



# An inspection into the effectiveness of Border Force's role in Project Kraken at small seaports

October 2021

**David Neal**

Independent Chief Inspector of  
Borders and Immigration

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

Independent Chief Inspector of  
Borders and Immigration,  
5th Floor, Globe House,  
89 Eccleston Square,  
London SW1V 1PN  
United Kingdom

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**Write to us:** Independent Chief Inspector  
of Borders and Immigration  
5th Floor, Globe House  
89 Eccleston Square  
London, SW1V 1PN  
United Kingdom



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# Foreword

Earlier this year, I published my intention to conduct an inspection of a small seaport. I decided to focus this inspection on the effectiveness of Border Force's role in 'Project Kraken', a multi-agency campaign, at small seaports as part of a piloted 'medium' inspection format.

Project Kraken came to the attention of the inspectorate in May 2018, at which time attempts to revive the operation through various relaunches had stimulated little return. This resulted in a recommendation that Border Force review Project Kraken, in particular the reporting arrangements, and identify if it could be made more effective. Although Border Force subsequently evaluated Project Kraken in October 2018, and notwithstanding operational pressures as a result of EU Exit and the COVID-19 pandemic, this inspection found that little progress had been made. The already low volumes of intelligence Project Kraken generated nationally had reduced and had produced no actionable intelligence.

Inspectors visited two seaports – Whitby and Wells-next-the-Sea – and it would be a fair summary that in both these locations Project Kraken has some way to go in meeting its objectives. Inspectors also spoke with national stakeholders and Border Force staff, and reviewed evidence of the Project's overall performance.

Based on the findings of this inspection, there is insufficient evidence to categorically state that Project Kraken is failing; however, I am not convinced another relaunch of Project Kraken will be effective. I will conduct a more comprehensive follow-up inspection, with a deeper evidence base, no later than spring 2023, and will continue to track Border Force progress between now and then.



**David Neal**  
**Chief Inspector**

# 1. Background

## Border Force

- 1.1** Border Force is a law enforcement command within the Home Office, responsible for securing the UK border by carrying out immigration and customs controls for people and goods entering the UK.
- 1.2** Border Force Officers conduct checks, exercising powers under the Immigration Acts of 1971 and 2019, the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979, and the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.
- 1.3** Border Force sets out its responsibilities as:
- “checking the immigration status of people arriving in and departing the UK
  - searching baggage, vehicles and cargo for illicit goods or illegal immigrants
  - patrolling the UK coastline and searching vessels
  - gathering intelligence
  - alerting the police and security services to people of interest”.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.4** Alongside these responsibilities, it also sets out its priorities, including to:
- “deter and prevent individuals and goods that would harm the national interests from entering the UK
  - facilitate the legitimate movement of individuals and trade to and from the UK
  - protect and collect customs revenues for trade crossing the border
  - provide excellent service to customers
  - provide demonstrable effectiveness, efficiency and value for money”.
- 1.5** In addition to major airports and seaports, Border Force is also responsible for carrying out immigration and customs controls at any port that handles general maritime (GM) traffic. GM is defined by Border Force as non-scheduled, un-canalised and non-commercial maritime traffic, including vessels such as yachts, tugs, rigid hull inflatable boats (RHIBs) and small motorboats. It can also include small commercial vessels, identified through intelligence, as being used solely for smuggling purposes. These vessels often arrive at small ports in remote locations that do not have a permanent Border Force presence.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/border-force/about>



## Project Kraken

- 1.6** Project Kraken is a joint initiative between the National Crime Agency, police and Border Force. It is not a ‘project’ in the traditional sense, but more of a long-standing campaign and process established in 2008. Project Kraken is aimed at encouraging members of the public to report suspicious or unusual activity at the coast or in coastal waters. According to GOV.UK, unusual activity could include “boats arriving at unusual times or to isolated locations”, “people being somewhere they shouldn’t be”, and “nervous crew who show a lack of maritime protocols”.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.7** Project Kraken aims to counter serious and organised crime, including smuggling, immigration crime and terrorism, around the UK’s coastline. There are two formal reporting channels available – the police ‘101’ number and online at GOV.UK.
- 1.8** Project Kraken is supported by Border Force Field Intelligence Officers (FIOs) who act as a primary point of contact for stakeholders, such as harbour masters and marina managers.
- 1.9** Inspectors were told by the Home Office that a full review of Project Kraken was instigated in March 2021 and it is now in the process of being redesigned and relaunched, with a projected completion date of spring 2022.
- 1.10** The overall objectives of the redesign are to:
- increase public awareness of Project Kraken and the channels the public can use to report anything suspicious or unusual within general maritime environments
  - increase public reporting of unusual or suspicious behaviour in and around coastal and maritime environments
  - strengthen industry’s response and security surrounding general maritime to reduce the impact of the threat from terrorism and serious and organised crime.

## Previous ICIBI inspection

- 1.11** In 2018 the Independent Chief Inspector conducted ‘An inspection of Border Force operations at south coast seaports’<sup>3</sup> which identified reporting issues with ‘101’ and ‘Crimestoppers’ call operators appearing unaware or uninterested in Project Kraken.
- 1.12** The inspection recommended that the Home Office “Look again at Project Kraken, in particular at the reporting arrangements, and identify if it could be made more effective.” This was ‘accepted’, and the Home Office responded:<sup>4</sup>

“As advised during the course of the inspection, Border Force is currently reviewing the reporting arrangements within Project Kraken and will produce an evaluation with recommended next steps by November 2018.”

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-suspicious-behaviour-at-sea-project-kraken/report-suspicious-behaviour-at-sea-project-kraken>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-inspection-of-border-force-operations-at-south-coast-seaports>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/response-to-the-report-on-an-inspection-of-border-force-operations-at-south-coast-seaports/response-to-the-report-on-an-inspection-of-border-force-operations-at-south-coast-seaports>

**1.13** The Chief Inspector also recommended that the Home Office:

“take note of the importance placed by harbour masters and marina managers on face-to-face contact with familiar officers as the best way of gathering information from the maritime and boating communities (making sure that Field Intelligence Officers and visiting port officers have sufficient time for this).”

**1.14** This recommendation was also ‘accepted’. In its response the Home Office stated, “Border Force recognises the importance of face-to-face contact by familiar officers with harbour masters and marina managers and will consider twinning Field Intelligence Officers (FIOs) wherever possible. It is the intention of Border Force that FIOs should be the primary point of contact for these important cohorts.” The Home Office was also considering implementing a dedicated phone line for port staff to call in the event an FIO was unavailable.

## 2. Scope and methodology

- 2.1** This inspection examined the effectiveness of Border Force’s role in Project Kraken at two seaports – Whitby, North East Yorkshire, and Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk – to gain insight from local perspectives and to consider how Project Kraken intelligence is generated, collected and used by Border Force to prevent immigration or customs offences. Inspectors focused on the activities of local Border Force Officers, mainly Field Intelligence Officers (FIOs), in raising awareness of Project Kraken, the adequacy and accuracy of promotional materials, experiences, reporting mechanisms and outputs generated at local levels.
- 2.2** While this inspection acknowledges that Project Kraken is multi-agency, it does not consider the specific work undertaken by other agencies, for example, the police or National Crime Agency.
- 2.3** Inspectors undertook the following activities:
- reviewed publicly available information on Project Kraken
  - notified the Home Office of the inspection on 20 September 2021 together with an evidence request
  - received and analysed 15 pieces of documentary evidence relating to Project Kraken and engagement activities at Whitby and Wells-next-the-Sea
  - undertook eight interviews with Border Force staff, from Executive Officer (EO) to Grade 6 level, from across Border Force National Operations Headquarters, Border Force Intelligence Directorate and Border Force General Maritime
  - conducted one interview with a partner national law enforcement agency and another with a key national stakeholder representing general maritime users
  - visited Whitby and conducted interviews with five local organisations working in and with the general maritime community
  - circulated a short online survey to members of a maritime organisation
  - visited Wells-next-the-Sea and held interviews with four local organisations working in and with the general maritime community
  - requested four items of further evidence on 11 October 2021
  - held a feedback session, sharing initial thoughts and indicative findings on 11 October 2021, with the Grade 6 Director of Border Force National Operations.

## 3. Key findings

- 3.1** The success of Project Kraken is contingent on two key factors: first, that members of the public are aware of it and know when to report something suspicious and to whom; and second, that this is reported effectively and efficiently by the relevant agency to allow for appropriate action to be taken. This inspection identified that, while the project has been rebranded and relaunched numerous times in its 14-year history, indicative of an appetite to make it work, the fact a further relaunch is due to be completed by spring 2022 suggests issues have not yet been successfully addressed.
- 3.2** Measuring the success of Project Kraken is difficult due to the low volume of referrals, which have decreased annually since 2018, and the absence of any other measurable metric. This low volume of reporting is, however, indicative of issues with Project Kraken, particularly reporting mechanisms, which were highlighted by a previous inspection, and generally low awareness of the Project among the public.
- 3.3** Reporting mechanisms rely on members of the public, either professionals working in coastal communities or individuals enjoying the coast recreationally, ringing '101' or reporting a concern via an online form. Border Force has documented the issues in an internal review relating to members of the public ringing '101' to report a crime or a suspicion of one, which includes long waiting times (between 30 and 50 minutes) and a lack of awareness of Project Kraken among call-handling staff. To address this second issue, in 2018, Border Force announced that it would produce briefings and training on Project Kraken for call-handling staff, though there was no evidence that this had occurred. Inspectors heard plans that reporting crimes or suspicions via '101' would be replaced with a dedicated 'Border Force' telephone line in 2022, though the detail on how this would work and when this would happen was not clear.<sup>5</sup>
- 3.4** Inspectors did not attempt to measure awareness of Project Kraken among the general public resident or visiting the coast nationally. However, inspectors did speak to stakeholders with professional experience in the maritime industry who had knowledge of the national coastline and related security issues. These stakeholders were aware of Project Kraken but believed it to be "dead in the water" after having heard nothing about the Project from Border Force for several years, if at all.
- 3.5** To raise awareness of Project Kraken, Border Force Field Intelligence Officers (FIOs), alongside Border Force frontline teams, were tasked with, among other things, conducting outreach to small seaports to highlight Project Kraken through conversations and by disseminating promotional material, as well as building and maintaining relationships with local stakeholders. However, the success of this outreach was limited, as FIOs were generally 'tasked to risk' and spent much of their time on more urgent priorities. Their roles were also split between maritime and aviation work, with 'commercial' maritime and aviation being much more time

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<sup>5</sup> In its factual accuracy response, Border Force told inspectors that the phone line would be an Immigration Enforcement hotline and would be introduced by spring 2022.

consuming than 'general' maritime. While their role had recently, in the summer of 2021, been simplified from the collection and development of intelligence to either the collection or the development of intelligence, they remained overstretched.

- 3.6** This lack of contact between Border Force and stakeholders at small seaports was evident at the two locations visited by inspectors: Whitby and Wells-next-the-Sea. Neither port has a full-time Border Force presence, and while FIOs are required to make ad hoc visits to these locations, a Home Office record showed that Wells-next-the-Sea had only been visited six times by Border Force since 2018, not all of which were by FIOs. For Whitby, the situation was unclear, as Border Force did not record visits, though they estimated it had only been visited three or four times since 2018.
- 3.7** Despite this, at these ports, knowledge of Project Kraken was reasonably high, though public-facing promotional Project Kraken materials were often either outdated or non-existent. Local maritime sector stakeholders expressed distrust or a lack of faith in Border Force within their communities, whose engagement with stakeholders at the seaports in question had been limited. Several had taken part in local multi-agency meetings attended by Border Force staff and these were viewed positively. Overall, though, Border Force was perceived by some stakeholders as either unable, due to resources, or unwilling to engage with these small seaport communities, which gave rise to a perception that local coastal borders were particularly vulnerable to illicit activity.
- 3.8** Enthusiasm to 'protect the border' by engaging with the aims of Project Kraken was high among stakeholders, but Border Force had not leveraged this goodwill. Border Force has planned a further relaunch of Project Kraken in spring 2022 and is currently recruiting more FIOs. It was not made clear, though, how this relaunch would differ from previous iterations, and the Home Office should keep an open mind as to whether there are viable alternatives to Project Kraken.

## 4. Recommendation

- 4.1** As part of the Project Kraken relaunch, due in spring 2022, critically evaluate and, where necessary, implement:
- a. the resources required (including staffing, strategic communications and promotional materials)
  - b. any new intelligence reporting mechanisms, including changes to improve their efficiency and effectiveness where appropriate
  - c. mechanisms to continuously measure the effectiveness of the Project.

## 5. Evidence and analysis

- 5.1 Project Kraken's webpage on GOV.UK, last updated on 10 April 2019,<sup>6</sup> describes Project Kraken as a "joint law enforcement operation tackling maritime border crime around over 11,000 miles of British mainland coastline, which can be exploited by terrorists and serious criminals".<sup>7</sup>
- 5.2 Project Kraken is led by Border Force but has significant multi-agency support, including from the National Crime Agency (NCA), the Home Office's Clandestine Threat Command (CTC), Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) and Territorial Policing. It is primarily aimed at members of the public in coastal communities, pleasure craft users, and those living and working in and around small ports, marinas and harbours.
- 5.3 The Project Kraken webpage also directs people to 'sign up' for regular updates about Project Kraken, although the URL receives an error message.<sup>8</sup>
- 5.4 Project Kraken has been through numerous iterations, relaunches and re-branding exercises since it launched in 2008, as set out at Figure 1.

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6 In its factual accuracy response, Border Force said that it would update the website as part of the relaunch.

