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10 August 2023

Dear Migrants' Rights Network and Co-Signatories

Thank you for your email of 9 August 2023 about the Bibby Stockholm barge. Your email has been passed to Asylum Support, Resettlement and Accommodation at the Home Office for a reply.

The volume of illegal small boat arrivals has simply overwhelmed our asylum system. The backlog of asylum claims has ballooned to over 160,000 with the asylum system now costing the British taxpayer £3 billion a year. Since 2018, some 89,000 people have illegally entered the UK by small boat – 46,000 of them in 2022 alone. All have travelled through safe countries in which they could and should have claimed asylum. The small boats problem is part of a larger global migration crisis, but one that this Government is committed to tackling, including with international partners.

Under the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999, the Home Office has a statutory obligation to provide asylum seekers, who would otherwise be destitute, with accommodation and support whilst their claim is under consideration. Eligible asylum seekers are ordinarily placed in housing accommodation; however, the unprecedented number of crossings has led to about 51,000 migrants being accommodated in hotels, costing the taxpayer over £6 million every day. That is unsustainable and has meant the Home Office has had to consider alternative accommodation options to ensure that we meet our statutory obligations.

The Home Office is undertaking work across government to secure alternative large-scale sites that are more appropriate and cost-effective accommodation to house asylum seekers. These site proposals are across the country and would provide basic, fit-for purpose and functional accommodation whilst asylum seekers await a decision on their claim.

Furthermore, the Bibby Stockholm has also been subject to Lloyds Register quality assurance inspection and certification and regulatory inspection by the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency in order to fulfil its permitted purpose.

I hope my response addresses your concerns.

Yours sincerely,

**M-J Garcia**  
**ASRA Briefing and Correspondence Team**  
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