

Britain and France to strengthen joint action against small boats

The Home Secretary and her French counterpart have agreed to intensify joint action to tackle small boat crossings in the Channel.

Priti Patel met French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner in Paris yesterday evening to discuss what more can be done to deter migrants making the perilous journey across one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world.

The pair acknowledged the extensive joint cooperation already taken to tackle the issue of small boats crossing the Channel – but agreed tougher action was needed following the concerning rise in incidents over the summer months.

They also discussed how more resources to intercept and stop crossings along the French coast were crucial – and agreed to immediately draw-up an enhanced action plan to deliver this.

The ministers also agreed that UK teams will work with their French colleagues to increase intelligence gathering in the fight against the organised people-smuggling gangs responsible for driving illegal crossings.

The Home Secretary, Priti Patel, said:

I will not let the ruthless gangs of criminal people smugglers continue to put lives in danger – which is why I'm doing everything in my power as Home Secretary to put a stop to these illegal crossings.

We've been working extremely closely with our French colleagues to tackle the use of small boats but we both agreed more needs to be done.

It's vital we ensure our collective expertise is used to stop the boats from leaving French shores and dismantle the criminal networks driving this activity.

Today's meeting follows the introduction of the joint action plan agreed by the UK and France in January. The plan included over £6 million (£7 million) investment in new security equipment, increased CCTV coverage of beaches and ports and a mutual commitment to conduct returns of migrants under international and domestic laws.

Since January, the UK has returned over 65 migrants who arrived illegally in small boats to countries across Europe.