

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.

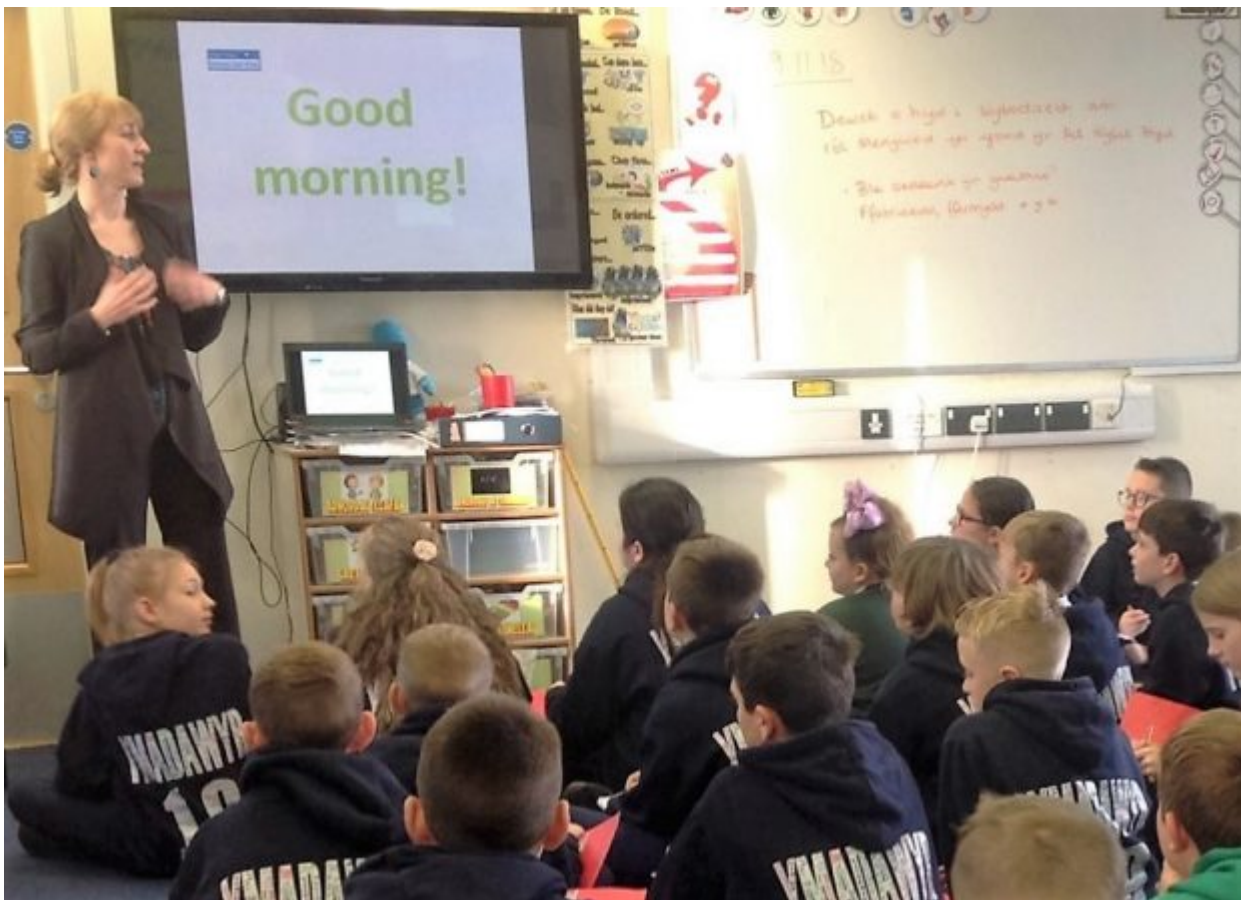
As part of the trip, the Home Secretary was taken out into the Channel on board one of the Border Force cutters. Officers provided an overview of the cutter's operational capabilities and first hand accounts of the dangers faced by people attempting to cross the Channel in vessels that are unfit for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

What I learned from teaching schoolchildren about DVLA

They say never work with children (or animals). But Nicola Braun, of DVLA Vehicle Business Services, proved this wrong recently when she visited a class of local schoolchildren to tell them all about DVLA.

I've always been nervous about public speaking as I'm quite shy by nature. But when I was asked to give a presentation about the agency to around sixty 10 to 11 year olds, I jumped at the challenge!



How it happened

At my daughter's parents evening I was having a chat with her teacher when he asked me where I worked and what my role was. I explained [about DVLA and what we do](#) and talked a bit about my role in Vehicle Business Services.

He was really interested and asked if I'd like to present to year 6 pupils (including my daughter!) about my place of work and career. I immediately said yes. It's something I've always wanted to do – as well as helping the children to develop and learn about something new, I knew I'd learn a lot from it as well.

Getting started

I got the clearances I needed from work to go ahead, then I started on my presentation. I made sure I included the kind of stats and numbers which would help to keep my young audience's attention. For example, did you know that [last year](#) we issued more than 11 million driving licences? Or that our contact centre took around 14 million calls from customers? I felt it was important to get across the scale of what we do.

Presentation done, next it was on to the tricky bit...



New teacher nerves

Soon, it was 'Presentation Day'. That morning I felt sick with nerves, thinking 'Oh my gosh! I've never done this before, I hope I do well...' But as soon as I went into the classroom, my butterflies went. I introduced myself and began my presentation.

