



Convoy Report for June 2019

This year's early convoy saw a move from May to June, due to the delay in opening phase 2 of the CWUHA supported Phoenix Disabled Centre run by our amazing partners Mad-Aid. We also had a change in how we reached the continent as we travelled by Eurotunnel, which we found extremely easy and would recommend for future convoys.

Due to a couple of last minute drop outs we only had four vehicles travelling, 3 from the UK and 1 from the Republic of Ireland. Out of the 8 drivers we had 3 first time volunteers who report having a brilliant experience and all 3 will be making a personal contribution to this report.

The convoy took the usual route leaving the UK on Saturday June 15th through France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania and into Moldova taking 5 days to complete the journey, arriving on Wednesday June 19th.



After spending some time with the children we started the unloading process



This turned out to be quite a task as the temperature was in the mid 30's.



Some of the children joined us to help with the unloading



Fevzi and Parminder doing some heavy lifting.



With the intense heat it wasn't long before we were all reaching for the water.



When we had finished unloading and cooled off, it was time for a bit of fun.



And the reaction from one of the children...



This is Fevzi's attempt at photobombing...

Once we had cleared customs on the Thursday we travelled to the Phoenix center and received the usual warm welcome from the children and staff who performed the bread and salt ritual, reserved for the most respected friends and guest.



On Friday we delivered aid to a kindergarten (ages 3-5), where the children spent time singing and dancing for us. When you receive such a charming welcome it's sometimes easy to forget the reason we are there.

The Kindergartens receive no state funding and so are heavily reliant on organisations such as the CWUHA.

Our next engagement was the official opening of the Phoenix center phase 2. The project was always meant to be self-sufficient, phase 2 is a home for the care of the elderly and will generate an income

which will ensure the total success of the project.

On the face of it this looks and is a brilliant facility. However, when you consider the building was derelict when the work started to turn it into a center of excellence for disabled children under phase 1 and home for the elderly under phase 2, it is an incredible feat of hard work and determination. An achievement which should be shared with all those from the CWU and CWU Ireland who have donated, fundraised or raised aid and travelled on a convoy.



Along with the aid we delivered, each child received a goody bag which contained colouring pencils, paper, a toy and some sweets.



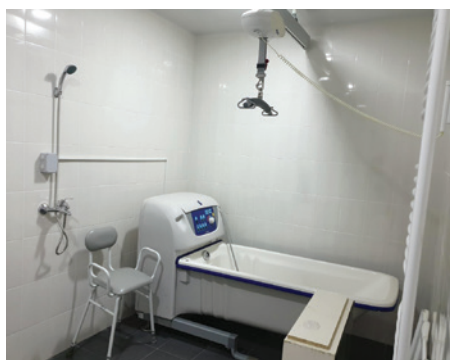
- The official opening was a great celebration enjoyed by all.



- Victoria Dunford, the driving force behind the Phoenix project speaking at the official opening.



- Children from the center enjoying the celebration.



- Some photographs of the facilities in Phase 2

The following statements have been written by the first time volunteers on the June convoy.

"I felt the convoy was well organised and team leaders had good knowledge of the whole journey to and from Moldova. Good drivers in the convoy and all had a laugh.

The whole experience at the Phoenix centre was priceless and the memories will last a lifetime. To see the kids smiling and laughing and full of joy was also a heartfelt highlight of the convoy.

CWUHA a BIG thanks for giving me this opportunity to be a part of this Convoy."

Parminder Sethi
Royal Mail



"Reflections on convoy to Moldova 2019

It was always in my mind to take part in a CWUHA convoy to Moldova but I was always a bit apprehensive. However, after talking to Mick, and Joe who travelled on last September's convoy, the advice and support they gave me was invaluable. So I decided to give it a go and now I'm delighted I got accepted as it was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

It was pretty hectic before we left raising funds, asking for sponsorship and filling the wish list but I could be with no better man than Mick Walsh. I learned pretty quickly if you don't ask you won't get and I have to thank all the generous donors who sponsored me and also the invaluable help and assistance from Pascal Connolly & Jimmy O'Connor and all the staff at CWU HQ in Dublin.

