



## **North Devon Council**

Report Date: Monday, 4 December 2023

Topic: Illegal Migration Act – Cap on Safe and Legal Routes, Consultation

Report by: Jeremy Mann, Head of Planning, Housing and Health

## **North Devon Council**

Report Date: Monday, 4 December 2023

Topic: Illegal Migration Act – Cap on Safe and Legal Routes, Consultation

Report by: Jeremy Mann, Head of Planning, Housing and Health

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. Government has launched a consultation with local authorities to introduce an annual cap on the number of refugee entrants using safe and legal routes coming to the UK. This is to meet a duty under the Illegal Migration Act 2023.
- 1.2. It provides opportunity for local authorities to put forward their capacity to house and support people coming to their districts in light of current pressures. The aim is to establish a migration system which is sustainable and well managed.
- 1.3. The Government's consultation document was launched a few weeks ago, reference:  
  
<https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/safe-and-legal-routes-cap-consultation>
- 1.4. This paper gives the Council the chance to make representation before the deadline of the 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2023.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. It is RECOMMENDED that Members:
  - 2.1.1 Approve the draft local policy objective in paragraph 4.5.
  - 2.1.2 Give delegated authority to the Chief Executive to put forward the proposal to Government in paragraph 4.7 on behalf of North Devon Council or for this information to form part of a collaborative response (Team Devon, whole SW region) if this is considered to be a more appropriate and flexible option.

### 3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Reason (2.1.1.): To establish clear policy goals for refugee resettlement in north Devon, while recognising that community capacity will limit its behaviour.
- 3.2 Reason (2.1.2.): To ensure that a response is conveyed to Government before the end of the consultation period on the 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2023, a non-return will be interpreted as a 'zero capacity commitment'.

### 4 REPORT

- 4.1 The Local Government Association has produced an additional useful background document on this consultation, which is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-consults-on-safe-and-legal-routes-for-refugees#:~:text=The%20cap%20will%20include%20the,and%20the%20Community%20Sponsorship%20Scheme>

- 4.2 The number of people sadly displaced globally is increasing, reference the UNHCR (United Nations Refugee Agency) refugee population statistics in Appendix A. Mark Read from ND Salvation Army is quoted as saying, "*The projections for human migration over the next ten, twenty or more years, mean that communities are going to need to learn how to welcome, how to integrate, how to share life globally*".

- 4.3 North Devon has already shown its willingness to welcome and integrate refugees into its community. This started in 2017, with the advent of the community sponsorship schemes, and more recently with host families now accommodating over 100 people under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. This has occurred notwithstanding the significant unmet local housing need in the district.

- 4.4 To date, the Council has responded positively to each of the specific refugee resettlement schemes established by Government. This consultation, however, provides the Council with the opportunity of setting out its capacity to house and support refugees against a clear local policy objective. This would promote the place – based approach advocated by Government.

- 4.5 A draft policy NDC statement on refugee resettlement is set out below:

*Throughout this century, North Devon has repeatedly demonstrated how seriously it takes its responsibility to reach out to the world's most vulnerable people. North Devon Council is cognisant of the housing problems faced by many people in North Devon and our need to balance the needs of local residents with our moral and*



*legal responsibility to demonstrate support for the Government's refugee resettlement schemes.*

*North Devon Council has entered into discussion with local support groups and statutory partners, it will work collaboratively within our community's resources to meet the critical needs of people relocating to North Devon, as well as, supporting integration into local employment and communities.*

4.6 Whilst this consultation is specifically between Government and Local Authorities, your officers have engaged within partners across Devon, through a DCC event on the 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2023, and more recently with local organisations, including the Pickwell Foundation on the 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2023.

4.7 A realistic and evidenced based picture on ND's capacity to house and support refugees in 2025, in accordance with the draft policy statement, is 5 households within the North Devon District area. They would need to be accommodated in homes exclusively delivered through community sponsorship schemes. 3 – 4 of these would be single person households. 1 household could be a larger family who has a 3 bedroom need. 1 family could also be accommodated who has a greater complexity of need, e.g. who requires their property to be adapted in some way.

4.8 The creative use of the proposed Government funding with local partners who have an entrepreneurial culture is the most likely way of sourcing the required accommodation.

4.9 The projected multiple local pressures on other areas of housing has ruled out direct NDC housing provision in the first instance.

4.10 Government's full consultation paper is provided in Appendix B. It suggests that there should be a politically agreed commitment to any figure proposed and that any proposition represents a consensus view in the area. Response in two tier areas needs to be agreed by District and County Councils. This can be facilitated by a consideration of this issue at the Team Devon meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2023.

4.11 Delivery of any NDC commitment is likely to be closely monitored by Government and specific Memorandums of Understanding may be introduced to govern this.

## 5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Current local authority tariffs will apply. £20,520 per person provided over five years for UKRS (UK Resettlement Scheme) arrivals and over three years for Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). This will also include the current funding rates for ESOL (£850 per adult) and child education (up to £4,500 per child). The £2,600 for local health bodies will also still be available.

## 6 EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

6.1 This paper provides more opportunity for people with protected characteristics to live in north Devon and fully participate in the local community.

6.2 The potential adverse impact of the recommendations has been limited by the scale of ambition proposed in 2025 and by the plan to deliver all the accommodation through community sponsorship schemes.

6.3 A Equality Impact Assessment has been submitted separately.

## 7 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

7.1 The proposed use of community sponsorship properties in 2025 will not result in any in-scope increase in emissions.

## 8 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

8.1 Refugee resettlement is a priority programme of action under the adopted Housing and Community Safety Plan.

## 9 CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

9.1 The decision in respect of the recommendations in this report can be made by this Committee pursuant to delegated powers provided in Part 3 Annexe 1, paragraph 1.

## 10 STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

## 11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following additional background papers were used in the preparation of this report: (The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report).

11.1 None.



## 12 STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers: Jeremy Mann, Head of Planning, Housing and Health.