

UK-France agreement strengthens efforts to tackle illegal immigration

Home Secretary Priti Patel and French Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin today (Tuesday 20 July) [signed an agreement](#) to strengthen UK-France joint cooperation to tackle illegal immigration across the Channel.

This follows a rise in dangerous crossings and will see the number of police patrolling French beaches more than double for the second time in a year to prevent illegal migration and stop small boats from departing French beaches.

The agreement comes as the Home Secretary's New Plan for Immigration is debated in Parliament this week. The Nationality and Borders Bill will address the failures of the current asylum system and the criminal activity behind illegal migration.

The Bill will welcome people through safe and legal routes whilst preventing abuse of the system, cracking down on illegal entry and the criminality associated with it, rather than allowing people to undertake dangerous journeys to the UK as their preferred destination.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

The British people have simply had enough of illegal migration and the exploitation of migrants by criminal gangs.

Illegal immigration is driven by serious organised criminals and people smugglers. The public are rightly angry that small boats are arriving on our shores, facilitated by appalling criminal gangs who profit from human misery and put lives at risk.

The government is addressing the challenge of illegal migration for the first time in over two decades through comprehensive reform of our asylum system which will enable us to go after the gangs exploiting people, deter illegal entry into the UK, introduce new and tougher criminal offences for those attempting to enter the UK illegally and strengthen our ability to remove those with no legal right to be in the UK.

With UK support last year, France doubled the number of officers deployed daily on French beaches, improved intelligence sharing and purchased more cutting-edge technology.

This resulted in France preventing twice as many crossings so far this year than in the same period in 2020.

However, as French interceptions increased, organised criminal gangs have changed their tactics, moving further up the French coast, and forcing

migrants to take even longer, riskier journeys.

Thanks to support from the UK, the French will be able to respond by posting more security forces further up the coast, installing and utilising the latest surveillance equipment throughout northern France.

The package agreed at the meeting today also includes:

- improving law enforcement deployments along the coast of France, more than doubling resource focused on addressing illegal migration. French officers will patrol wider areas of coastline across the northern coast between Boulogne and Dunkirk, and will expand patrols further north-west around Dieppe
- deploying wide area surveillance technology to improve coverage of the coast of France to prevent crossing attempts, including the use of aerial surveillance
- investment in infrastructure to increase border security at key border crossing points along the Channel coast

Whilst these are important steps, the UK and France agreed that further collaboration would be required to significantly disrupt the ruthless organised crime which underpins the small boats phenomenon as well as any other form of illegal migration towards the UK through France.

Both nations agreed to implement a long-term plan for a 'smart border' along the coast and improve existing surveillance technology. New cutting-edge technology will identify where crossings are being attempted, directing French law enforcement officers to those locations, thereby stopping migrants from risking their lives in entering the water.

This is part of the long term strategy in the New Plan for Immigration to help prevent these crossings and tackle illegal immigration. The government is bringing forward new laws in the Nationality & Borders Bill to make it a criminal offence to knowingly arrive in the UK without permission to be here, sending a clear message to migrants thinking about paying people smugglers to make dangerous and illegal journeys to the UK.