Heading off on that Saturday morning, catching the ferry and driving through North Wales I was pretty nervous but when I met Lenny & Steve our convoy leaders at service station on the M6 I was put pretty much at ease with their good humour and professionalism. Then when I met the rest of the Drivers at the channel tunnel I knew that we had a great team heading to Moldova.

Driving down through central Europe was pretty uneventful but with temperatures in the high 30's my co-driver was the most chilled out driver I have ever travelled with. It was very impressive how the convoy led by Lenny and Steve organised fuel stops, meal breaks, paid tolls, booked hotels and dealing with customs etc.

When we arrived in Moldova I was pretty shocked at the state of the infrastructure, the roads especially were pretty horrendous and when driving out to the Phoenix centre I could not believe the state of the road down to the centre which was in sharp contrast to the centre itself which stood out like a beacon of hope. It was very impressive and is a testament to all the good work carried out over the years by the CWUHA and others to bring it to its current state. The welcome we received from the children and staff was heart-warming and unforgettable. It was great to see at first hand all the aid being delivered to the Center, kindergarten and vulnerable families. The new wing for the old folk's home was also very impressive and it will be great to see a blend of young and old at the centre where one can learn off the other.

I left Moldova with a sense of pride and satisfaction for what the convoy had achieved. Also a sense of companionship with my fellow colleagues and I hope that we keep in touch as this was a great team and everyone played a part in bringing a smile to many faces. I hope to support this worthy cause for many years to come."

Eamonn
CWU Ireland.



"Words can never describe a Convoy Experience...

I had been an admirer of CWUHA for many years and have been a member for a while now. Having attended previous AGMs and stood in awe at the good work that the charity does, little did I know that I would be a convoy driver experiencing the incredible uplifting and inspiring events of CWUHA's June Convoy to Moldova.

There are many highs - so many to list individually. But the opening of the new block at the Phoenix Centre was truly a special day. As a regular visitor to Calais and Dunkirk (assisting refugees) I have witnessed many inspiring and difficult scenarios but this was very different.

The experience has seen new friendships forged and existing friendships strengthened. My horizons have been broadened in a way I thought not possible.

One of the big things about this charity, which is clear to see, is that the aid gets taken to exactly where it is needed - there is no 'middle-person' and so I had the benefit of seeing those smiles first hand, which is priceless.

I had a lot of banter with the team, which when you are driving for up to 10 hours a day you need, otherwise your sanity is pushed to the limits. Steve was a great convoy partner - a fabulously experienced driver and the perfect co-driver for me.

In closing, a special mention to our friends at CWU Ireland, Mick and Eamonn. A wonderful friendship was forged. By the end of the fortnight Mick was calling me son - and I was calling him dad (the rest of the convoy called me mini-Mick!).

For the record I would like to thank CWUHA for allowing me this opportunity and also to the CWU for their support in facilitating my request. It might be a bit cliché, but genuinely, words can never quite describe a convoy experience. I expect this will not be my last convoy!"

Fevzi Hussein
Newbie, CWU HQ



The following organisations have also played a massive part in the success of the Phoenix project and the Convoy and should quite rightly take pride in the fact.

Royal Mail Group, BT Group, OpenReach, An Post, Eir, CWU Ireland, CWU, CWU Branches and Members, Pellacraft and UnionLine. Along with our in-country partners, MAD-Aid and Moldova Aid.

Finally we would like to express our thanks to **Victoria**, the driving force behind the **Phoenix project** and the person who makes the final border crossing bearable. Why not be part of something special and apply to be a volunteer.

More details can be found at www.cwuha.org or by emailing cwuhaprojectworkers@gmail.com



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