TAUNTON WELCOMES REFUGEES

From the Chair

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Sir Ashley Fox MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Sir Ashley

We write in support of refugee and asylum policies which will enable those fleeing persecution and danger to experience safe and humane pathways to resettlement here in the UK, and which are in keeping with the spirit of the 1951 UN Convention of Human Rights.

In particular, we welcome the current suggested move towards enabling asylum seekers to work, where appropriate, while they await asylum application decisions (Protection Work and Study). This will have many benefits:

- It would accord dignity and worth to the individual
- It would make use of the range of skills and expertise that the asylum seeker/refugee community bring with them
- It would take momentum out of the smuggling/trafficking gangs' offers of illegal working opportunities
- It would relieve some of the burden on the Benefits System, both in the short and long term

We would also encourage the Government to implement replacement resettlement programmes as soon as possible. Resettlement packages are the first and foremost life-saving method of intervention. We would also urge the Government to consider resettlement under a wider brief. Traditionally, resettlement has generally been offered to families with dependent children under the age of 18. From our experience of supporting many such families, it would be really beneficial to have automatic

In addition, we are deeply concerned about the proposals that the qualifying time for *Indefinite Leave to Remain* could be 10 or 20 years, or even longer, depending on method of arrival, language capability or earning capacity. This, linked with more scrutiny on whether people can be safely returned to their country of origin over this time, can only lead to damaging levels of uncertainty and lack of stability for people already deeply traumatised.

There is also an immediate need for an effective method to receive and process asylum applications from single people, with the appropriate resources in place to ensure quick and fair decision making.

We see good and humanitarian policies not only as a moral imperative, but also a way of internationally sharing the burden of forced migration with others. The Statement released by the Spanish Government at the conclusion of the 2025 UNHCR Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways* summarises our thoughts better than we can, so we quote it in part here:

'*Together, we can reaffirm resettlement and complementary pathways as powerful expressions of solidarity and shared humanity. We call for a renewed commitment to refugee resettlement, ensuring that programmes are maintained, expanded and sustained to meet increasing global needs. Above all, we call on all to ensure that fact-based and evidence-based decision-making remains at the forefront and centre of policy decisions around refugee resettlement and integration.*'

*UNHCR Projected global resettlement needs 2026 p 134-35

Yours sincerely

Simon Forrester
Chair