

Helping migrants

It is not a good idea to help people smugglers put more people at risk by selling them expensive trips in unsuitable boats across the Channel. The UK authorities need to issue clear safety warnings to people not to undertake these journeys, and not to expose themselves to the criminal gangs who sell these places of danger. The UK of course does not wish to see people drown in the Channel and should co-operate and assist the French authorities to prevent these boats taking off from the French coast, or intercepting them early and returning the people safely to France where they have committed themselves to the water. The longer they are at sea the more danger there is of inclement sea and weather conditions overwhelming them or of collision with one of the many large vessels using the busy Channel waterway.

The UK has legal routes for refugees and for economic migrants from the EU which people should use where they wish to seek a work and residence permit. It is not a good idea to offer an expensive rescue service to people to jump the queue or get round the rules. There is the danger the rescuers will not encounter all the boats seeking night time passage across the Channel increasing the risk of death and disaster for any given boat, whilst their presence may encourage more to think this is a low risk way of expediting admission to the UK. Some of the criminals who run these illicit boats are seeking to make criminals of their passengers by encouraging some of them to arrive and work illegally in the UK, where they would then be prey to versions of modern slavery. The authorities need to be vigilant to clamp down on such vile practices. We want legal migrants to come through the proper routes and to then settle to a decent lifestyle here in the UK.