

News story: Home Secretary visits channel operations

During a trip to Dover today (2 January 2019), Home Secretary Sajid Javid has thanked all those involved in the effort to tackle the increase in attempts by migrants to cross the Channel in small boats.

The Home Secretary, who announced on Monday (31 December 2018) that he would be redeploying 2 Border Force cutters from abroad to help patrol the Channel, met representatives from organisations including Border Force, Immigration Enforcement, the Kent Intake Unit and the National Crime Agency.

He said:

Border Force and others have been doing an incredibly good job in recent weeks to do everything they can to keep us safe, to protect our borders and to protect life. I want to thank them for what they are doing and to learn myself about the work they are undertaking.

The additional cutters, which will bring the number we have along the South East to 3 as well as 2 coastal patrol vessels, will make a big difference in fulfilling those 2 key functions – protecting the border and preserving life. The Channel – one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world – is an extremely treacherous stretch of water and we need to send a very clear message to people that if they embark on this journey, they are taking their life into their own hands.

As part of the trip, the Home Secretary was taken out into the Channel on board one of the Border Force cutters. Officers provided an overview of the cutter's operational capabilities and first hand accounts of the dangers faced by people attempting to cross the Channel in vessels that are unfit for purpose.

Border Force has 5 cutters and 6 coastal patrol vessels and their deployment is kept under constant review. 2 coastal patrol vessels and 1 cutter, HMC Vigilant, are currently deployed in the Channel. 3 cutters, HMC Valiant, Seeker and Protector, are deployed overseas while HMC Searcher remains in UK waters. The UK will continue its commitment to the FRONTEX humanitarian mission by retaining a cutter in the Mediterranean.