

News story: Immigration Minister visits Joint Co-ordination Centre

Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes and the French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner have today (25 January) visited the Joint Co-ordination and Information Centre (CCIC) in Calais to see first-hand some of the work that is being done to tackle attempts to cross the Channel illegally via small boats.

The visit follows the agreement on 24 January between the Home Secretary and the Interior Minister of a joint action plan that builds on the ongoing co-operation between the two nations and includes over £6 million (€7m) investment in new security equipment, increased CCTV coverage of beaches and ports, air surveillance and shared intelligence as well as a mutual commitment to conduct return operations as quickly as possible under international and domestic laws.

The Immigration Minister, Caroline Nokes said:

The UK and France have long worked closely together to tackle the threat posed by cross border crime. The CCIC is one of a series of measures that enhances that collaboration and forms part of our long-term commitment to tackle the complex issue of illegal cross channel migration.

The real-time intelligence resulting from that close co-operation has already enabled the French authorities to stop migrants and arrest suspected facilitators on the beaches of northern France prior to departure.

The centre, which became operational in November last year, was formally opened by the Immigration Minister and the Interior Minister during the visit. It sees Border Force working closely alongside Police Aux Frontieres as part of a 24/7 operation to:

- assist with preventing illegal attempts to cross the shared border
- facilitate the circulation of information between UK and French agencies to combat cross-border criminality
- work on the prevention of threats to public order on cross-border infrastructure
- provide analysis of cross-Channel traffic flows

Importantly, the CCIC also helps with the identification, prosecution and dismantling of criminal gangs involved in people smuggling and wider cross border crime.

The opening of the CCIC forms part of the commitments of the Sandhurst Treaty, signed by the Prime Minister and President Macron in January 2018.

The Sandhurst Treaty is a bilateral agreement between the UK and France which reinforces the commitment of both sides to work together on border security issues.

Other law enforcement partners with a presence at the CCIC include Kent Police, National Crime Agency, Home Office Immigration Enforcement officers, and French authorities.