



Janet.Finch-Saunders@senedd.wales

The Rt Hon Suella Braverman KC MP,
Secretary of State for the Home Department,
UK Government,
By Email

Constituency Office

29 Madoc Street,
Llandudno LL30 2TL

Swyddfa'r Etholaeth

29 Stryd Madog,
Llandudno LL30 2TL

01492 871 198

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Dear Home Secretary,

I am writing so to raise my serious concerns about the decision by your department to allegedly place up to 200 illegal male immigrants from Albania at the Hilton Garden Inn Hotel, Dolgarrog.

Dolgarrog is a small village with a population of around 500 people. I would be grateful if you could clarify what consideration you gave to the fact that you are increasing the local population by 50%.

There are no medical centres in Dolgarrog. Given that health is devolved, I wonder if it has been explained to you that Wales has proportionally more people waiting longer than a year for treatment than any other nation in Great Britain – 1 in 4 Wales vs 1 in 20 England; Fewer people are seen in A&E in Wales within four hours than England and Scotland; and Dolgarrog is situated within Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, which has been placed in targeted interventions due to poor performance. Therefore, it would be appreciated if you could explain whether you liaised with Eluned Morgan MS, Minister for Health and Social Services, Welsh Government, and the Health Board, before making the decision to increase the burden on already struggling medical services, and state how much the UK Government will be investing in our local health facilities so to assist them with any additional demand created.

The village is nestled in the heart of the Conwy Valley, beside the Conwy River and on the edge of Snowdonia National Park. Indeed, the community is situated along the B5106 which runs from the UNESCO world heritage town of Conwy to the gateway of Snowdonia, Betws-y-Coed. All along that route and the Conwy Valley there is tourist accommodation and attractions that contribute to the fact that the area is a tourism honey pot, and part of the reason why North Wales is regarded as one of the best destinations in the UK. In fact, one of the region's major attractions is situated literally next door to the hotel: Adventure Parc Snowdonia. It opened in 2015 with £4m of Welsh Government funding. I am therefore at a complete loss as to why you would think it even suitable to site a detention camp here. I do believe that the residents of the Conwy Valley and Aberconwy deserve a detailed explanation as to how your department reached a conclusion that Dolgarrog and this hotel is the most appropriate location in the whole of the UK.

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Dolgarrog currently has no access to a railway station. There are some public buses, for which I am very grateful, but the truth of the matter is that Dolgarrog is a rural community which desperately needs improved public transport and highway connectivity. Indeed, you cannot drive to the hotel from a trunk road without having to navigate sections of highway which are a single lane, such as the arch in Conwy, the B5279, Pont Fawr in Llanrwst, and Pont-y-Pair in Betws-y-Coed. I would be grateful if you could explain whether any consideration had been given to the rurality of the village before moving alleged illegal immigrants there, and what measures are in place to facilitate the quick arrival of emergency services should there be a situation at the location.

The Hilton Garden Inn has planning permission to be a hotel, not a house of multiple occupancy nor a detention centre. Again, please explain why you have chosen this location when it does not have planning permission for what you are using it for.

As you may be aware, the Hilton in Dolgarrog is a new luxury hotel. Like many residents, I would be pleased to know how much you are paying per night to accommodate each alleged illegal immigrant. Whilst I appreciate the support the UK Government is providing to assist residents this Winter, it remains the case that you are using tax payers money to house alleged illegal immigrants who have contributed nothing to this nation in accommodation many locals cannot afford. That is a disgrace.

Finally, you may be unsurprised to read that I am appalled that nobody in the UK Government had the courtesy to inform me, the elected member of the Welsh Parliament for Aberconwy, that you had made this decision. It was inappropriate to have left residents and myself to find out via rumours on social media. Clarity as to whether you have a communication strategy for this situation would be very welcome. Also, given that the immigrants have been placed in a bilingual community, I would appreciate assurances that any statement issued by the UK Government will be bilingual.

You and your department have caused considerable distress to a peaceful community. This is especially the case when considering that the hotel is situated in very close proximity to a primary school.

As a long standing Welsh Conservative elected representative in Aberconwy, I place on record my serious objections to the holding of these individuals in this particular location, and thereby request that you reconsider this decision which is causing much anguish and anger within the constituency I have the honour of representing in the Welsh Parliament.

Kind regards,

Janet Finch-Saunders MS/AS