

Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development – Neil Gray

Briefing for [BIRKSHAW TOWER]

What	Visit to Birkshaw Tower to see progress of works carried out by North Lanarkshire Council (NLC) on void properties, which are being funded by the Scottish Government (SG) through £5m grant to provide accommodation for Ukrainian Displaced Person's (UDPs).
Where	Birkshaw Tower, Gowkthrapple, Wishaw, Lanarkshire, ML2 0LX
When	24 th October 2022 from 16:00 – 17:00
Key Message(s)	<p>Delighted to provide £5m to support NLC to deliver much needed longer-term accommodation for Ukrainian people displaced by the crisis.</p> <p>The Scottish Government have subsequently approved the Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund of up to £50m, inviting other Local Authorities (LAs) and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) across Scotland to bring forth additional proposals which will build on the success of the NLC project.</p> <p>SG are keen to continue working closely with NLC to successfully complete the project and settle UDPs into these additional homes, and we are grateful for the creative and proactive approach taken.</p>
Who	The Minister will meet NLC representatives including Council Leader (REDACTED), and Head of Housing (REDACTED) (REDACTED)
Why	Following Mr. Gray's letter sent on 18 th August 2022 to NLC, thanking them for the progress on works carried out to date, Mr. Gray expressed his wish to come and visit in person and thank them for their significant contribution. Lessons learned from this pilot phase will be applied to other work to bring void properties back into use.
Supporting official	(REDACTED) Investment and Local Strategies Manager, South and West. (REDACTED)
Briefing contents	Annex A: Event Programme Annex B: Guest List/Attendees Annex C: Summary Page / Key Issues Annex D: North Lanarkshire Council's Pilot Project Annex E: Affordable Housing Supply Programme Annex F: Homelessness Annex G: Map
Media Handling	NLC communications staff in attendance: (REDACTED) communications manager (REDACTED)

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SG COMM's not attending as no media are invited.• This is a low key private event which is focusing on refurbishment works to date.• A photo op has been arranged by SG and NLC but will not include a picture with families.• (REDACTED)NLC will provide SG COMM's with some pictures to submit to local media alongside a quote from Mr. Gray and the council leader.• NLC will also record a 10 second clip with the Minister for use on social media.
Social Media	Twitter handle: @nlcpeople SG Communications will get pictures from NLC after the visit and issue a post on social media to mark the visit. Should Mr. Gray wish to issue a tweet from his personal account then NLC's twitter handle is stated above.
Dress code	Business Attire – No PPE required as construction has been completed
Greeting Party and specific meeting point on arrival (if event is at a non SE Building)	(REDACTED) Council Leader, North Lanarkshire Council. Senior officer, (REDACTED) Head of Housing (REDACTED) Meeting point at front entrance of Birkshaw tower.
Specific entrance for Ministerial car/parking arrangements	Car can be parked immediately adjacent to front entrance, NLC will ensure space is available. See map in Annex G with circled space

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Annex A:

Event Programme

15:55: Minister arrives at Birkshaw Tower and will initially be met by SG More Homes Area Investment Manager (**REDACTED**)

16:00: Minister will be met by (**REDACTED**) leader of North Lanarkshire Council, at front door to tower.

16:05: (**REDACTED**) proceed to empty apartment to see standard of refurbishment. Also in attendance; (**REDACTED**) (Mears), (**REDACTED**)

16:15: All proceed to first-floor apartment to meet staff involved in involved in Ukraine resettlement programme project.

16:30: (**REDACTED**)

16:50: Minister to film short clip to camera reflecting on his view of project in North Lanarkshire and to have photographs taken with Cllr. Logue and NLC Communications staff will coordinate. If weather is fair, the clip will be recorded outside front entrance to tower. If raining, will be filmed in foyer of tower.

17:00: Minister departs location

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Annex B:

Guest List/Attendees



Council Leader (REDACTED)

Councillor (REDACTED) (Scottish Labour Party), is the leader of North Lanarkshire Council. He is in his second term as leader of the council (since August this year) having previously been leader from 2016 until May 2022. He was first elected in 1977 to represent Airdrie Central. He has held a number of positions on the council and has represented North Lanarkshire on a number of national and international bodies including COSLA, the National Association of Local Councillors' and European Cities of Sport. He started his career as a teacher before moving into social work, holding a number of positions in Strathclyde Regional Council and West Lothian. He retired in 2011 as a group manager with direct responsibility for a range of children and families services including fostering and adoption, residential childcare, secure placements, youth crime and aftercare.



