

16th March 2022

The war in Ukraine: supporting evacuees and potential implications for Councils

Purpose

1. To update members on the implications of the war in Ukraine for Welsh councils, both in terms of responding to the humanitarian situation that has developed as people flee the war and the potential impact of the sanctions that have been placed on Russia by the UK Government and other states.

Background

2. On 24th February 2022, Russia began a military assault on Ukraine. This significant assault continues and has led to millions of people fleeing many towns and cities either to other areas in Ukraine or to neighbouring countries. It is estimated that nearly 2.8 million people have left Ukraine. Given the shelling and bombing of residential areas in Ukraine, and the continuation of the war, it is not known when the country may be safe enough for people to return. This has led to a humanitarian crisis and the need for other countries to provide refuge and a place of safety for those fleeing the war, the majority of whom are women, children and older or disabled people.
3. In response to the unprovoked actions of Russia in invading and launching a military assault on Ukraine, the UK Government and a number of other countries have introduced a wide range of sanctions on Russia and identified individuals who are believed to be supportive of the Russian President.
4. Councils will be directly impacted by both the sanctions that have been imposed but also in terms of providing safety and security for those from Ukraine who will arrive in Wales. A copy of an open letter received from Mayors in Ukraine towns is attached as Appendix 1.

Safe and legal routes to the UK

5. The UK Government has established different routes for people from Ukraine to seek to arrive in the UK and seek a place of safety:

Extended family route

6. The Ukraine Family Scheme allows applicants to join family members or extend their stay in the UK. It is free to apply, visas will apply for 3 years and to be eligible someone must:
 - be applying to join or accompany your UK-based family member; and

- be Ukrainian or the immediate family member of a Ukrainian national who is applying to the scheme; and
 - have been residing in Ukraine on or immediately before 1 January 2022 (including those who have now left Ukraine)
7. People can apply if they've already arrived in the UK and meet the requirements above. The family member must be one of the following:
 - a British national
 - someone settled in the UK - for example, they have indefinite leave to remain, settled status or proof of permanent residence
 - someone from the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland who has pre-settled status and started living in the UK before 1 January 2021
 - someone with refugee status or humanitarian protection in the UK.
 8. Evidence must be provided that their UK-based family member are one of the following: an immediate family member; an extended family member; or an immediate family member of an extended family member.
 9. It is estimated that more than 3,000 visas have been issued under this scheme so far but the UK Government has estimated that up to 200,000 people could be eligible under this scheme.

Homes for Ukraine (Sponsorship Scheme)

10. The UK Government has announced a bespoke sponsorship scheme which will offer a route to those who want to come to the UK who have someone here willing to provide them with a home. It will enable individuals, charities, community groups and businesses to volunteer accommodation and provide a route to safety for Ukrainians, and their immediate family members, forced to escape their homeland.
11. There will be no limit on numbers eligible under this scheme and the UK will welcome as many Ukrainians as wish to come and have matched sponsors. Those who come under this scheme will also be granted leave for an initial period of 12 months and able to work and access public services.
12. Individuals will be able to nominate a named person or family to stay with them rent-free, or in another property, for at least six months, and will be offered £350 a month for doing so. There will be no need for sponsors to know the refugees in advance and anyone interested in participating would need to make an application online, with both sponsors being vetted and refugees having to go through security checks.
13. Within the first day of the website launching for people to log their interest in being sponsors, nearly 45,000 offers were made.

Welsh Government Super Sponsorship Offer

14. Recently, Welsh Government and the Scottish Government have offered to be 'super sponsors' ¹and detailed discussions are taking place on how to take this forward. It is anticipated that a number of 'welcome centres' would be established across Wales for the initial reception and welcome of refugees to Wales, with plans to provide initial services (such as health screening) while longer-term accommodation is sought, which may also link to the offers of accommodation offered by sponsors but this detail is still to be determined. Welsh Government have offered to accept 1,000 people initially under this process. This offer reflects Welsh Government's ambition for Wales to be a Nation of Sanctuary and for the offer of support for refugees arriving in Wales to be the best it can be.
15. In coordinating the communication of the work ongoing in Wales, Welsh Government has also established a website - [Ukraine: support for people affected | GOV.WALES](#) as a source of information.

