Newsletter October 2007

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The friendship link between Bo District in Sierra Leone and Warwick District, UK

Visitors From Sierra Leone

Johannes Mallah.. A thoughtful chairperson

Maada Fobay, Bo OWL finance officer

Melvyn Caulker, chief administrator of Bo City Council

Plans are firming up for visits by people from Bo in October/November as follows:

Melvyn Caulker, Chief Executive of Bo Town Council 9 -28 October.

Johannes Mallah Chair of Bo OWL 27 Oct – 11 Nov

Unfortunately Maada Fobay has had his visa refused, but we hope to get him here as soon as possible.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU TO BE INVOLVED

- Participation in one of the public events listed below
- A visit to your school/organisation/place of work
- A visit to your home or other social occasion
- To stay at your home as a guest
- Anything else you may think of

PROGRAMME

Sunday 28th October Lunch Time Farewell party for Melvyn Caulker c/o Jane Knight 2 Gaveston Road. Please bring contribution of food

Monday 29th October Evening Public General Meeting venue t.b.a. Johannes will talk about the Bo OWL community centre and their hopes and plans for the future

Tuesday 6 November Morning at Bath Place. Workshop with Johannes on the future of One World Link

Big Africa Event - November 10th.

Details are on the back page, perhaps you might like to use this as a poster.

25th Anniversary Celebrations

Johannes surveys the 25th anniversary march past

Maada and Johannes leave Mosque in Bo after Muslim celebration of OWL's anniversary

The following events were held in Warwick:
Picture Exhibition: Adults and children from the UK and from Bo have produced pictures that illustrates the differences and the similarities in our lives.
Archive Event: The archive event was held on 9th June to gather memories from many people who have been involved in the link over the past 25years. Documents were collected, memories recorded and photographs identified. These have now formed the basis of the time line on our web page.
Youth Debate/Road Shows: we identified a need for school/youth organisation visits in the form of road shows. The presentations are designed to fit into the citizenship curriculum and also the geography and RE curriculum.
Big Africa Event. This is to be held on 10th November which is the end of our year of celebrations.

29th October Open Meeting

There will be a public meeting on Monday 29th October at 7pm in St Peter's Centre Dormer Place. Johannes and Maada will talk about the Bo OWL community centre and their hopes and plans for the future

Future of Warwick OWL

On the 3rd October Warwick OWL held a meeting to discuss the future, when the following was decided.
The broad and simplified Aim of the group it was agreed, was 'to form partnerships & friendships for mutual benefit'. It is not a primarily a fund raising charity. The immediate situation was discussed: that Jane will be stepping down as Chair at the end of this year, and both Brian and John wish to reduce their workload within the group. This brings into sharp relief two fundamental issues: firstly that there has been no success bringing individuals on to fill the roles of these three; and secondly that this means that the group's remit from now on will have realistically to reflect the lesser experience and time commitment of the other members.
In order to help the focus of the meeting it was decided to list Weaknesses, then Opportunities and then Priorities.

Weaknesses: Too much reliance on certain individuals; logistics of the link and general communication; too few people here speaking to too few people in Bo; reluctance to use the phone; internet contact not yet sufficiently developed; involve- ment with other groups here; lack of youth; lack of commitment from some schools; underdeveloped use of the press; try- ing to go in too many directions.

Opportunities: Agreeing priorities with Bo; schools; must clarify the benefits of an activity…..(what *use* do teacher's exchanges have?); to *facilitate* other people's efforts; campaigning and lobbying – using our experience with agencies & local govt.; (**no** Political lobbying) involvement of Sierra Leonean students and the diaspora here; choose projects annually to focus on, ie schools, or women, or youth. Enterprise and small businesses, - ways of bringing small enterprise and effort together from this region and Bo; have one individual from our group as the key person for each chosen sector. (our focus on local govt should become less of a priority as WDC become more formally involved)

Priorities: some sectors as priorities to offer to Maada and Johannes when they arrive: Schools, Youth skills, Enterprise and Women.