The children really seemed to be paying attention, as they were scribbling away and making notes of my slides. I had to slow down so they could capture all the information I was relaying.

I think it's important to teach children about staying on the right side of the law as early as possible, so I mentioned this in my presentation. Maybe the bit where I talked about the 'consequences of not abiding by the law' did the trick, as they gasped when I told them they could get a fine of up to

£1,000 for not taxing a vehicle!

Any questions?

I was keen to make it a two-way presentation. I wanted the children to feel part of it, so we had a question and answer session next.

I was asked plenty of really good questions. “Do you enjoy your job?”, “What did you want to be when you were in school?”... When I was asked “How long have you worked for DVLA?”, I answered “17 years”. I got a “Wow!” for that one.

The most popular question I asked the children was “What type of vehicle would you like to drive?” Nearly every hand went up. From Maseratis to limousines, I must say that they had great taste in vehicles!

When I finished and left the school, I was on cloud nine with a real sense of accomplishment. I’d faced up to my fears of speaking in front of large crowds of people, and spread the word about DVLA into the bargain.

The verdict

Was it worth it? Definitely! Not only did it help my confidence, but I hope I gave the children some tips on how to abide by the law when they grow up.

I would say to anyone thinking of doing something similar, if you ever get the chance to do something like this, give it a go. Chances are you could be speaking to your future customers, stakeholders or even colleagues.

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Press release: Self Assessment deadline: less than one month to go

Around 5,542,000 taxpayers have less than a month to complete their Self Assessment tax returns before the 31 January 2019 deadline.

More than 11.5 million 2017 to 2018 tax returns are due and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) expects the vast majority of taxpayers to complete their returns and pay any tax owed by the end of the month.

About 52% of taxpayers have already filed their returns, as of 31 December

2018, and more than 5 million have completed their returns online (88% of the total returns filed).

Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Mel Stride, said:

It is encouraging that around 52% of taxpayers have already completed their Self Assessment tax returns. With less than one month to go before the deadline, there are still many people that need to act now.

HMRC is encouraging all Self Assessment filers to complete their returns by 31 January and is offering support every step of the way.

Angela MacDonald, HMRC's Director General for Customer Services, said:

The Self Assessment deadline on 31 January is fast approaching, but there is still time for customers to file their tax returns online and on time to avoid any unnecessary penalties.

If you are completing Self Assessment for the first time or are yet to start your 2017 to 2018 tax return, there is a wide range of support and guidance available on GOV.UK to help at every stage of the tax return process.

For customers who are yet to start their 2017 to 2018 Self Assessment, there are [films and webinars](#) that show each stage of the process, with bespoke guidance for people's varying circumstances, including [a video](#) aimed at customers completing a tax return for the first time.

Help is also available on [GOV.UK](#), from the Self Assessment phone helpline (0300 200 3310), and on social media.

People need to complete a tax return if they:

- earned more than £2,500 from renting out property
- or their partner received Child Benefit and either of them had an annual income of more than £50,000
- received more than £2,500 in other untaxed income, for example from tips or commission
- are self-employed sole traders
- are employees claiming expenses in excess of £2,500
- have an annual income over £100,000
- earned income from abroad that they need to pay tax on

If customers completed a Self Assessment tax return last year but didn't have any tax to pay, they still need to complete a 2017 to 2018 tax return unless HMRC has written to them to say it is not required.

Self Assessment facts:

- 11,564,363 total Self Assessment returns due
- 6,022,579 returns received, as at 31 December 2018
- 5,541,784 returns still to file, as at 31 December 2018
- 5,318,636 returns, as at 31 December 2018, filed online (88% of total filed)
- 703,943 returns, as at 31 December 2018, filed on paper (12% of total filed)

The penalties for late tax returns:

- an initial £100 fixed penalty, which applies even if there is no tax to pay, or if the tax due is paid on time
- after 3 months, additional daily penalties of £10 per day, up to a maximum of £900
- after 6 months, a further penalty of 5% of the tax due or £300, whichever is greater
- after 12 months, another 5% or £300 charge, whichever is greater

There are also additional penalties for paying late of 5% of the tax unpaid at 30 days, 6 months and 12 months.

Tax is automatically deducted from the majority of UK taxpayers' wages, pensions or savings. For people or businesses where tax is not automatically deducted, or when they may have earned additional untaxed income, they are required to complete a Self Assessment tax return each year.

[Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Guinea in June 2019](#)

Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Guinea in June 2019 – GOV.UK

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Full name: David Thomas McIlroy

Married to: Victoria McIlroy

Children: Two

2016 to 2018 FCO, Deputy Head, Stabilisation Unit
2015 to 2016 FCO, Deputy Head of Department and Head of State Programmes Team, Counter Proliferation Department
2011 to 2015 Vienna, Deputy Permanent Representative, UK Mission to the United Nations and Other International Organisations
2009 to 2011 Cabinet Office (on loan from FCO), Secretariat, Iraq Inquiry
2007 to 2009 FCO, Head, Borders, Managed Migration, Multilateral and Development, Migration Directorate
2004 to 2007 Belgrade, Deputy Head of Mission and Consul-General
2002 to 2004 Full-time language training (Serbian)
2000 to 2002 FCO, Head of Gibraltar Section and Head of Justice and Home Affairs Section, European Union (Internal) Department
2000 Joined FCO

Further information

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Thank you for your feedback