Role of Councils in the humanitarian efforts

16. Local councils will have a key role in helping to coordinating activities locally and supporting refugees, and also in relation to the operation of the sponsorship schemes. While the exact detail of the role councils to play is still to be communicated by the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing (who is leading on this scheme at UK Government level), it is anticipated councils will be required to vet possible sponsors and assess properties, addressing safeguarding issues; possible process the £350 payment to sponsors; as well as ensuring appropriate support and access to services such as education and health.
17. We understand local authorities will receive £10,500 in extra funding per refugee for support services - with more for children of school age however we await confirmation. There are many issues still to be identified and clarified and these discussions will continue.
18. Since the war started, leaders have met twice with the Minister for Social Justice and Minister for Finance and Local Government. The WLGA Leader, Spokespeople and officers have been involved in a range of discussions about the plans and preparations needed, including with the Welsh Government, LGA, Home Office and DLUCH. In our communications the WLGA has stated:
- Councils keen to do all they can to support refugees and leaders have called on UK Government pressing for urgency, clarity and relaxation of rules.
 - Regular discussions between leaders and Ministers. WLGA Leader met with several Ministers yesterday.
 - Written to Prime Minister last week and jointly to UK Ministers with other Associations (a copy of this letter is available from [Local government's role in supporting arrivals from Ukraine | Local Government Association](#)).
19. WLGA and Wales Strategic Migration Partnership officers are also engaging with council officers on an on-going bases, sharing information and intelligence and

¹ [Scotland and Wales bid to be refugee super sponsors - BBC News](#)

enabling their engagement with Welsh Government to aid planning and the development of details as to how the scheme will operate in practice.

Impact of Sanctions: Supply Pressures for Welsh Councils

20. It is estimated the war in Ukraine will cost the global economy £300bn this year according to expert projections. Global growth is set to take a significant impact, but European countries will be the most exposed to the economic impact of the Russian invasion, analysis by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)² found.

- Oil prices will remain above US\$100/b as long as conflict rages in Ukraine.
- Gas prices will rise by at least 50% this year, on top of a fivefold rise last year.
- Russia is also a major producer of several base metals (aluminium, titanium, palladium and nickel), all of which will register price jumps.
- Prices of agricultural commodities (wheat, maize, barley and rapeseed) will soar.
- Supply chains will be disrupted by difficulties affecting land-based routes; restrictions on air links; and the cancellation of sea freight routes from Ukraine.
- Global inflation will jump above 6% this year

The conflict has added to the trade chaos that followed the global economy's emergence from pandemic lockdowns. Asia-Europe routes have been worst hit by issues including acute port congestion and cargo disruption due to the closure of Russian airspace.

The conflict's impact on shipping, rail and air freight has been compounding problems in the European auto supply chain at a time when inventory levels were already low and carmakers were still reeling from a chip shortage and soaring energy prices. With its complex supply chains, Europe's car industry may be particularly exposed to disruption but the impact is already being felt much more widely.

How is this affecting Councils in Wales?

Local Government Pension Scheme in Wales: Like many Pension Funds there is a limited degree of exposure to investments in Russia. Councillor Clive Lloyd (Swansea) is the chair of the Wales Pension Partnership (WPP) and recently issued the following statement:

“We are deeply saddened by the situation in Ukraine and our thoughts are with the Ukrainian people. Our total exposure to Russian Investments is minimal at less than 1%. Even so, in light of the terrible events we have witnessed and the economic sanctions imposed internationally, as a collective we have decided to divest from these holdings as soon as is practically possible. Given the circumstances we do not believe that engagement with these companies presents a viable option.”

