

TWIN CITIES ABERDEEN and GOMEL



It is now 26 years since Aberdeen signed a Twinning Agreement with Gomel in Belarus. These years have seen exchanges and links between medical expertise of all kinds, sports teams, a child-care project, women's groups, deaf communities, churches, Scouts, planners, young apprentices, veterans, schools, civic heads, to name but a few.

At first, the aim was largely humanitarian, and the project was medical, as Gomel was severely affected by the Chernobyl explosion in 1986. At the prompting of the then Lord Provost, Aberdeen Royal Infirmary sent three doctors to gauge how the city could help. As a result, exchanges of personnel, students, information and equipment has continued to this day. In 1991, a very specialised piece of equipment was requested by Gomel – a machine for testing for contaminated food, that could not be tampered with. This was donated by the people of Aberdeen, through a £32,000 fund-raiser by the Friends of Gomel.

From this important initiative, it was easy to see many more opportunities for links,

that would benefit both communities, from young people to the elderly. The friendship has developed, with each city learning more and more of each other's history, culture and people.

Belarus is still an economically-challenged country, though there have been enormous steps forward in the last 26 years - so Aberdeen continues to support these projects through a small Council grant, and local fundraising. These are managed by the Aberdeen Gomel Trust (itself 25 years old) and the Friends of Gomel.

Certainly, as people, we have much in common, they are positive, hard-working and family-orientated; and, above all, they are very hospitable. The warmth of their welcome to visitors from Aberdeen is often overwhelming, although the soup will not be Cullen Skink, but rather Borsch!

For more information please contact Beverley on 07979 448843