Head of Housing (REDACTED)

(REDACTED) has been Head of Housing at North Lanarkshire Council for four years. (REDACTED) has worked in housing for more than 37 years and has been heavily involved in all the recent resettlement schemes including the Syrian, Afghan and now the Ukrainian scheme. Prior to taking up the Head of Housing post, (REDACTED) gained extensive knowledge and experience working in all the locality housing offices across North Lanarkshire, ensuring a high level of service was delivered to tenants and residents.

NLC Ukraine Resettlement Team:

(REDACTED) Community Learning and Development Manager

(REDACTED) Senior Resettlement Officer

(REDACTED) Housing Advisor

(REDACTED) Education Manager

(REDACTED) NHS Lanarkshire Resettlement Lead

(REDACTED) Project Manager, Mears

(REDACTED) Investment Manager, NLC

(REDACTED) Project Coordinator, NLC

Media: (REDACTED) NLC Communications Manager (REDACTED) and

(REDACTED) Photographer

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Annex C

Summary Page / Top Brief:

Key issues:

- The Scottish Government has allocated up to £5M to NLC, which will bring up to 200 units back into temporary use in tower blocks at Birkshaw, Wishaw and High Coates, Coatbridge. This will provide housing to approximately 400 - 600 displaced people in need of emergency housing from the Ukraine crisis for up to 3 years. Of the 200 properties, these have been divided into 165 two bedroom properties, 4 person properties and 35 one bedroom, 2 person properties.
- The Scottish Government has also launched the Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund of up to £50m, inviting other Local Authorities (LAs) and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) across Scotland to bring forth additional proposals which will build on the success of the NLC project.
- This wider fund will build on the success of the NLC pilot and bring more properties into use across Scotland. We would be happy to consider any future proposals from NLC should more opportunities become available beyond the works already underway.

Sensitivities

- Success will depend on the speed with which the matching process can assign people to these units once they are completed. NLC have not flagged this as a significant issue and are working closely with SG matching teams and neighbouring South Lanarkshire Council to maximise uptake of homes. Consideration is also being given as to the suitability of the homes for rehousing up to 10 households with unaccompanied minors.
- Similarly the speed with which works can be completed, including service connections are crucial for success. Again NLC have not flagged this as a significant issue and are working closely with SG Energy colleagues to overcome power company connection delays.
- **(REDACTED)**
- NLC have confirmed that they have no specific issues they wish to raise with Mr. Gray as part of the visit.

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Annex D:

North Lanarkshire Council's Pilot Project

- During the summer, NLC contacted SG to advise that it had 2 tower blocks in Wishaw and Coatbridge which were scheduled for demolition in 3-4 years' time and could be offered as potential temporary accommodation for UDPs.
- Following this we issued a grant offer to NLC for £5m of funding on 6 July 2022. Through the improvement of the tower blocks in Wishaw and Coatbridge, this will bring up to 200 units back into temporary use and will provide housing to approximately 400 - 600 UDPs.
- Since that time, NLC have progressed the works quickly.
Wishaw: All 59 flats are now complete and in the process of being fully furnished for occupation. Currently 11 flats are now occupied and potentially another 4/5 flats will be let to UDPs this week.
Coatbridge: Works progressing. All 131 flats due to be completed by 2 December. 10 currently complete but not being let until other building works are less disruptive to support positive UDP resettlement.
- Houses will be let to UDPs on the basis of Scottish Secure Tenancies for a period of up to 3 years. During which time the LA will work with the tenants to identify permanent housing solutions. The houses will be improved to Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS) and will include new kitchens, bathrooms, white goods and furnishings. The works are been undertaken by Mears Group who are NLC's procurement partner for maintenance and building works.
- At the end of the three year period (unless extended as agreed by SG), the LA will revert to its original plan to demolish the tower blocks.
- There was some national press interest regarding cladding, but the LA confirmed this is not a significant issue.
- This pilot project was a pre-cursor to the £50m Ukraine Longer-Term Resettlement Fund which was launched on 22 September 2022.