² Source: The Independent and EIU [Global economic implications of the Russia-Ukraine war - Economist Intelligence Unit \(eiu.com\)](https://www.eiu.com/en/topics/analysis/articles-views/article.aspx?id=55700)

Transport: Growing challenges are being faced in the school transport sector; initially from Covid impacting infill work, driver shortages, more recently exacerbated by fuel cost escalation, together with increases in maintenance costs due to parts and labour. Continued fuel cost escalation will need to be kept under review with further adjustments necessary as the situation continues to unfold.

The second part of the issue is fuel supplies as operators are warning that they are struggling to maintain supplies and are looking to local government to assess the potential for mutual aid. Fuel suppliers have recently moved councils onto daily pricing which indicates ongoing pressures and an intent to price accordingly and demand is currently exceeding supply.

The final strand of this relates to fuel duty changes – the changes with Red Diesel means that councils are no longer able to operate any plant or machinery with red diesel from April. This means that councils will be running down those stocks to clear their tanks before replenishing, creating the potential for ‘a perfect storm’.

ICT: Cryoin is a Ukrainian company that makes neon gas, which is used to power lasers that etch patterns into computer chips. Disruption to Cryoin’s supply could be felt around the world as the production came to a halt after bombings. The industry is also becoming nervous that these shortages could be intensified by a repeat of 2014, when prices for neon gas spiked by 600 per cent. Ukraine produces around 70% of global neon gas exports.

Local Government Elections: Councils will be entering the pre-election protocol period from 18th March, in advance of the elections on 5th May. Given the fast-changing nature of the situation in Ukraine, including responding to the impacts on local areas of people arriving in Wales, Councils may wish to consider how they will manage this situation and any need for decision-making required during this time.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- (a) Note and comment on the content of this report
- (b) Reaffirm Welsh local Government’s support for Ukraine
- (c) Reaffirm the readiness and willingness of councils to play a key role in the humanitarian response that is needed for those fleeing the war and in supporting the arrival and integration of refugees locally, noting further information about the role of councils will be provided in due course
- (d) Support the principle that all areas of Wales will be involved in supporting refugees so no one area is disproportionately affected
- (e) Commit to supporting Welsh Government’s role as a super sponsor.

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Appendix 1

Open Letter to World's Mayors and Local Self-Governance

At dawn on February 24, the Russian Federation attacked independent and sovereign Ukraine. This cruel bloodshed in the heart of Europe was the beginning of a full-scale insane war: civilians are being brutally killed, hospitals and kindergartens are being bombed, while key city infrastructure is being destroyed by the invaders. Various methods of terror are being applied, and the aggressor is grinding Ukrainian cities and villages to dust that until a few days ago were filled with happy citizens investing in their development and prosperity.

During the last decade, we implemented local self-governance and decentralization reforms, and were proud to call them Europe's "best practices". Today, the strength of Ukrainian communities' self-governance is an important element of Ukrainian resistance against the Russian invaders. Regular citizens have self-organized to defend their cities, towns, and villages; they are coming barehanded to the streets to protest and face armed military forces with tanks. City mayors, community leaders and local deputies are doing their best to fulfill basic needs of their citizens under a sky full of Russian rockets. Cities and communities are being savagely bombed by Russian invaders. The city of Pokrovsk in Donetsk region was attacked by forbidden hypersonic cassette missiles. More than four hundred thousand citizens of Mariupol are locked behind a blockade that is provoking humanitarian crisis. Cities like Irpin (Kyiv region) and Volnovakha (Donetsk region) are nearly destroyed from continued bombing by the enemy. Famous universities, historical and cultural and civil infrastructure of Kharkiv have been ruined. Chernihiv, one of the oldest cities in Ukraine and in Europe, is under systemic missile attacks by Russian forces. The whole world was frightened by news of Russia's attack on Energodar (Zaporizhzhia region), the largest nuclear power plant in Europe. In Mariupol, ceasefire agreement was broken by Russian forces and evacuation route for civilians and the local maternity hospital was viciously shelled. Civilian infrastructure and residential areas in Vinnytsia and Zhytomyr remain under heavy shelling. Mykolaiv and Kherson are putting all their forces to defend their citizens and land, Mykolaiv witnessed the cruel shooting of kindergarten teachers. Invaders killed your mayoral counterpart, the mayor of Hostomel, on the outskirts of Kyiv, the city was heroically defending Ukraine's capital.

