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Kaukab Stewart MSP
Convener
Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

Clare Adamson MSP
Convener
Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

13 July 2023

Dear Conveners,

MS Victoria

When Ms Roddick, Minister for Equalities, Migration and Refugees, appeared before the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice (EHRCJ) Committee on 20 June she was asked about the number of people displaced from Ukraine still accommodated on passenger vessels. Given the numbers on board fluctuated daily, she committed to provide a further update at a later date which I am now doing on her behalf. As the Committee primarily overseeing the Ukraine Programme, I am also including the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture (CEEAC) Committee in this update for their information.

I am pleased to be able to now confirm that, as a result of a joint strategy led by the City of Edinburgh Council, with support from the Ukrainian Consul and third sector, the safe and orderly disembarkation of MS Victoria has completed, one week ahead of the formal end of contract on 11 July.

I can also advise that Scottish Government analysts are currently reviewing the data on the total number of displaced people previously housed on the MS Victoria by accommodation type, and will publish this data in the future. I will update both committees with that information when it is available.

I am sure you would agree that the successful disembarkation of over 1000 displaced people from Ukraine called for a huge collective effort and is a true testament to the spirit of partnership working between Scottish Government, COSLA, local government and third sector that has characterised our national response to the Ukraine crisis. In particular, I would acknowledge the City of Edinburgh Council and Scottish Government matching teams for the sensitivity, compassion and kindness they showed to guests, even when under immense pressure. I know the Consul has personally thanked the teams working on-board for their approach to disembarkation.

The Ukraine Long Term Resettlement Fund

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight another significant milestone in our Ukraine response: the Scottish Government's Ukraine Longer-term Resettlement Fund (ULTRF) is now funding the improvement of over 1000 void properties for rehousing displaced people from Ukraine across Scotland.

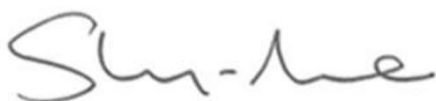
As you are aware, the Fund was launched by the Scottish Government on 22 September 2022, making up to £50 million available to Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords to bring empty and void properties back into use. It has been a vital part of our efforts to help displaced people access longer term accommodation and settle well within our communities. My officials continue to work in partnership with councils and housing associations on a healthy pipeline of new and potential applications.

I hope you have found this information useful and, as noted above, I will provide further detail on the total number of displaced people previously housed on the MS Victoria by accommodation type when this information is available.

Ms Roddick also committed to write to the EHRCJ Committee to share insights from the Illegal Migration Bill Summit held on 22 June and will do so separately.

I provide a copy of this letter to the Social Justice and Social Security Committee for awareness.

Yours sincerely,



SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE