



Border Force

Our fleet of cutters

Our organisation

This page describes the UK Border Agency's fleet of patrol boats, known as 'cutters'.

Our 5 cutters operate 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. They detect prohibited and restricted goods, and prevent tax fraud, by searching all types of vessels.



Most of the time, our cutters are deployed on a risk-led or intelligence-led basis to control general maritime traffic throughout UK waters. In the more remote areas and inaccessible areas, visited less often by land-based teams, they may be the only law enforcement tool available.

Other activities include strategic patrols, tactical response work, support for other departments and agencies, and participation in multi-agency operations in both UK and international waters. Although they operate mainly in UK waters, they have responded to deployments as far as the Baltic to the Mediterranean.

The fleet

The fleet currently consists of:

- HM Cutter Seeker - Damen Stan Patrol 4207, commissioned 2001
- HM Cutter Searcher - Damen Stan Patrol 4207, commissioned 2002
- HM Cutter Vigilant - Damen Stan Patrol 4207, commissioned 2003
- HM Cutter Valiant - Damen Stan Patrol 4207, commissioned 2004
- HM Cutter Sentinel - Vosper Thornycroft 'Island Class', commissioned 1993

Forming the bulk of the fleet, the Stan Patrol 4207 patrol vessel is built by Damen Shipyards, Holland. It is 42 metres long, is powered by two Caterpillar diesel engines through controllable pitch propellers, and is capable of reaching speeds above 26 knots. It can accommodate up to 16 people, and can remain at sea for extended periods and in heavy weather conditions.

Each cutter carries a rigid hull inflatable boat (RHIB), which can carry 5 crew and a coxswain for boarding duties. The 7.4-metre Delta-built craft is driven by an inboard diesel engine powering a water jet. The RHIB is launched down a slipway in the stern of the cutter, allowing for safe and speedy deployment and recovery in most sea conditions.



The crews

We have 10 cutter crews consisting of 120 seagoing staff. Each crew is led by a cutter commander. Crews work 2 weeks on duty and 2 weeks off duty, so there are 5 fully operational cutters all year round.

Our crews are all trained to full international and national maritime accreditation standards, under the Standards for the Training and Certification of Watchkeepers 1995 regulations. Every crew member must pass a medical examination every 2 years.

Crew training is regulated by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA). Training and accreditation commitments are high, and it can take up to 10 years to qualify as a cutter commander.

Crew members are all highly trained for their maritime enforcement role. Additionally, they share responsibility for catering, cleaning, cooking and other domestic routines.