

The IAGCI invites tenders to evaluate the UK Home Office Country Information Products

Background

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) is part of the Office of the Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration. Its purpose is to review the content of all Country of Origin Information (COI) produced by the UK Home Office. Country of Origin Information is used in procedures that assess claims of individuals for refugee status or other forms of international and humanitarian protection. It is also used in policy formulation.

The IAGCI reviews products to provide assurance to the Independent Chief Inspector that the content is as accurate, balanced, impartial and as up to date as possible. COI is contained in:

CPINs are generated on an ongoing basis for the top 20 asylum intake countries, and commonly address a specific type of common asylum claim(s) or provide general information for several claim types. They are compiled from material produced by a range of recognised external information sources (news sources, academic literature, independent research reports, fact finding reports from UK government or from other governments, etc). These documents also contain Home Office policy on the recommended position to be taken with respect to various types of claims, based on the available and accepted country information.

Information Request (IR) responses are made directly by case workers or others to the Home Office. These relate to information that is not covered in the CPINs. The IAGCI includes in its reviews a consideration of the COI included in a sample of (not more than ten) IR responses. Each IR response is typically a maximum of 2 pages in length.

Tender Details

IAGCI commissions country experts or experienced researchers to evaluate and report upon the country of origin information contained in UK Home Office information products. At its next meeting, the IAGCI requires a country expert to review the use of country information used in the following CPINs (2 separate tenders, 1 for each country):

Tender 1: [El Salvador](#)

[Country policy and information note: gangs, El Salvador, February 2020](#) (93 Pages)

Tender 2: [Sudan](#)

[Country policy and information note: non-Arab Darfuri, November 2019](#) (15 Pages)

[Country policy and information note: opposition to the government, including sur place activity, Sudan, November 2018](#) (67 Pages)

For each tender, the expert is also asked to consider a selection of approximately 10 Information Request Responses, which will be provided by the Chair of IAGCI, and are an average of 2 pages long.

Description of work

Country Policy and Information Notes aim to provide an accurate, balanced and up to date summary of the key available source documents regarding the human rights situation, with respect to the issues selected for coverage, in the country covered. The purpose and scope of the reports are clearly set out in an introductory section of the document. Reviewers should evaluate the reports in this context and seek to identify any areas where they can be improved. Specifically the review should entail:

- assessing the extent to which information from source documents has been appropriately and accurately reflected in the CPIN Reports
- identifying additional sources detailing the current human rights situation in the country with respect to main grounds for asylum claims (which are noted in each CPIN Report)
- noting and correcting any specific errors or omissions of fact
- making recommendations for general improvements regarding, for example, the structure of the report, its coverage or its overall approach
- ensuring no reference is made to an individual source which could expose them to risk

Reviewers should follow these specific guidelines:

- the review should focus exclusively on the country of origin information contained within the document, and not pass judgement on the policy guidance provided
- the CPIN should be reviewed in the context of its purpose as set out above. It should consider the situation in the country up to the stated 'cut off' date for inclusion of information
- when suggesting amendments, rather than 'tracking changes' on the original CPIN, a list of suggested changes should be provided as part of a stand-alone review paper, and each report should be reviewed separately. A reporting template will be provided to reviewers (for reference please refer to most recent reviews on the IAGCI webpage for examples of the template)
- any suggestions for additional information (or corrections to information in the document) must be referenced to a source document for the Home Office to be able to use it (preferably Open Source). The Home Office may use foreign language source documents, but only if the information is considered essential and is not available in English

language source

[Previous reviews of COI](#) products can be viewed on the ICIBI website.

The selected reviewers will be requested to attend an IAGCI meeting when their review will be considered. Under Covid 19 measures this may be done remotely rather than at the Office of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration in London. The meeting is due to take place in October 2020. Alternative arrangements may be made if attendance is not possible.

Representatives from the UK Home Office also attend the meeting to provide responses to comments and recommendations made in the review.

Reviews commissioned by IAGCI may be used as source documents for future CPIN reports or other Home Office information products.

How to Apply

Researchers interested in conducting any of the reviews should submit:

- a one page letter demonstrating their expertise in human rights and/or asylum issues pertaining to the particular country or countries
- their c.v.

Payment for this work will be set at £2,000. Expressions of interest should be submitted to IAGCI@icibi.gov.uk by close of Wednesday 19 August 2020.

We are only able to accept expressions of interest from individuals and not from institutions or consultancy groups.

Successful bids will be notified by 24 August 2020. Final reviews will be due by the close of Thursday 24 September 2020 and will be discussed at the IAGCI meeting in October 2020.

Whitehaven youngster calls for help protect our environment

In an impassioned speech recorded at the side of Whitehaven's marina, Iyla said:

About 8 million tonnes of plastic waste are added to the ocean every year.

[Iyla video](#)

With the help of our community we can raise lots of money for Seabins which can help with plastic and pollution in our oceans.