We are very grateful for your support in this wartime by your humanitarian aid and shelter for Ukrainians escaping rockets and tanks. We also believe there is a larger role for the world's cities and leaders to help bring peace by stopping the aggressor. Ukrainian cities and communities learned from you that local self-governance is a key pillar of democracy. Now we ask you to apply this principle in your own countries to defend your Ukrainian counterparts and partner cities.

Our President, government officials and parliamentarians have addressed the UN, NATO, international organizations and leaders of the democratic world with one urgent request – to close the sky above Ukraine and help fight the aggressor and defend the European values that Ukrainians are giving their lives for. We understand there might be reasons why this hasn't been done yet, but people's lives are not worth excuses. Politicians and world leaders will not forgive themselves for permitting the unnecessary

deaths of children who could become doctors, writers, engineers, economists. We also ask for stricter sanctions against Russia to stop this bloody war against sovereign Ukraine.

You can be a strong voice in your cities and communities that impacts decision-making of your countries' leadership. The appeals and voices of mayors, associations of local self-governance and local deputies representing political parties should be loud to be heard. Help us protect our children and women as we would help to protect yours.

We urge you to mobilize direct contacts with your Ukrainian counterparts in partner-cities and partner-communities or within various international platforms. Allow Ukrainian representatives of local self-governance to address your people asking for support. Talk to your countries' leadership and decision-makers about our cries for help with our defense. Appeal to your central governments to support Ukraine's European Union and Euro-Atlantic integration under the accelerated accession procedure. Together, we can find solutions that save Ukraine.

Now, as never before it's vital to unite behind European values, democracy and freedom. This is the moment to confirm those values. Today, we are all Ukrainians.

Mayors of big cities, heads of amalgamated communities and representatives of local self-governance associations representing over 800 communities signed the letter.

Signatories:

Mayors:

Igor Terekhov, Mayor of Kharkiv
Adnriy Sadovyy, Mayor of Lviv
Borys Filatov, Mayor of Dnipro
Vladyslav Atroshenko, Mayor of Chernigiv
Anatoliy Kurtieev, Mayor of Zaporizhzhia
Sergiy Hadal, Mayor of Ternopil
Ruslan Martsinkiv, Mayor of Ivano-Frankivsk
Vadym Boychenko, Mayor of Mariupol
Oleksandr Sienkevich, Mayor of Mykolaiv
Oleksandr Tretyak, Mayor of Rivne
Roman Klichuk, Mayor of Chernivtsi
Sergiy Sukhomlyn, Mayor of Zhytomyr
Oleksandr Symchyshyn, Mayor of Khmelnytsky
Sergiy Morgunov, Mayor of Vinnytsia
Ihor Polischuk, Mayor of Lutsk
Bohdan Andriiv, Mayor of Uzhgorod
Anatoliy Bondarenko, Mayor of Cherkassy
Hennadiy Trukhanov, Mayor of Odessa
Yuriy Bova, Mayor of Trostyanets
Oleksandr Honcharenko, Mayor of Kramatorsk

Ministry:

Oleksiy Chernyshov, Minister of Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine

Associations:

[Association “Energy Efficient Cities of Ukraine”](#)

[Association of Amalgamated Communities of Ukraine](#)

[Association of Communities of Ukraine](#)

Local Self-Governance Platform:

[International Mayors Summit](#)

If you wish to help or support Ukrainian cities, please coordinate efforts with us: Iryna Ozymok, Founder of the International Mayors Summit at iozymok@wnisef.org or info@wnisef.org