7 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-suspicious-behaviour-at-sea-project-kraken/report-suspicious-behaviour-at-sea-project-kraken>

8 <https://gov.smartwebportal.co.uk/homeoffice/public/error.html>

**Figure 1****Development of Project Kraken, 2008–2021**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
2008	<p>Project Kraken initially launched in the Hampshire police area, with Devon and Cornwall Police also involved. It was a joint initiative with the Home Office’s then UK Border Agency.</p> <p>Posters and marketing materials at the time described Project Kraken as an “enhanced crime and counter terrorist ‘vigilance’ capability within the maritime environment of Devon and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. It engages key stakeholders together with local communities to provide a hostile environment to terrorists and criminals looking to disrupt the everyday lives and safety of those who live, work or travel through the waters of the United Kingdom.”</p> <p>It invites members of the public to report suspicious behaviour to 08452 777 444 and quote ‘Project Kraken’.</p>
2011	The remit of Project Kraken expanded nationally, with Counter Terrorism Policing holding the lead.
2014	<p>Project Kraken is relaunched, this time led by the NCA. Briefings from the time state its relaunch was due to wanting to “increase public reporting of unusual or suspicious behaviour in and around coastal and maritime environments”.</p> <p>It attempted to simplify reporting mechanisms to just two: ‘101’ and Crimestoppers. It created new branding material.</p>
2016	Project Kraken is removed from NCA and passed to Border Force. It sits within Border Force’s Maritime Command.
2018	Border Force relaunches Kraken with updated marketing materials and regional ‘toolkits’.
2019	Project Kraken is the responsibility of Border Force’s Maritime Command and the promotion of Project Kraken is included in the Home Office national border security communications campaign in 2019.
2020	Responsibility for Project Kraken is moved to Border Force’s National Operations Headquarters <sup>9</sup> (NOHQ). The NOHQ team are tasked with identifying issues with Project Kraken and making recommendations for improvements for a spring 2022 relaunch.

9 NOHQ launched in 2020 and spans multiple Home Office commands, including tasking, coordination and capability development of General Aviation and General Maritime.



## Referrals and reporting mechanisms

**5.5** Project Kraken relies on members of the public reporting ‘suspicious activity’ at the border to the police (via ‘101’ or ‘999’) or through a generic ‘report an immigration or border crime’ GOV.UK tool, as illustrated in Figure 2.<sup>10</sup> Historically, Crimestoppers was also used.<sup>11</sup>

**5.6** The website asks for anyone who has seen any “unusual or suspicious activity near the UK coastline” to report it online via GOV.UK,<sup>12</sup> or call the police on ‘101’. While it does not give a definition of what unusual or suspicious activity is, it does provide examples:

- “boats arriving at unusual times or to isolated locations
- people taking an interest in port security or buildings
- nervous crew who show a lack of maritime protocol
- people making attempts to signal or guide boats offshore
- people making a large cash payment for maritime equipment
- people being somewhere they shouldn’t be
- boats showing signs of unusual modification or minor damage”.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The GOV.UK website is accessible here: <https://www.gov.uk/report-immigration-crime>

<sup>11</sup> Crimestoppers is a charity that specialises in the anonymous reporting of crime and suspicious activity. It has a single call centre where calls are taken by trained operatives who cover a range of over 75 schemes and projects across government and private industry. The call response times are far superior than ‘101’, but volumes regarding Kraken were low, and a Crimestoppers contract was withdrawn [date unknown].

<sup>12</sup> This is a generic form for any ‘immigration or border crime’: <https://www.gov.uk/report-immigration-crime>

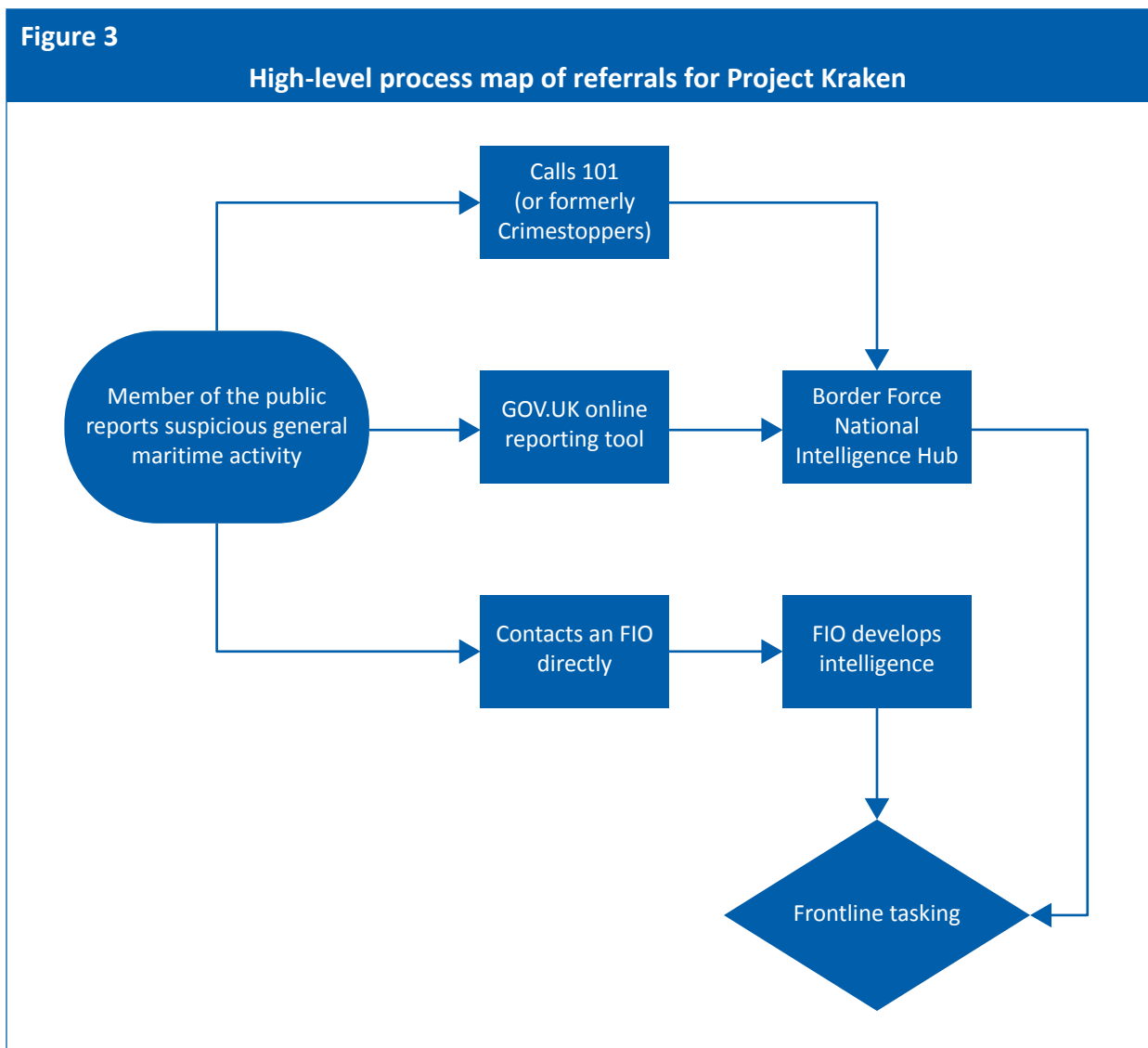
<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-suspicious-behaviour-at-sea-project-kraken/report-suspicious-behaviour-at-sea-project-kraken>

