

The Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP Foighnich airson/Please ask for: **Councillor Raymond Bremner**
Secretary of State for the Home Àireamh fòn/Direct phone: (01463) 702856
Department Ur n-Àireamh-iùil/Your ref:
2 Marsham Street Ar n-Àireamh-iùil/Our ref: RB/GM
London
SW1P 4DF
United Kingdom Ceann-latha/Date: 13 November 2025

Dear Home Secretary

Proposed use of Inverness Cameron Barracks for Male Asylum Seekers

Following a specially convened meeting of the Highland Council to discuss the decision by the Home Office to accommodate 300 single male asylum seekers using the MOD premises at Cameron Barracks, Inverness, it was agreed that we write to you convey our very deep concern at this decision.

We are deeply disappointed that there has been no consultation with the Council, instead we have merely been informed of this decision by the Home Office.

It was not until the afternoon of Monday 27 October 2025 that formal written notification was received by the Council. On the same day the Home Office chose to issue a press release setting out their intention to use Cameron Barracks, along with a similar provision in Crowborough army training camp, East Sussex. The Council and its partners did not even receive the courtesy of advance notification that this information was going to be released to the media.

We deplore the lack of engagement, the lack of consultation and indeed the lack of information from the Home Office regarding this proposal.

There remain a number of issues that have yet to be addressed by the Home Office. Many of these were expressed by elected Members at the special Council meeting. I have set these out as follows:

Councillor Raymond Bremner
Leader of The Highland Council

The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX
Tel no: (01463) 702856 **Mobile:** 07787 836402
e-mail: raymond.bremner.cllr@highland.gov.uk

An Comhairliche Raymond Bremner
Ceannard Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd, Rathad Ghlinn Urchadain, Inbhir Nis, IV3 5NX
Fòn: (01463) 702856 **Fòn-làimhe:** 07787 836402
Post-d: raymond.bremner.cllr@highland.gov.uk

- Why was Cameron Barracks chosen as a suitable site for adult asylum seekers, especially in consideration of its proximity to residential and educational premises and the town centre itself?
- What assurances can the Home Office provide that the condition of Cameron Barracks is suitable temporary accommodation for the asylum seekers, and can the Council be provided with detailed confirmation of the improvement/repurposing works scheduled on site?
- What assurances can the Home Office provide that the project will not have a detrimental impact on local services, especially those related to health and housing?
- When will the appropriate impact and risk assessments be provided to the Council to confirm the Home Office measures to ensure adequate welfare, safeguarding and security arrangements related to the project?
- How will concerns over any individual be addressed to ensure the safety of the community and indeed other asylum seekers is maintained?
- When will the official contracts related to the management of the project be shared with the Council?
- When will the individual asylum seeker assessment be shared with the Council so the Council can have assurance as to the various safeguarding, welfare, health and age circumstances of the asylum seekers who will be resident at Cameron Barracks?
- Will the Home Office agree that all further operational meetings organised by the Home Office be suitably minuted and available for wider distribution to appropriate partners?
- Will the Home Office commit to a joint communications strategy which will minimise the “leaking” of information to the media which has added to the community concerns and has significantly undermined the project preparations?
- Will the Home Office confirm the funding arrangements in place for the Council and Highland partners to enable suitable community support to be in place and to offset any pressures placed on local services; and
- Given the above project arrangements, can the Home Office confirm in writing the exact number of asylum seekers to be resident at Cameron Barracks, when the first arrivals will be resident there, and that the project is indeed scheduled to have a 12-month duration?
- Can the Home Office provide a copy of the implementation plan for this proposal?

Councillor Raymond Bremner

Leader of The Highland Council

The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX

Tel no: (01463) 702856 **Mobile:** 07787 836402

e-mail: raymond.bremner.cllr@highland.gov.uk

An Comhairliche Raymond Bremner

Ceannard Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd, Rathad Ghlinn Urchadain, Inbhir Nis, IV3 5NX

Fòn: (01463) 702856 **Fòn-làimhe:** 07787 836402

Post-d: raymond.bremner.cllr@highland.gov.uk

The scale of this proposal and the sheer number of people to be accommodated within this setting together with the potential impact on already stretched public services is deeply concerning. We are also aware of considerable unease from the families of serving personnel living in the married quarters next to the barracks. This concern has been exacerbated given that many of the soldiers are shortly to deploy.

Furthermore, it simply does not make any sense to locate 300 asylum seekers in the north of Scotland far away from the point at which their applications will be processed and where their legal advisors are likely to be based.

While Inverness and the wider Highlands have supported three resettlement programmes in the past (Syrian 2015, Afghan 2021 and Ukrainian 2022), it has done so at a scale that was appropriate and manageable for the communities that were impacted.

In relation to the Afghan resettlement programme, concerns have been expressed by these families who have stayed in Inverness that some of these 300 asylum seekers are from Afghanistan which could pose a risk to their safety and indeed the safety of family members who remain in Afghanistan.

We are also very concerned over community cohesion. In the absence of information being readily provided, there is a real danger that this void is filled with misinformation and disinformation which could seriously impact community cohesion. There is a need for regular engagement with communities so that they are fully informed and their concerns addressed. To that end we would welcome, the Home Office participating in a public meeting in the same way they did in Crowborough to address community concerns.

The Highlands have a proud history of welcoming people in need and seeking a safe place to live either temporarily or permanently. However, for this project to have successful outcomes and minimise the community concerns, it is essential that the above questions are answered in writing as soon as possible.

We would therefore urge you to commit the Home Office to engage openly with the Council and to adopt a flexible approach to addressing these genuine concerns.

It would be extremely helpful to meet with you to discuss these issues in more detail.

Councillor Raymond Bremner

Leader of The Highland Council

The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX

Tel no: (01463) 702856 **Mobile:** 07787 836402

e-mail: raymond.bremner.cllr@highland.gov.uk

An Comhairliche Raymond Bremner

Ceannard Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd, Rathad Ghlinn Urchadain, Inbhir Nis, IV3 5NX

Fòn: (01463) 702856 **Fòn-làimhe:** 07787 836402

Post-d: raymond.bremner.cllr@highland.gov.uk

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely / Leis gach deagh dhùrachd,

Councillor Raymond Bremner
Leader of The Highland Council

An Comhairliche Raymond Bremner
Ceannard Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Councillor Bill Lobban
Convener of the Highland Council

Councillor Alasdair Christie
Leader of the Opposition

Councillor Raymond Bremner
Leader of The Highland Council

The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX

Tel no: (01463) 702856 **Mobile:** 07787 836402

e-mail: raymond.bremner.cllr@highland.gov.uk

An Comhairliche Raymond Bremner

Ceannard Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd, Rathad Ghlinn Urchadain, Inbhir Nis, IV3 5NX

Fòn: (01463) 702856 **Fòn-làimhe:** 07787 836402

Post-d: raymond.bremner.cllr@highland.gov.uk