All of the sea life won't be reduced as much because the sea bins will collect up all the waste and pollution.

This determination to clean up the marina in Whitehaven, West Cumbria to remove waste before it has chance to get into the ocean, and to protect sea life, has been rewarded.

Following a successful pilot project where the youth project and the Whitehaven Marina Team ran one sea bin as a proof of concept, we have invested in 6 additional bins.

Head of community and development for Sellafield Ltd, Gary McKeating said:

This is a fantastic project that will make a real difference to our environment. The project is a credit to the harbour youth project and special thanks to Whitehaven Marina who are maintaining and emptying the Seabins.

[Seabins – How it works](#)

The project is also a great demonstration of our social impact multiplied programme – it was co-created with the community, is sustainable, and will have a positive impact on our local area.

Stephen Walter, from the Whitehaven Harbour Youth Project, said:

We are really excited about the new Seabins and the education project that we will be able to continue to run thanks to the funding.

The Seabins will make the harbour look a lot cleaner and with the help of the young people and the wider community we will all be doing our bit to help keep the world's oceans alive.

While the seabins will collect plastics and rubbish from the marina, Iyla is keen to remind us all that we can help prevent the waste getting there in the first place.

She closed her video with a clear message. She said:

Please remember to take home your rubbish and recycle.

The Whitehaven Harbour Youth Project has now re-opened following temporary

closure during the pandemic.

The Seabins will be installed later this year.

(Video credit: Sarah France Photography)

[PCA user research project restarts – how to get involved](#)

News story

Information about how to participate in the project and give your view about how Pubs Code rights should be communicated



The user research project commissioned by Fiona Dickie, Pubs Code Adjudicator, will now restart on the 24 August and run until 02 October.

The research will be carried out by independent design and research agency Hive IT. They will be talking directly to tied tenants, tenant representative groups and relevant trade bodies to gather their facts and opinions about Pubs Code and PCA communications. This research will inform an evidence-based plan and recommendations report which will be made public at the end of this project, with all information anonymised.

You can register your interest with this quick 5 minute [online survey](#) or by texting YES to 07401 230 698

Fiona Dickie, commenting on the recommencement said,

It is crucial that the industry, and tied tenants in particular, are able to access clear and consistent information about their Pubs Code rights and how to exercise them. This project will play a large part in supporting that by connecting directly with tenants

and other stakeholders and getting their views about the most effective ways we can communicate and engage in the future. I urge all tenants who are able to do so to please register their interest, so we can ensure that the findings convey the opinions of all our users.

Restarting the research at this time has been informed by some initial engagement, conducted by Hive IT, through a screener survey and contact with stakeholder groups.

You can find out more information about the project and Hive IT [here](#).

You can keep up to date with all the latest news from the PCA, including this project, by signing up to [email alerts](#).

You can also follow the PCA on [twitter](#).

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[Want to go on a road trip with your dog?](#)

Drivers planning a post lockdown trip with their dogs are being urged to take a break and enjoy one of the many outstanding walks that can be found just off England's motorways and major A roads this summer.

After the restrictions of the last few months it's completely understandable that people want to get out and about again and many will be including their dogs in the fun.

To make sure drivers and their pooches stay happy and safe on road trips Highways England has teamed up with the [Driving with Dogs](#) website to suggest some top stop off ideas for a mid-trip break or day out.

Highways England Head of Road Safety Richard Leonard said

We want all our customers, including the four-legged ones, to arrive at their destinations safely this summer and I'd urge drivers to make sure they plan a break into longer trips as well as preparing for any journey, especially in hot weather, by stocking up on water and checking travel conditions before setting off.

Walks that would make brilliant stop offs close to Highways England roads

include:

- A38, Plympton, Devon – Saltram House Park is a National Trust mansion with a most imposing vista. Dogs are welcome in the woods and parkland.
- M5 Junction 18 Bristol – Blaise Castle estate is an enormous outdoor space, with a mixture of woodlands, meadows and limestone gorge spread over 650 acres. Signed trails lead from the car park in all directions.
- M6 Junction 5 or 7 Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands – A former deer park with 2,400 acres of open space – including 7 lakes. Dogs are welcome, but there are a few restrictions in certain areas to protect the wildlife at breeding times.
- M60/M62 various junctions Greater Manchester – With 600 acres of parkland, Heaton Park is a massively popular open space for walkers and their dogs. You can get here easily from several M60 junctions and also the M62.
- A46 Lincolnshire – A super park for dogs, with flat walking in 200 acres of woodland and wetland. The area is a combination of both Hartsholme County Park and Swanholme Lakes Local Nature Reserve.
- A12 Blaxhall Common, Suffolk – A peaceful nature reserve where you can relax and enjoy the sounds of birdsong and chirruping insects. It's very handy for a doggie comfort break.
- M25 Junction 8 Reigate Hill, Surrey – Countryside dog walk just yards from junction 8. Excellent stop off when travelling. Access to both carriageways. Adjacent to North Downs Way / Gatton Park. Massive view over the North Downs and Reigate.

Lezli Rees, Driving with Dogs Director, said:

Since lockdown ended we've seen a big increase in visitors to our site so it would seem this year more than ever people want to go on adventures with their dogs.

Whether you're planning a fun day out or driving a long way and need a stop off en route there are literally thousands of lovely dog walks within a stone's throw of most major roads and motorways and we would urge people to get exploring!

As well as taking a break on road trips, veterinary charity PDSA is offering safety advice to anyone travelling with their dog this summer.

PDSA Vet Anna Ewers Clark said:

As camp-sites, holiday homes, and places where we can enjoy a day out – like national parks – begin to re-open, many of us will be planning days out and holidays in the UK. It's important to remember to keep our pets safe and happy as we do that, especially if you'll be spending a long time in the car.

PDSA's top tips include:

- Keep your pet restrained and secure in the car, not only will this keep them safe but it's also required by the Highway Code. We recommend using car safety harnesses for medium sized and large dogs, and pet carriers for small dogs and cats. The harness fits around the dog's chest, back and shoulders, and is then attached to one of the rear safety belts.
- Consider travel time. Lengthy journeys can be stressful for many pets, so keep travel as short as possible, and plan in plenty of rest breaks along the way. If your pet is likely to get stressed, consider staying closer to home.
- Check the temperature in the back of the car. Although most cars have great air conditioning for the front seats, the back seat or boot can heat up very quickly and can become dangerously warm for your pet, especially if they are in a carrier.
- Make sure you put your dog on the lead before you open the car doors and get them in and out of the car on the pavement side, away from the road. To prevent eye injuries and accidents, don't let your dog put its head out of the window.
- Carry plenty of drinking water and a bowl, even on short journeys and stop frequently so they can go to the toilet and stretch their legs in the fresh air.

View more [tips and advice from the PDSA](#).

The RSPCA offers advice on what to do in the event of a breakdown:

- Dogs should be removed from the broken-down vehicle if it is safe to do so.
- The animal should be kept under secure control i.e. kept on a lead at all times.
- Both animal and owner must position themselves as far away as possible from the roadside behind the crash barrier.

And whether you are heading off with a pet or not Highways England is offering the following information to ensure all your road trips are successful.

Highways England provides [real time traffic information](#)

Journey planning advice, including making sure vehicles are ready for the road, can be found here: [Think! vehicle checks](#)

You can find information about how to avoid tailgating by giving fellow road users enough space here: [Stay safe – Stay back](#)

Advice about [loading your vehicle safely](#)

Details of the above walks and many others can be found at [Driving with Dogs](#)

(Photo courtesy of Driving with Dogs)

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

Competition concerns in retail investment software merger

FNZ purchased GBST in November 2019. Both companies have a significant presence in the UK. They are 2 of the leading suppliers of retail investment platform solutions in the UK.

Following its in-depth 'Phase 2' investigation, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has provisionally found that FNZ's purchase of GBST could result in a substantial lessening of competition. This could lead to UK consumers who rely on investment platforms to administer their pensions and other investments facing higher costs and lower quality services.

The merged business would be by far the largest supplier in the UK, holding close to 50% of the market. Although there are differences in the business model that the 2 companies use, with FNZ providing an integrated software and servicing solution and GBST being a software-only provider, the CMA provisionally considers that they compete closely in a concentrated market in which there are few other significant suppliers. In particular, the CMA's investigation found that FNZ and GBST have competed consistently against each other in recent tenders to supply major investment platforms in the UK and that customers view them as close alternatives.

The investigation provisionally found that the merged business would face limited competition, with only one other supplier (Bravura) offering similar capabilities. Switching retail investment platform solutions is an expensive and complex process. The reluctance of customers to change suppliers, as a result of the risks involved, can make it difficult for smaller or less well-established firms (including suppliers active outside the UK) to enter or scale up in the UK.

In reaching this provisional decision, the CMA analysed a wide range of evidence looking at how closely these firms compete, including tender data and the companies' internal documents. It also engaged with customers, competitors, and other stakeholders to inform its findings.

The CMA has set out potential options for addressing its provisional concerns, which include requiring FNZ to sell all or part of GBST. Views are invited on the provisional findings by 25 August 2020 and on the notice of possible remedies by 18 August 2020.

Martin Coleman, Chair of the CMA inquiry group, said:

“The evidence we’ve seen so far consistently points in the same direction – that FNZ and GBST are two of the leading suppliers within this market and compete closely against each other. That’s why we’re concerned that their merger could lead to investment platforms, and therefore indirectly millions of UK consumers who hold pensions or other investments, facing higher fees and lower quality services. We’re now inviting comments on our provisional findings and possible remedies.”

For more information, visit the FNZ/GBST merger inquiry [case page](#).

For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.