Figure 2

Project Kraken promotional poster March 2019 – present



- 5.7 Calls to '101' are handled by local police forces and then disseminated to Border Force via the National Intelligence Hub.<sup>14</sup>
- 5.8 In addition to these formal reporting mechanisms, members of the public or general maritime (GM) stakeholders, such as harbour masters or other local maritime professionals, may also have the direct contact details for a Field Intelligence Officer (FIO), and therefore bypass the official Kraken reporting mechanisms altogether. These reports will be given verbally and the FIO would then pass this intelligence on for development or develop it themselves.
- 5.9 Where intelligence is passed through the referral mechanism, either via '101', GOV.UK or an FIO, it always ends with 'frontline tasking', as illustrated in Figure 3.



- 5.10 Since May 2017, the number of referrals attributable to Kraken has been low and has decreased annually since 2018, as set out at Figure 4. Border Force explained that a referral will not be marked as Kraken unless it is explicitly stated upon referral.

<sup>14</sup> The Border Force National Intelligence Hub is a central unit with responsibility for conducting the initial evaluation and recording of incoming information before referring it on.

**Figure 4**  
**Number of Project Kraken referrals received by Border Force from May 2017 to October 2021**

Year (calendar)	Total Project Kraken referrals
May to December 2017	18
2018	25
2019	13
2020	9
January to October 2021	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>

- 5.11** Between 1 September 2019 and 1 September 2021, the Border Force Maritime Intelligence Bureau received a total of 4,221 general maritime referrals. Of these, 15 referrals were marked up by the source of the referral, either ‘101’ or Crimestoppers, as being “Kraken”. Limitations in how data was captured mean that other referrals may have been Kraken related but not marked as such. Seven of the 15 definite Kraken referrals led to further intelligence being developed, but ultimately no specific targets were issued to frontline staff as a result of these referrals.
- 5.12** In responding to this inspection’s request for evidence, the Home Office said it recognises “the limitations of data in this area” and that this is one of the “core workstreams” that it is seeking to address through the redesign of Kraken.
- 5.13** A previous recommendation from ‘An inspection of Border Force operations at south coast seaports’<sup>15</sup> in 2018 asked Border Force to “look again at Project Kraken, in particular at the reporting arrangements, and identify if it could be made more effective”. This recommendation was accepted, and Border Force said that it would produce an evaluation with recommendations for next steps by the end of that year.
- 5.14** The resulting evaluation, ‘Project Kraken, an Evaluation of Reporting Arrangements’, dated October 2018 acknowledged key issues with reporting and the reporting mechanisms. It highlighted that, even when reports are made regarding general maritime to ‘101’ that could be perceived as “Kraken related”, they were not recorded as such.
- 5.15** This was due largely to call-handling staff in ‘101’ call centres not being aware of Kraken, exacerbated by a high turnover of staff within these centres. The evaluation noted that improvements could be made by raising awareness through Border Force briefings to call-handling staff, and this was a recommendation within the evaluation. Inspectors found no evidence that any briefings for ‘101’ staff had been delivered. As at October 2021, ‘101’ was still a key reporting mechanism and was referenced on all Kraken marketing materials.
- 5.16** One Border Force staff member involved in Project Kraken told inspectors that they thought ‘101’ was insufficient as a reporting tool. They said that those in the general maritime and coastal communities “don’t want to use it”.

<sup>15</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/755272/ICIBI\\_An\\_inspection\\_of\\_South\\_Coast\\_Ports.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/755272/ICIBI_An_inspection_of_South_Coast_Ports.pdf)

- 5.17** In addition to ‘101’ reporting, Kraken posters also signpost people to report online at [www.gov.uk/report-border-crime](http://www.gov.uk/report-border-crime), though the evaluation from 2018 said referrals from this method were “negligible”. This is likely due to the absence of any reference to Kraken in this reporting tool.<sup>16</sup>
- 5.18** The online reporting tool takes users through to a generic webpage questionnaire which asks questions about any immigration or border crime. The questionnaire is based on multiple choice questions about the “crime”, the person or organisation supposedly committing the crime, and about the person providing the information. It also allows free text for “other or further information” and provides the option to upload supporting documentation.
- 5.19** Inspectors reviewed a PowerPoint presentation titled ‘Project Kraken’, dated April 2021, drafted by a Border Force staff member from NOHQ who led Kraken work. This formed part of scoping work to identify issues with the project, as well as recommendations for improvements ahead of the relaunch in spring 2022. Regarding the online reporting tool, it said:
- “Online reporting needs a full review. The current generic form is not user friendly and may discourage reporting ... as a minimum, the form needs to give an option to say that something relates to Kraken to enable effective tracking.”
- 5.20** The same presentation referenced alternative options for telephone reporting, such as removing ‘101’ and having a dedicated Crimestoppers line, or an internal reporting line. It also proposed a long-term ambition of having a mobile phone application.
- 5.21** Inspectors also learnt that there were plans to work on a dedicated line for Project Pegasus (the equivalent mechanism for general aviation)<sup>17</sup> and Project Kraken, though no further information on how this would work was provided.

## Perception of staff and partner agencies

- 5.22** Given the UK’s large coastline, it is not possible for Border Force to have a full-time presence at small seaports. Project Kraken, therefore, relies on the general public, local maritime communities and partner organisations knowing about and utilising it in order for it to function as an effective mechanism for capturing intelligence relating to maritime offences.
- 5.23** One staff member told inspectors that outreach and building relationships with people on the ground in coastal communities are key to Kraken. While FIOs are required to conduct outreach, including ‘ad hoc’ visits to ports to build relationships with these stakeholders to raise awareness of Kraken, the reality described to inspectors by multiple stakeholders, partner agencies and Border Force staff was different. FIOs were said to be unable to complete frequent ‘ad hoc’ visits due to competing priorities. Most of their role was focused on “fire-fighting” and on general aviation rather than general maritime. A senior manager said that there are “too few” FIOs, and that rather than strategic and organised visits, they get pulled onto “this week’s priority”. They further acknowledged that, while the job description of FIOs does include visits, an increase in the number of FIOs was required to enable them to do

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<sup>16</sup> In its factual accuracy response, Border Force said “in the testing of the communication materials for the national communications campaign, the public fed back that ‘reporting’ should be as easy as possible and that using ‘quote Kraken’ or even a long contact telephone number were seen as barriers for reporting crime. Using that insight, the reporting process was streamlined to the central 101 phone number and the online form on GOV.UK.”

