

By Email Only
Home Secretary

13 April 2022

Dear Home Secretary,

MIGRATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

This letter summarises my assessment of the Migration and Economic Development Partnership (MEDP) as the responsible Accounting Officer.

You are looking to enter into an agreement with the Government of Rwanda (GoR). The negotiated agreement will enable the processing of asylum claims which are inadmissible under our current asylum system in Rwanda. Under this approach the UK's legal obligations end once an individual is relocated to Rwanda, and GoR takes on the legal responsibility for that individual and for processing their claim in line with the Refugee Convention.

You have made clear the rationale behind the MEDP, with the underlying policy acting as part of a suite of measures in the New Plan for Immigration to break the business model of people smugglers while maintaining a fair and robust immigration and borders system. The policy is also intended to support the Government in its objectives of preventing tragic loss of life in the Channel, deterring hazardous and illegal journeys to the UK and maintaining public trust and confidence in border controls. I also recognise the scale of the issue we are facing. The asylum system is costing the taxpayer over £1.5 billion per annum – the highest amount in over two decades, and current spend on hotels is c. £4.7 million per day including those who have arrived through resettlement programmes. I note the priority you have placed on these measures over the last year.

My role as Permanent Secretary is to ensure that the Home Office delivers your objectives. It is also my personal responsibility as Principal Accounting Officer to ensure that the Department's use of its resources is appropriate and consistent with the requirements set out in Managing Public Money (MPM).

The Accounting Officer advice that I have received comprises a rigorous assessment of the regularity, propriety, feasibility and value for money of this policy, drawing on legal, policy and operational expertise. I have satisfied myself that it is regular, proper and feasible for this policy to proceed. We have incorporated learning from Windrush in developing this policy and the plans for its implementation.

However, this advice highlights the uncertainty surrounding the value for money of the proposal. I recognise that, despite the high cost of this policy, there are potentially significant savings to be realised from deterring people entering the UK illegally. Value for money of the policy is dependent on it being effective as a deterrent. Evidence of a deterrent effect is highly uncertain and cannot be quantified with sufficient certainty to provide me with the necessary level of assurance over value for money.

I do not believe sufficient evidence can be obtained to demonstrate that the policy will have a deterrent effect significant enough to make the policy value for money. This does not mean that the MEDP cannot have the appropriate deterrent effect; just that there is not sufficient evidence for me to conclude that it will.

Therefore, I will require your written instruction to proceed. I consider it is entirely appropriate for you to make a judgement to proceed in the light of the illegal migration challenge the country is facing. I will of course follow this direction and ensure the Department continues to support the implementation of the policy to the very best of our abilities.

Should you issue a direction, I am required to copy all relevant papers to the Comptroller and Auditor General (who will inform the Public Accounts Committee) and the Treasury Officer of Accounts. I anticipate publishing our exchange of direction letters as early as practicable.

Yours sincerely,



**Matthew Rycroft CBE
Permanent Secretary**