



23rd March 2025

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing in support of Photo Weston ACE project grant application, in my role as Support Manager for the charity Refugees Welcome North Somerset (RWNS).

At RWNS, I work closely with refugees and asylum seekers to help them settle in North Somerset, particularly in central Weston-super-Mare. Our work focuses on integration, wellbeing, community, and sustainable independence.

I had the privilege of being involved in the Photo Weston Project in 2024—not only as an audience member but also by providing a venue. I also spent time talking with participants during and after the project, which gave me a strong sense of the impact it had on them.

The stories I heard were moving. One participant shared that it was the first time they'd ever held a camera. Another told me they'd been waiting for years to somehow tell their story since leaving their home country. One participant said they were now considering studying photography at college, and another mentioned how the project helped them explore their new town with a fresh perspective, through the lens of a camera.

The exhibition, partly set up in our local town centre park, gave participants the chance to become exhibiting artists. The pride and sense of accomplishment that came with this opportunity was immeasurable. Displaying their work in such a public space helped foster a sense of belonging for people who can often feel isolated. It also sparked important conversations about cultural diversity and the role of the arts in bringing people together.

What sets Photo Weston apart in our area is its unique ability to bring together refugees, asylum seekers, and local communities in such a meaningful way. I believe there is no other project in the area that offers such an opportunity for expression, empowerment, and connection.

The success of Photo Weston 2024 was clear, not only in its meaningful impact on participants but also in the way it brought the community together. I truly believe that continuing this important work is essential.

This project provides a unique space for participants to open up about their experiences and connect with their new community. Creating a sense of place and purpose is key to helping people feel “at home,” and with that stability, they are able to thrive.

I’m excited to continue supporting this project and look forward to seeing what the future holds, both in terms of the ongoing work of Photo Weston and the positive impact it will continue to have.

I wholeheartedly support the Photo Weston Project’s application for this grant and believe it will make a lasting difference in the lives of refugees, asylum seekers, and the community as a whole.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Southwell
Support Manager

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