<sup>17</sup> Project Pegasus is similar to Project Kraken but for the aviation community – it requests that people call ‘101’ or Crimestoppers if they see anything unusual or suspicious in their local airfield: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-suspicious-behaviour-at-small-airfields-project-pegasus/report-suspicious-behaviour-at-a-small-airfield-project-pegasus>

“more, in greater depth”. Recruitment campaigns were ongoing, and staff were positive that more resource would allow FIOs to fulfil all aspects of their job description.<sup>18</sup>

## Project Kraken central communications

- 5.24** Border Force does not currently allocate funding for Project Kraken specific communications and branding materials. One representative from a national association that works within general maritime told inspectors that they had not received any communications about Project Kraken since 2018. When asked about this inspection and Project Kraken more broadly, they told inspectors that they had assumed Kraken to be “dead in the water”.<sup>19</sup>
- 5.25** In response, a Border Force senior manager explained that the Home Office’s Strategic Communications team no longer supported or undertook communication activity that did not fit directly within the Home Secretary’s priorities, commenting that while the police and NCA were still promoting Kraken, Border Force did not have the resources to.<sup>20</sup>

## Central governance of Project Kraken

- 5.26** Border Force’s NOHQ took ownership of Project Kraken in January 2020, although the team consisted of one member of staff at that stage and was prioritising border health measures and EU Exit work. The team began work on “scoping” to improve Project Kraken once additional resources were in place during September 2020. Scoping for a redesign of Project Kraken took place between January and April 2021, and by July 2021, a new Tactical Delivery Group was established to “drive forward the redesign and operational activity” of Kraken.
- 5.27** The aims of the group are:
- “To provide a consistent tactical steer to multiagency Kraken activity around the UK, in line with the strategic needs identified through the GM Sub-Threat Group.
  - To review levels of intelligence reporting and operational outcomes delivered through Kraken activity.
  - To identify and share good practice from Kraken activity.
  - To share the latest branding and communications materials, ensuring consistency of use.
  - To establish and maintain appropriate support and funding for Kraken activities.”
- 5.28** The group consists of representatives from across the Home Office, Territorial and Counter Terrorism Policing, the NCA, Ministry of Defence, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, Department for Transport and the Marine Management Organisation. The group had met monthly since July 2021 and Border Force said engagement at these meetings was “high”.
- 5.29** The effectiveness of these meetings will likely not be known until the 2022 relaunch, though the attempt at creating a cross-agency group to solely focus on Kraken is positive.

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18 In its factual response, Border Force said it intends to extend the reach of Kraken into coastal communities “by more effective and wider engagement with partner agencies and through wider use of frontline operational resources in this role”.

19 In its factual accuracy response, Border Force stated that it presented an outline of the redesign plans to a broad range of national association representatives “early in the process”.

20 In its factual accuracy response, Border Force said: “The Home Office Communications team promoted Project Kraken delivered as part of its national border security campaign during 2018-2019; and in February 2020, Home Office Communications had planned to relaunch maritime security communication which was approved by the Home Secretary. However, this work was suspended due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the need for the Comms Team to focus on other border security priorities including the increase in illegal migration via high-risk routes including by small boats and HGVs.”

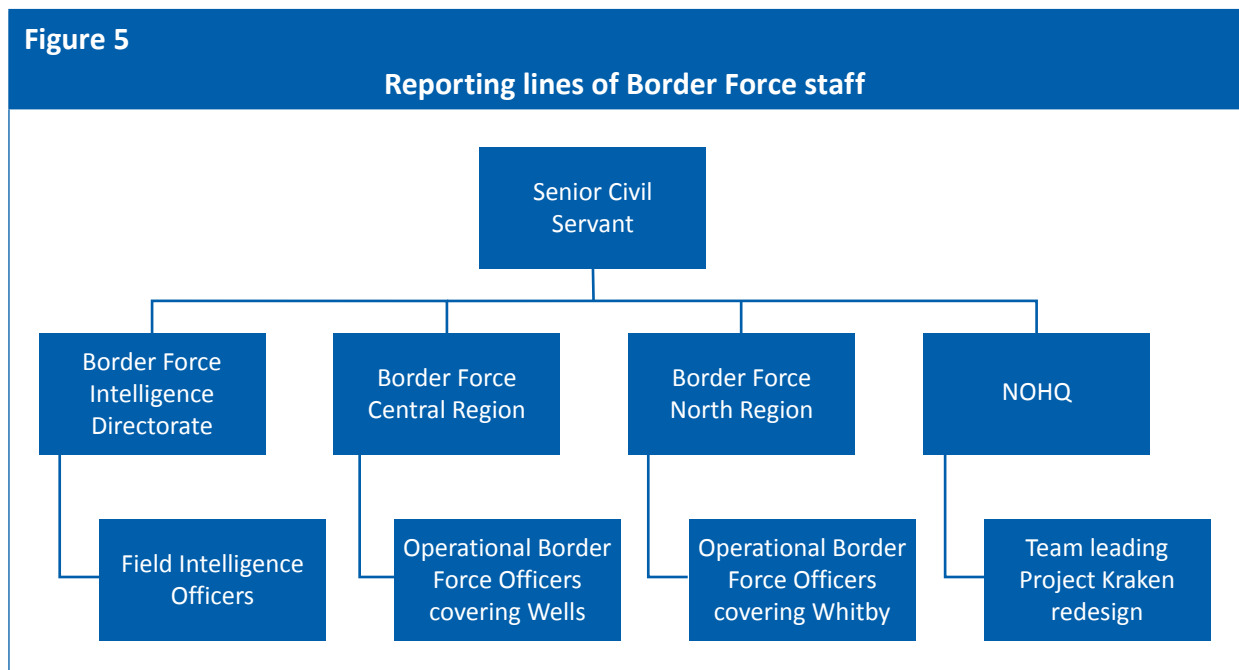
## The 'local' Kraken picture

### Wells-next-the-Sea and Whitby

**5.30** Inspectors visited the ports of Whitby and Wells-next-the-Sea and met representatives from nine maritime-related organisations. Both ports are frequented predominantly by general maritime vessels, including fishing vessels, yachts, leisure cruises and, in Wells-next-the-Sea, wind farm support vessels.

## Governance and resource

**5.31** Neither Whitby nor Wells-next-the-Sea are staffed by Border Force, though they fall under the remit of Border Force FIOs and Border Force operational teams in Border Force North and Border Force Central respectively. These Border Force Officers sit under different commands within Border Force, as illustrated in Figure 5.



**5.32** Border Force operational staff are frontline officers responsible for carrying out customs and immigrations functions at ports, and other related tasking, such as intelligence-led operations responding to possible customs or immigration offences at the border.