(REDACTED)

Project Manager

Ukraine Long-Term Resettlement Programme

More Homes Division

(REDACTED)

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Annex E:

AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLY PROGRAMME (AHSP)

Scotland has led the way in the delivery of affordable housing across the UK

- We have delivered 112,993 affordable homes since 2007, over 79,000 (79,187) of which were for social rent, including 19,727 council homes.
- Having met our previous 50,000 affordable homes target during March 2022, we have now started to deliver against our commitment to 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, of which at least 70% will be available for social rent and 10% will be in our remote, rural and island communities.
- A total of 2,362 homes have now been delivered to end June 2022 towards the 110,000 target, of which 2,068 (88%) are homes for social rent.
- £3.6 billion funding is being made available in this Parliamentary term towards the delivery of affordable homes across Scotland.

North Lanarkshire Council Resource Planning Assumptions 2021-2026

- The RPA for 2022/23 in North Lanarkshire is £32.967m, which will enable an estimated 246 affordable homes to start on site with 446 anticipated to complete, all of these properties will be for social rent. These homes will be spread across the council area and delivered by the LA as well as a range of Housing Associations active in the area.

Investment in the Tower blocks Across North Lanarkshire

- The Council made a political decision in 2018 to demolish all 48 tower blocks in North Lanarkshire over a lengthy period. This decision was primarily based on low demand for the blocks, for social reasons and tenants' aspirations going forward. Over 80% of tenants were in favour of the demolition plans
- While the Scottish Government will not be providing additional funding to support the demolition of the tower blocks through the AHSP, we will provide funding support for the regeneration of these areas through any new build housing.
- The blocks in Holehills/Dykehead (Airdrie), for example, have already been demolished and our funding is currently supporting 150 new build homes on the site.

The Wishaw Tower Blocks (Gowkthrapple)

- Gowkthrapple is a small neighbourhood of Wishaw, around 3/4s of a mile from the town centre. It is characterised by residential tower blocks and four storey blocks of flats for social housing.
- Over the years the area has demonstrated clear levels of housing failure, including high void levels, substantial rent loss and high staff support costs.

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- As part of the wider Council's tower block reprovisioning programme, the Council completed a masterplan for the Gowkthrapple area and as a result 304 low rise flats and 140 high rise flats have been included for demolition over a number of years. This includes the Birkshaw and Allershaw blocks currently being prepared to house Ukrainian people.
- The masterplan for Gowkthrapple includes four phases of redevelopment and will deliver 275 new homes, creating a sustainable community and delivering an attractive and well connected new neighbourhood, including potential for private housing.
- The Scottish Government approved funding of £11,094,931 in April this year to support Phase 1 of the regeneration of Gowkthrapple in advance of the demolition works. This 1st phase will provide 97 new homes on a vacant site near the high rise blocks.
- **(REDACTED)**
- Work started on site in July for the new build homes which are expected to complete in 2024/25.
- Once the 1st phase of new build is complete, the LA will progress with plans to demolish the high rise blocks.

(REDACTED)

Investment and Local Strategies Manager
More Homes Division, South and West

(REDACTED)

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Annex F:

Homelessness

- There is a potential sensitivity that UDPs are potentially being given priority for accommodation in North Lanarkshire over and above homeless people. NLC does not see this as a particular sensitivity as Birkshaw Tower would not have been available for homeless people as it was due for demolition prior to the change of plan to accommodate UDPs.
- 1,345 households in NLC were assessed as homeless in 2021/22.
- At 31 March 2022, 565 households were in temporary accommodation in North Lanarkshire. This was a reduction of 1% from 31 March 2021.
- At 31 March 2022, there were 125 households with children or a pregnant woman in temporary accommodation; an increase of 9% since 31 March 2021.
- At 31 March 2022, there were 230 children in temporary accommodation: 220 in LA furnished accommodation; and 10 in Housing Association temporary accommodation. This is generally regarded as the best form of temporary accommodation and does not attract the definition of unsuitable accommodation.

(REDACTED)

Team Leader

Homelessness

Better Homes Division

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Annex G:

Map: Birkshaw Tower, Gowkthrapple, Wishaw, Lanarkshire, ML2 0LX



Parking Location:

