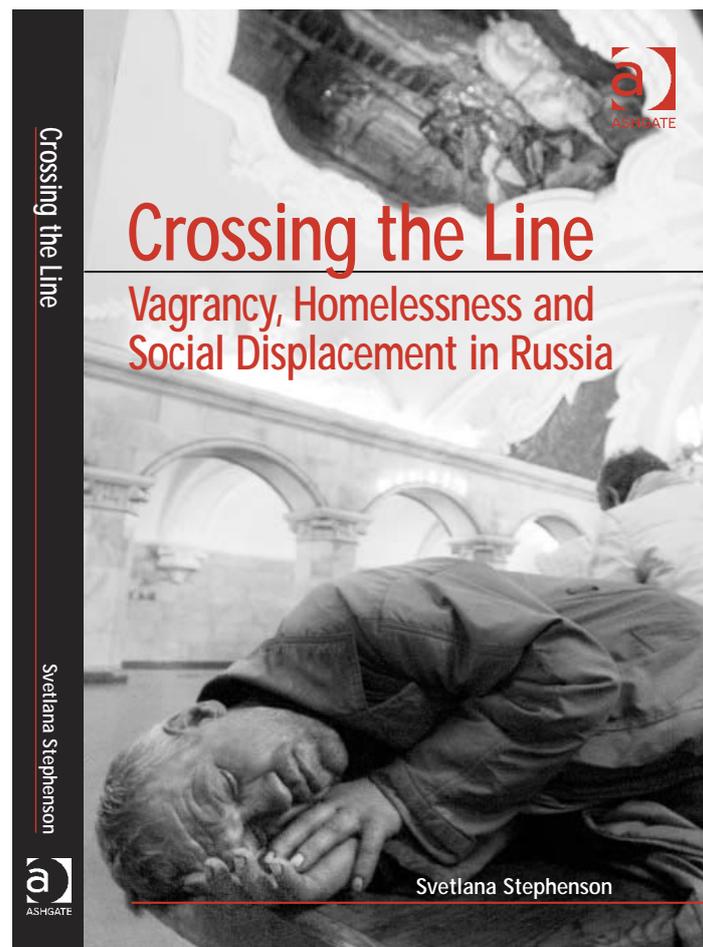
Reviewed by David Maidment

Dr. Svetlana Stephenson has been writing on homelessness in Russia since 1996. In this book, she brings together a comprehensive review of adult homelessness in both Communist and post-Communist societies, in the context of Russian historical attitudes to vagrants and the homeless, and referring to restrictions imposed in the sixteenth century and punitive laws imposed by Peter the Great.

The author takes individual stories and traces how people were displaced from 'settled' society, balancing this with an analysis of the social and political practices that create the conditions for social displacement. She follows the path of the vulnerable losing their social bonds: ex-prisoners, children leaving institutional care, migrants, workers with irregular employment history, alcoholics, the elderly, the divorced. She places the system of territorial registration and the need for documentation (*Propiska*) at the heart of the challenges facing people whose hold on family and societal bonds is tenuous. In the post-Communist era, the registration system remains as pernicious as ever, even exacerbated by the loss of public space and access to housing through privatisation.

Her analysis is based on records from Moscow and to a lesser extent St Petersburg, as little data is available from elsewhere. She meets and interviews people living in the train and metro stations, markets, cafes and churches of Moscow. She records their survival activities and their interaction with both the regular and criminal societies. Above all, she records the descending spiral of people trapped by their circumstances, losing the bonds that might have prevented their drift into hopelessness.

Homeless people in the early years of Communism were initially treated as deserving of a better life in the class struggle, but this quickly degenerated into their being stigmatised as 'parasites' and becoming 'socially excluded'. Since 1989 the increase in the number of vagrants is very obvious, caused by a number of structural processes which Svetlana Stephenson analyses in some detail. As well as the problems of registration, the lack of adequate social welfare services in Russia means that there is no system to catch those who need help beyond their own efforts.