**5.33** The 2021 Project Kraken review noted that “Kraken has been driven and publicised through BFID and the FIO network”. Inspectors spoke with staff from Border Force Intelligence Directorate (BFID) and Border Force operations, and although operational staff played some role in Project Kraken, this was unclear, with staff indicating that Project Kraken engagement remained primarily the responsibility of FIOs.

**5.34** FIOs responsible for Whitby operate from Teesside, 30 miles away, while those covering Wells-next-the-Sea are based in Felixstowe, 90 miles away. FIOs told inspectors their duties include both general aviation and general maritime.

- 5.35** Evidence supplied by the Home Office states that FIOs are “multimodal” and “tasked to risk”. Resource and responsibilities for those covering Whitby and Wells-next-the-Sea are shown at Figure 6.

**Figure 6**  
**FIO resource covering Whitby and Wells-next-the-Sea**

Region	Town	FIOs in post	FIO vacancies	General and commercial maritime coverage
East Anglia	Harwich	3	2	The Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk coastlines from the River Crouch up to Boston in Lincolnshire. This includes the rivers Blackwater, Stour, Orwell, Deben and Alde
	Felixstowe	2	1	
	Midlands (Birmingham)	2	0	
North East England	Teesside	1	1	Coastline from the Scottish border to Boston, Lincolnshire, covering the regions of Tyne, Tees and Humber
	Humber	1	4	

- 5.36** The FIOs interviewed by inspectors recognised that their resource was limited and that this impacted their ability to conduct liaison work. They told inspectors of recent changes in the Intelligence Directorate; where previously FIOs were expected to collect and develop intelligence, in summer 2021 they moved to roles devoted to either intelligence collection or development. In tandem, the geographic area of responsibility was increased.<sup>21</sup> Some recruitment was taking place, and the North East team was expected to increase in size, which staff hoped would improve their ability to conduct Project Kraken engagement.

## Project Kraken and perception of risk

- 5.37** Within Whitby and Wells-next-the-Sea, most of the maritime organisations operating in and around the ports, spoken to by inspectors, had heard about Project Kraken. Almost two-thirds (17 of 26) of members of a local maritime organisation responding to a survey had also heard of Project Kraken.
- 5.38** Stakeholders spoken to in both ports recognised that their locality may be attractive to immigration or border crime, with a perception that there was “no border” in smaller ports and the unmanned and often unpopulated coastline provides a “perfect” opportunity for illicit activity. However, none had any recent direct experience of such activity and the limited first-hand examples provided were dated, though many had heard rumours.
- 5.39** In August 2020, in reply to a previous ICIBI recommendation, the Home Office recognised the importance of face-to-face contact with harbour masters and marina managers, stating “It is the intention of Border Force that FIOs should be the primary point of contact for these important cohorts.” However, locally, stakeholders considered Project Kraken to be a police-driven initiative. None of the seven non-law enforcement organisations spoken to could name an FIO or Border Force Officer responsible for the area; however, the majority could

<sup>21</sup> In its factual accuracy response, Border Force said “FIOs are based in Intelligence Collection Groups linked to geographical areas. However, FIOs can be surged between geographical areas as required based on Intelligence Collection priorities as agreed through the BFID Intelligence Tasking process.”



name the local police lead for Project Kraken.<sup>22</sup> Two stakeholders who regularly took part in Project Kraken engagement had no idea Border Force was involved.

## Border force engagement strategy and visit records

- 5.40** Inspectors found no evidence that a consistent Border Force engagement strategy had taken place at either port, although some FIOs maintained a log of port visits. FIOs said they would “try” to get involved and go to some maritime community events, such as regattas and boating sales, and that visits were usually planned a few weeks in advance and coordinated with Border Force operational colleagues. As with many operations, the Covid-19 pandemic had limited opportunities for face-to-face engagement and impacted operational activity of both Border Force and organisations in the maritime community, though some activities did move to virtual platforms.
- 5.41** The Home Office provided an FIO activity log for Wells-next-the-Sea covering the period 1 September 2018 to 30 September 2021 which listed all visits to the port but did not indicate if any were related to Project Kraken. There were six in total: one in 2019, three in 2020 and two in 2021. The latter three visits were to discuss a specific matter with the police. However, two were combined with meetings with other stakeholder organisations.
- 5.42** The Home Office was unable to supply a visit log for FIO activity in Whitby, stating, “Prior to the move into Collection (August 2021) visit logs to GM sites were not routinely completed.” But added:

“Due to there being only 1 FIO covering the Whitby region since at least 2018, the local manager estimates that Whitby has been visited 3-4 times by an FIO in that time frame. These visits were conducted alongside Frontline BF colleagues from Teesport to avoid lone working. Relationships have been maintained with stakeholders at Whitby (police/Harbourmaster etc) virtually throughout the pandemic.”

## Stakeholder engagement at Whitby and Wells-next-the-Sea

- 5.43** Border Force operational teams had been sighted by stakeholders at the ports, monthly in Whitby, but not since the Covid-19 pandemic in Wells-next-the-Sea. Several stakeholders expressed a distrust and lack of confidence in Border Force felt by the local maritime community. Among the fishing community, this was attributed to some confusion with ‘Fisheries officers’, working for the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority,<sup>23</sup> who were also unpopular. One stakeholder reported that Border Force operational officers could be “intimidating” and “heavy handed” when attending port and made little effort to engage with the community.
- 5.44** Border Force Maritime Command deployed a rigid hull inflatable boat to Whitby as part of an operation in June 2021, but otherwise stakeholders had not seen Border Force vessels since before the Covid-19 pandemic. Several stakeholders expressed a wish for their more frequent return, though it was appreciated, from media coverage, that they were likely busy on the south coast. One stakeholder considered that Border Force staff on the vessels were “down to earth and more effective” when it came to engaging directly with the maritime community.

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<sup>22</sup> In its factual accuracy response, Border Force said “these police officers have community based roles which cover very small geographic areas” and that they therefore “would expect those staff to be more well known in the local community ... the purpose of Kraken is multi-agency and about raising local vigilance in GM and coastal communities by any of the partner agencies”.

<sup>23</sup> According to the IFCA website “the Authority is responsible for managing the exploitation of sea fisheries resources within its area of jurisdiction” and carries out enforcement activities including the supervision and inspection of fishing activities, catches and equipment, ashore and at sea.

- 5.45** Key port stakeholders took part in local multi-agency meetings, including Border Force. These were held monthly in Wells-next-the-Sea and every three to six months in Whitby, continuing virtually during the Covid-19 pandemic. These were viewed positively by those spoken to who took part. While Kraken was not always mentioned at these meetings, it was considered by Border Force staff and stakeholders that they contributed to Project Kraken by maintaining connections and sharing intelligence.
- 5.46** Despite a perceived high turnover of staff, Border Force FIOs were considered more approachable than operational staff. Police officers who had regular contact with FIOs reported a “good” working relationship. However, Border Force FIOs were not proactive in promoting Project Kraken, and local police tended to drive engagement by default.<sup>24</sup>
- 5.47** Only stakeholders who worked closely with the FIOs could recall Border Force attending local maritime community events. The broader perception from stakeholders across both ports was that Border Force representation was absent from such events and outreach in the community. In contrast, and especially in Whitby, the police officer lead for Kraken regularly visited stakeholders, beyond just the harbour master, informally to chat or more formally to deliver Kraken briefings as needed.<sup>25</sup>
- 5.48** Overall, there was appetite among stakeholders for meaningful engagement by Border Force and a sense of missed opportunity to raise awareness and tap into possible sources of intelligence in the wider coastal community.