Visit of Local Government Officials To Bo

Warwick District Council has been linked with Bo District for the last 26 years as part of a friendship link (One World Link - OWL) which has involved school, women, church and hospital groups over the years. The local councils have also been involved in principle mainly for protocol purposes during that time. However with the re-establishment of local government in Sierra Leone in 2004, the councils have engaged more strongly in the link and they are represented on the CLGF Sierra Leone Task Force. Leamington Town Council is now twinned with Bo City Council.

Since 2004 Warwickshire County Council has convened a local authority sub group of OWL which has representatives of Warwick District Council and Leamington Town Council on it. This group is committed to working in partnership with Bo City Council and including in its contact Kenema and Coventry City Council representatives where appropriate. This programme has been worked out closely with the Mayor of Bo and his deputy and his senior officers. It is part of the wider local government support programme of the Decentralisation Secretariat headed by Emmanuel Gaima.

Before the programme can take off, it is necessary for the officers concerned to familiarise themselves with the council staff and working environment in Warwickshire and Bo and Kenema in general. The tasks in the programme which range from planning and development in a general context, and focusing on finance and waste management and development of ward committees in particular, have been discussed at a distance by staff and members of all the councils. Such a programme cannot go ahead effectively without exploratory visits to both councils. The Mayor of Bo and his deputy are familiar with the Warwickshire local government operations having visited in 2005 and 2006. The Bo City Council Chief Administrator Melvyn Caulker is scheduled to visit Warwickshire for 3 weeks in October 2007, supported by the British High Commission.

The proposed visit is for 4 officers and 1 member to travel to Bo for 10 days from November 12th to 23rd or 16th to 26th).

OBJECTIVES OF VISIT

It is proposed that the following officers accompanied by the chair of OWL (Cllr. Jane Knight) who is a member of Warwick District Council and who is a vice chair of the Sierra Leone Task Force travel to Bo in November 2007.

1 Phil Triggs - WCC Group Manager, Treasury and Pensions
2 Glenn Fleet – WCC sustainability unit manager
3 Clive Harridge from ENTEC planning consultants and ex president of the RTPI
4 Richard Hall – Head of Environmental Health Dept. Warwick District Council.

The choice of visitors was based on the needs and issues related to development of Bo identified by the Mayor of Bo (Dr. Wusu Sannoh) and his staff.

The objective is for the visiting officers to familiarise themselves with working conditions and the challenges facing Bo City Council. They will also hope to fit in some short contact with Kenema City Council with a view to sharing any support which is developed in Bo with the assistance of Coventry City Council. The latter has expressed a willingness to host the Bo Chief Administrator during his visit to give him further insights about different council issues depending on their struc- tures. He will also be hosted by the Warwickshire councils' chief executives. Bo City Council members and staff mean- while will organise a programme tailored to the expertise of the officers they wish to host and focussing on the Bo Development Plan commitments. Cllr. Knight will focus on governance issues assisted by the officers.

OUTCOME

The visit will provide an opportunity for the partners in the programme to start on the development of a plan of action for the 3 year good practice scheme led by the Decentralisation Secretariat and CLGF (Commonwealth Local Government Fo- rum) . As funds become available from this scheme the action plan will commence. It will be focused on the outcome of the visit discussions and agreed recommendations within a context of:-

5 Governance and better management of services (e.g. waste)
6 Engaging with the community
7 Smooth relationships with other stakeholders such as enabling access to the Local Government Development Grants
8 Aiming for Millennium goals where appropriate.

The framework for the 3 year plan will have been discussed in October with the Chief Administrator.

The three year plan will then be developed and be ready for implementation from 2008 onwards.

The

Big Africa Event

One World Link's 25th Anniversary Celebration

Saturday, 10 November 2007
Town Hall, Leamington Spa
from 6:30 pm

Food and licensed bar.
Music and dancing by:

King Masco
and his band

Hamana Bjemakan
African dance and drums

Embaire Strikes Back
Ugandan xylophone group

Advance tickets £10 (includes food)
On the door £5 (food not included)
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