Dr Stephenson's conclusion is that such people are denied their rights in the Russian state. The limited intervention of charities is welfare rather than rights-based. Many *bomzhi* try to hold out, but fail as public attitudes deny their worth; and, as they lose hope and self-care, the process of stigmatisation and rejection accelerates. She concludes that there is an urgent need for change in the laws on registration, but current state concerns with security and terrorism have put liberalisation of these statutes on the back burner.

Dr Stephenson aims 'to aid understanding of the hidden world of social suffering, opening up homelessness for public debate without biased moral judgements.' Her book is thoroughly researched – there are sixteen pages of bibliography! – but it is written in a jargon-free and accessible style and will interest the concerned lay reader as well as the academic. I hope her book will motivate activists, government officials and politicians to address the rights of a large underclass of people excluded from Russian society and help to bring hope to these vulnerable people.

Crossing the Line. Vagrancy, Homelessness and Social Displacement in Russia is published by Ashgate, 2006

Date for your diary

The BEARR Trust's **2007 Annual Conference** will be held on **23 November 2007** at the Charity Centre near Euston, London.

The conference will focus on the demographic challenge facing Russia and its neighbours, and the implications for policy and for the NGO sector. Details will appear on the BEARR website as plans are firmed up. If you wish to feed in any ideas on subjects or speakers, please email ukadmin@bearr.org.

If you wish to receive a conference programme and application form when available, and are not already on BEARR's mailing list, please send your email address to info@bearr.org

The BEARR Trust has moved to new offices run by Oneworld for a range of charities. We are next door to the Guardian building on Farringdon Road. Our direct line telephone number (020 7239 1412) is only routinely manned one day a week, normally Thursday. If there is no reply, you can leave a message with our host organisation, Oneworld, on 020 7239 1410, but if possible please send an email instead to info@bearr.org or, if urgent, ukadmin@bearr.org.

The BEARR Trust
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Email: info@bearr.org
www.bearr.org

The BEARR Trust endeavours to include as wide a debate and as broad a range of opinions as possible in the Newsletter to capture the diversity of NGO work in the UK, Russia and Eurasia. However, The BEARR Trust cannot be held responsible for the views expressed by authors in their articles.

About The BEARR Trust

Patrons: The Duchess of Abercorn, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Elena Bashkirova Barenboim, Lady Fall, Myra Green OBE, Professor Geoffrey Hosking, Lady Hurd, HE Sir Roderic Lyne KBE CMG, Sir Jonathan Miller CBE, Anthony Oppenheimer, Rair Simonyan, Sir Andrew Wood GCMG

The BEARR Trust is a British registered charity. It was formed in 1991 to act as a bridge between the welfare and health sectors of Britain and the former Soviet republics. Its mission is:

- to promote and support cooperation between the third sector in the United Kingdom and appropriate partners in Russia and Eurasia, especially in health and social welfare, with a view to strengthening civil society.

The Trust will do this by:

- supporting organisations committed to reform in the health and social sectors
- facilitating networking and exchange of information
- encouraging sharing of experience and learning
- helping organisations working in the region to identify potential partners
- providing seed funding to assist selected organisations to launch or extend partnerships
- lobbying with and on behalf of organisations that share our objectives.

Trustees: Michael McCulloch (Chairman), John Church, Stephen Dalziel, Yuri Goligorsky, Daryl Hardman, Marcia Levy, Ann Lewis CMG, Anne Lindley, Nicola Ramsden

Staff: Information Officer: Renate Wright
Web manager, Moscow: Alexander Pokhilko

Volunteers: Philip Michaelson, Martin Edwards,
Olga Selivanova, Ceri Utting

Editor: Ann Lewis

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Become a Friend of BEARR and receive the Newsletter as well as details of our events throughout the year. If possible, please subscribe and pay through our website at www.bearr.org – this eases our administrative burden. Otherwise, return the form with your cheque to The BEARR Trust office.

- I wish to become a Friend of The BEARR Trust. Minimum gift £30 per year.
- I wish to renew my Friend's subscription and enclose a cheque for £30.
- I wish to make a donation and enclose a cheque for £..... (payable to The BEARR Trust).
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