## Project Kraken communications

- 5.49** Evidence supplied by the Home Office states regional Project Kraken communications packs were distributed to GM operational leads in Border Force in 2018 and 2019; however, inspectors saw very little evidence in Whitby or Wells-next-the-Sea of those marketing materials in the public areas.
- 5.50** Information material, such as posters, about Project Kraken was limited in Wells-next-the-Sea, with only two seen and neither in a publicly accessible location. In Whitby, three rigid weatherproof signs were seen, displayed in key positions, for example on one of the gates to a pontoon and around the harbour, and most stakeholders had paper posters displayed on their notice boards, at Annex A.
- 5.51** Only one ‘current’ Project Kraken poster was seen across both ports, the remainder contained non-current images or information. The signs in Whitby, see Annex A, referenced Crimestoppers as a reporting route and contained a QR code which links to a North Yorkshire police website<sup>26</sup> about Project Kraken.

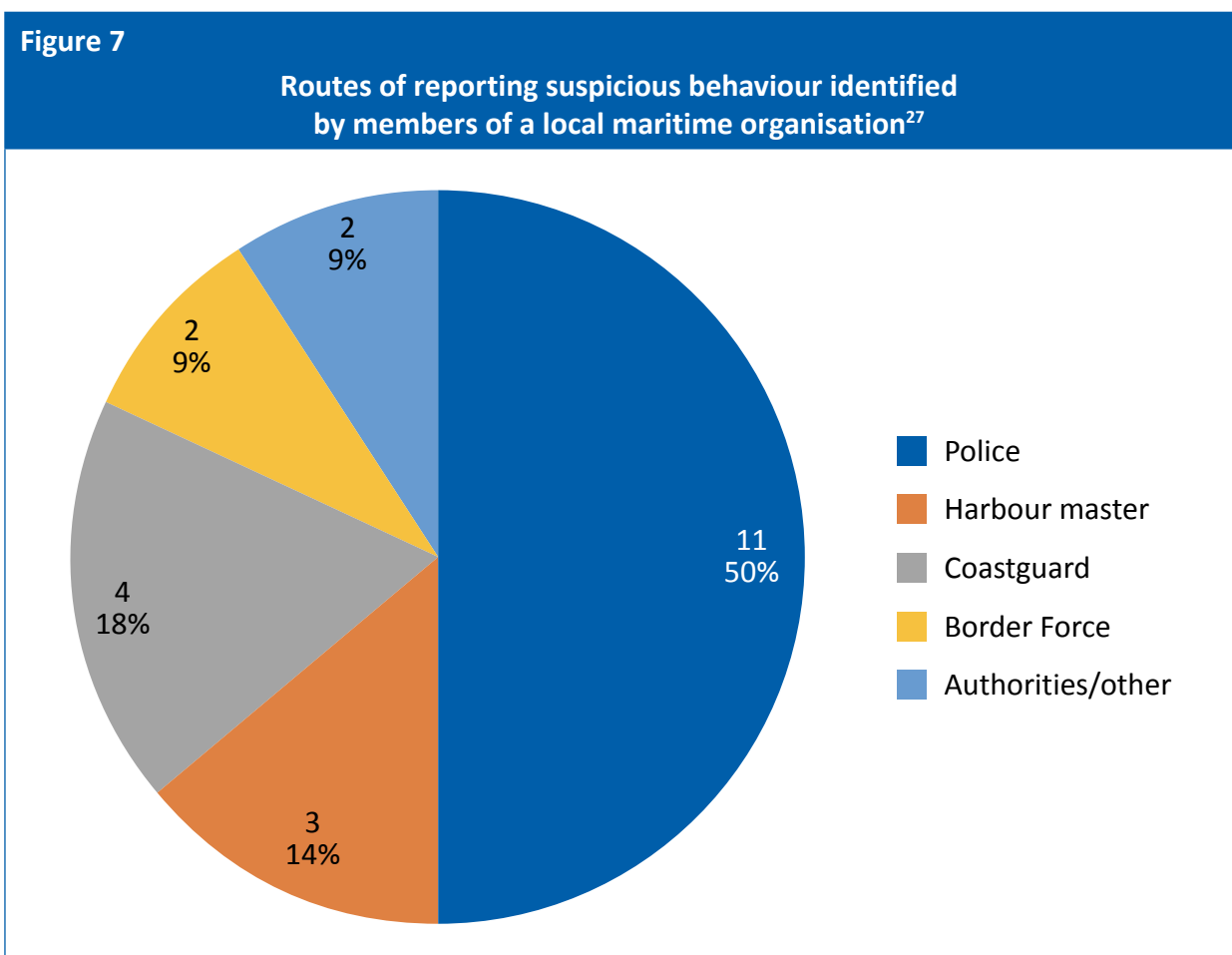
<sup>24</sup> In its factual accuracy response, Border Force noted that, “given the difference in geographical areas of responsibility and numbers of staff” it would “expect the majority of stakeholders to engage more frequently with police than with their own staff.”

<sup>25</sup> In its factual accuracy response, Border Force stated “The police officer referenced covers a small area of the East Coast around Whitby, with a remit purely focussed on ports in this area, compared to the Border Force FIOs (currently two in post) who cover from Boston, Lincolnshire to the Scottish Border across multiple modes. We consider it both inevitable that stakeholders are visited more frequently by this police officer and, indeed, a positive that, despite limitations of BF resources, those stakeholders are getting regular Kraken messaging and engagement.”

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.northyorkshire.police.uk/what-we-do/tackling-crime/protecting-coastline/> At the editorial stage it was found the link was no longer active and returned a message that the “page has been moved, deleted or does not exist”.

## Project Kraken reporting mechanisms

- 5.52 The means of reporting Project Kraken related intelligence was a confused picture from the local perspective.
- 5.53 FIOs told inspectors they encourage reporting through the official channels such as '101' and provide their direct contact details only to partner organisations in the community, such as the police and harbour masters.
- 5.54 Local stakeholder organisations spoken to suggested various means of reporting: for those with FIO details, they might report to the FIO, though all who held FIO details also held details of a local Project Kraken police contact and said they might report to both. Stakeholders would prefer to report to a local Project Kraken contact, if they had one, but suggested they might also talk to the harbour master, call '101', 'Crimestoppers' or the Coastguard.
- 5.55 Similar replies were received from members of a local maritime organisation who were asked, "If you saw suspicious behaviour around the coastline, would you know what action to take?" Seven (26.9%) answered 'no', and of the 19 that answered 'yes', routes of reporting were mixed, set out at Figure 7.



