

## **Ukraine Crisis: Message from Walkerburn and District Community Council**

Walkerburn and District Community Council has set up a small sub-committee, chaired by Colin Kerr, to act as an Information and Help Exchange for anyone in the community offering accommodation for Ukrainian refugees.

The sub-committee will liaise with various Council, Government and charitable agencies involved in settling refugees and will provide direct help on request to any residents involved in accommodating refugees. The committee will maintain lists of useful contacts such as interpreters and local Ukrainians.

Scottish Borders Council has set up a Ukraine Crisis Operational Group and information has been published to the Council's website at: [www.scotborders.gov.uk/ukraine](http://www.scotborders.gov.uk/ukraine) There is a dedicated mailbox for specific queries from residents : [ukrainian.support@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:ukrainian.support@scotborders.gov.uk)

### **Homes for Ukraine**

The UK government has asked that anyone willing to sponsor and accommodate refugees for a minimum of 6 months registers their interest. This does not commit individuals to anything at this stage since it is currently up to the individual sponsor to make contact with refugees who may be eligible to enter the UK. However, the potential sponsor will then be kept up-to-date with developments and may eventually arrange to actively sponsor someone.

Eligibility for the special visa scheme for UK entry is restricted to Ukrainian nationals (or an immediate family member of one) who were resident in Ukraine prior to 1 January 2022. People arriving under this scheme will be able to live and work in the UK for up to three years and to access healthcare, benefits, employment support, education, and English language tuition

If you are eventually sponsoring someone, checks (background and in-person) will be carried out on you as a sponsor, your family and the accommodation that you will provide to ensure a safe and suitable environment for people arriving from Ukraine. In similar fashion, checks will be carried out on refugees to provide for your security.

At present, the majority of those arriving are likely to be women and children, disabled people of all ages and the elderly. Men between 18 and 60 are barred from leaving Ukraine in order to support the military and many single women are also choosing to stay.

The government will make a goodwill gesture of £350 per month to help cover additional costs for hosts. Hosts are not expected to cover food costs and other necessities, that should be covered by refugees themselves who will have access to the benefit systems and be able to work.

### **Warm Scots Welcome Scheme**

The Scottish Government, acting as a 'Super Sponsor', has set up the Warm Scots Welcome Scheme. The scheme is available as an option to Ukrainians when applying for a visa by opting for the organisational sponsor route, and selecting "The Scottish Government" from the drop-down box in response to the question "Which organisation is sponsoring you?" Scottish people willing to volunteer and provide homes for Ukrainians arriving through the sponsorship scheme are encouraged to sign up at the UK Government "Homes for Ukraine" portal. Their details will be shared with Scottish Government so that appropriate matches can be arranged while immediate support is provided by the Scottish Government to those arriving.

### **Safeguards for Hosts**

We don't know yet what decisions will be taken to safeguard hosts legally but at the very least anyone offering to be a host must check with their insurance company and mortgage lender or landlord first. Offering anything other than a room in the main home – such as an annex above a garage or a cabin or a separate flat – could create a legal “tenancy”. If the owner of a second home or investment property were to allow several families to stay in a property, it may give rise to the need to register as a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO).

**Give us Feedback Please!**

Get in touch if you have any questions and we'll try to answer or direct you to an appropriate organisation.

If you have already registered as a possible host, please consider telling us so that we can send on to you any information we receive about people looking for sponsorship. Your experience might also be useful to others. Email the Chair, Colin Kerr, on [cjkerr66@gmail.com](mailto:cjkerr66@gmail.com) or speak to any WDCC member.