- 5.56 Despite Crimestoppers no longer being a partner in Project Kraken, and having been removed in March 2019 from marketing materials, the organisation was referenced on most posters in circulation at the time of inspection.

<sup>27</sup> The number of identified routes exceeds 19 as two replies identified more than one reporting route, and in those cases each method has been recorded.

- 5.57** A stakeholder explained that Crimestoppers worked better because it offered an anonymous service. This was considered beneficial in a “close knit” maritime community as, for example, fishers frequently swap boats and crew members, so if one reported an allegation it could cause friction and have implications for their future work if it became known.
- 5.58** Several stakeholders who had experience of ‘101’ repeated issues highlighted in Border Force’s 2018 review of Project Kraken. These include long wait times for ‘101’, often “40 to 50 minutes”, inconsistent handling by call operators and a lack of knowledge about Project Kraken. One stakeholder said they had been advised when calling to reference Project Kraken, ask for the Port branch and emphasise the importance; they added “we have to spell it out”.

## Looking forward – next steps

- 5.59** Border Force launched a redesign of Project Kraken in July 2021, focusing on four areas: reporting channels, governance, communication and branding, and operational delivery. The redesign is due to be rolled out by spring 2022.
- 5.60** Inspectors were provided with a presentation outlining current issues with Project Kraken and setting out options and proposals as part of the redesign. These again focus on the four areas and suggestions include:
- new, improved ways of reporting suspicious activity
  - a rebranding of Project Kraken
  - governance, including a new central GM Sub Threat Group to coordinate future actions and a Tactical Delivery Group
  - a refreshed operational delivery of Project Kraken along with improved community links.
- 5.61** Border Force’s aim for the redesign is to provide “a refreshed, community focused campaign [Project Kraken], which raises public awareness and vigilance around GM and provides a highly visible deterrent to the use of this mode in border crime”.
- 5.62** From interviews, it was unclear how Border Force would measure the success of the Project Kraken redesign. A Senior Civil Servant felt that it could not simply rely on the number of intelligence reports received but on whether it led to “upstream disruption” and physical activity.<sup>28</sup>
- 5.63** During the inspection, the redesign was ongoing, with many of the proposals yet to be implemented. As a result, inspectors could not assess any of the proposed changes but acknowledge the detail of the plans and possible benefits these may bring.

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<sup>28</sup> In its factual accuracy response, Border Force said, “ascertaining more accurate details around level of intelligence reporting is the first step in being able to measure success across these wider areas”.

# Annex A: Photographs of promotional material relating to Project Kraken

Project Kraken sign, seen in two locations around Whitby Harbour and a third on a gate to a pontoon



Project Kraken materials held by stakeholders in Whitby



# CRIME DOESN'T RESPECT OUR BORDERS




IF YOU SEE ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS ABOUT WHERE, WHEN OR HOW A VESSEL AND CREW ARE OPERATING, **REPORT IT**

Call your local police on 101 or contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111

**Quote KRAKEN** In an emergency always dial 999

Project Kraken is a joint law enforcement operation tackling maritime threats to the UK



**Safer Neighbourhoods**



## Project Kraken

Protecting our land from sea to shore

Help keep this region a safe place to live and work by reporting any unusual behaviour or activity within our waters



To report a crime or incident, or provide information, phone the non-emergency number **101**

Press option 2 if you know the name of the person or department you wish to speak to and state caller number or full name to ensure your call is directed correctly

Alternatively, **CRIMESTOPPERS** can be contacted anonymously on 0800 555 111

**In an emergency always phone 999**

[projectkraken@north-yorks-here.pnn.police.uk](mailto:projectkraken@north-yorks-here.pnn.police.uk)



## Project Kraken

protecting our land from sea to shore



# Shore, sea or port Make a report...

If you see suspicious behaviour on the coastline, at sea or in a port or marina, or if you see a person in distress who could be considering self-harm, please report it immediately to the police.

Your call could help us to prevent suspicious views, tackle terrorism, or even save the life of a vulnerable person.

Contact us on the numbers below, or use the QR code to find out more about Project Kraken in North Yorkshire, and what to look out for when you're at work or at play along the coast.



**CALL YOUR LOCAL POLICE**  
**101** IN AN EMERGENCY ALWAYS CALL 999  
Tel: 0113 438000

**CRIMESTOPPERS**  
0800 555 111



# Annex B: Role and remit of the Independent Chief Inspector

The role of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (until 2012, the Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency) was established by the UK Borders Act 2007. Sections 48–56 of the UK Borders Act 2007 (as amended) provide the legislative framework for the inspection of the efficiency and effectiveness of the performance of functions relating to immigration, asylum, nationality and customs by the Home Secretary and by any person exercising such functions on her behalf. The legislation empowers the Independent Chief Inspector to monitor, report on and make recommendations about all such functions, in particular:

- consistency of approach
- the practice and performance of listed persons compared to other persons doing similar activities
- the procedure in making decisions
- the treatment of claimants and applicants
- certification under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (c. 41) (unfounded claim)
- the law about discrimination in the exercise of functions, including reliance on section 19D of the Race Relations Act 1976 (c. 74) (exception for immigration functions)
- the procedure in relation to the exercise of enforcement powers (including powers of arrest, entry, search and seizure)
- practice and procedure in relation to the prevention, detection and investigation of offences
- the procedure in relation to the conduct of criminal proceedings
- whether customs functions have been appropriately exercised by the Secretary of State and the Director of Border Revenue
- the provision of information
- the handling of complaints; and
- the content of information about conditions in countries outside the United Kingdom, which the Secretary of State compiles and makes available, for purposes connected with immigration and asylum, to immigration officers and other officials.

In addition, the legislation enables the Secretary of State to request the Independent Chief Inspector to report to her in writing in relation to specified matters.

The legislation requires the Independent Chief Inspector to report in writing to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State lays all reports before Parliament, which she has committed to do within eight weeks of receipt, subject to both Houses of Parliament being in session.

Reports are published in full except for any material that the Secretary of State determines it is undesirable to publish for reasons of national security or where publication might jeopardise an individual's safety, in which case the legislation permits the Secretary of State to omit the relevant passages from the published report.

As soon as a report has been laid in Parliament, it is published on the Inspectorate's website, together with the Home Office's response to the report and recommendations.



# Acknowledgements

The inspection team is grateful to the Home Office for its cooperation and assistance during this inspection and for the contributions from the staff who participated. We are also grateful to the local organisations at Whitby and Wells-next-the-Sea who accommodated visits by the inspection team, as well as the organisations that attended virtual interviews, and contributed to this inspection.

## Inspection team members

G7 Oversight:	Paul David
Lead Inspector:	Tessa Wilson
Project Manager:	Russell Brown
Inspector:	Victoria Campbell
Inspector:	Philip Hallwood



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