



COMMON TRAVEL AREA

REVIEW OF NEW ARRANGEMENT AT NORTHERN IRELAND SEA PORTS

JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2011

SECURING OUR BORDER CONTROLLING MIGRATION

Section 1: Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 In May 2009 the ACPOS Review of Ports Policing concluded that National Security funded officers were being detracted from their core duties as a result of the volume of immigration arrests being made at the ports of Stranraer and Cairnryan. Similar representations were made by Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary. In response, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice asked his officials and senior representatives from ACPOS, to work with the UK Border Agency to resolve the situation.
- 1.2 In November 2010, the UK Border Agency transferred responsibility for the identification of illegal migrants travelling between the Galloway and Northern Ireland sea ports to its local immigration team in Northern Ireland, ending the secondment of 3 police officers from Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary.
- 1.3 During Prime Minister's Questions on 24 November 2010 it was stated that the new arrangements would be monitored and assessed to ensure that they were working properly. The outcomes from an initial review¹ of arrangements were published in August 2011.
- 1.4 Emerging results from January through April 2011 indicated that the new arrangements had strengthened Common Travel Area (CTA) defences and significantly more immigration offenders were detected by both agencies. The police and the UK Border Agency agreed a 10 point plan of action to establish closer working arrangements and further increase the proportion of immigration work conducted in Northern Ireland.
- 1.5 The review concluded (and both Agencies agreed) that a further assessment should be conducted in early 2012 when outcomes over a longer period of time could be examined and compared.
- 1.6 The following sets out the main findings from the second review of these arrangements which has been prepared in consultation with Dumfries & Galloway Constabulary. The review period is one full year, from January to December 2011.
- 1.7 In the longer term, the Home Office and Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service are working in partnership to prevent abuse of the CTA by strengthening the external CTA border, whilst preserving the right of free movement within it for those who are lawfully present. The two governments are working together on data sharing, visas and electronic border systems, as evidenced by the joint Ministerial statement signed by Damian Green MP and Alan Shatter TD in Dublin on 20 December 2011. The free movement provisions within the CTA continue to be of immense importance to the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of all its constituent parts.

¹ *Common Travel Area – Review of New Arrangements at Northern Ireland Seaports* is available at <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/reports/review-ni-sea-ports/>

Main findings

- 1.8 The new arrangements have had the following results:
- In the 12 month period January to December 2011 a total of 281 immigration offenders were detected at Scottish and Northern Ireland sea ports.
 - This represents a **77% increase** on the same period in 2010.
 - **152 (54%)** offenders were detected by the UK Border Agency in Northern Ireland and **129 (46%)** were detected by the police in Scotland.
 - Both agencies increased their detection rates by **145%** (UKBA) and **33%** (Dumfries & Galloway) respectively over the period
 - **231 (82%)** of the 281 offenders were detected attempting to travel to Great Britain through Northern Ireland sea ports – a reflection, perhaps, of the changed economic climates between the UK and Ireland.
- 1.9 These results demonstrate that the new arrangements continue to strengthen Common Travel Area defences and the proportion of immigration offenders detected in Northern Ireland before they can travel to Scotland by ferry has continued to increase.
- 1.10 While more than half of immigration offenders attempting to abuse these routes were detected in Northern Ireland, a significant increase overall has meant that time used by Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary on immigration matters has also increased when compared to 2010. This remains a concern for the force. An additional 6 staff are being allocated to the UK Border Agency resources in Northern Ireland to meet this rise in demand.
- 1.11 The growing threat from the Irish/ UK land border is being matched by an uplift in resources on both sides of the Irish Sea, to combat immigration issues (UKBA) and to increase national security (the police), that will further strengthen CTA defences and increasingly shift more immigration work to the UK Border Agency in Northern Ireland
- 1.12 Partnership arrangements introduced during the second half of 2011 have brought unprecedented levels of co-operation and intelligence sharing between the two agencies and continue to be managed on an inter-agency basis.
- 1.13 The figures used in this review have been agreed by the UK Border Agency and Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary.

Section 2: Background summary

- 2.1 International border controls at the United Kingdom's international ports are operated by the UK Border Force. Ferry routes between Northern Ireland and Scotland are domestic UK services and are not subject to international border controls.
- 2.2 As a part of the Common Travel Area (CTA)² the Irish/ UK land border means that these routes are susceptible to abuse and known nexus points for illegal migrants moving between Great Britain and the Irish Republic using the Irish land border and Northern Ireland as a route of illegal entry.
- 2.3 The UK Border Agency's main response to deter, disrupt and detect this type of abuse of travel is called Operation Gull. Immigration officers in Northern Ireland check the status of passengers arriving from, or leaving for, Great Britain targeting routes shown to be most at risk.
- 2.4 In July 2006, the UK Border Agency funded the secondment of three police officers to assist immigration work at the ports of Stranraer and Cairnryan. At that time UK Border Agency staffing levels in Northern Ireland were minimal and Operation Gull was conducted fortnightly using a team from Liverpool to conduct operations in Northern Ireland.
- 2.5 In July 2009, the UK Border Agency opened a new local immigration office in Belfast to build up its enforcement capability in Northern Ireland. Funding to the force ended in November 2010 following a national review of police secondments, and responsibility for detecting illegal migrant flows between the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain transferred to the UK Border Agency in Northern Ireland.
- 2.6 An interim review of the first months of the new arrangements was conducted and published in August 2011. The review assessed emerging results over January to April 2011.
- 2.7 The emerging findings suggested that the new arrangements had strengthened internal CTA defences with an increasing number of immigration offenders being detected by both the UK Border Agency in Northern Ireland and Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary in the West of Scotland. However, time used by the force on immigration matters had increased.
- 2.8 The review recommended that a further assessment take place in early 2012 when outcomes over a longer period of time would be available.

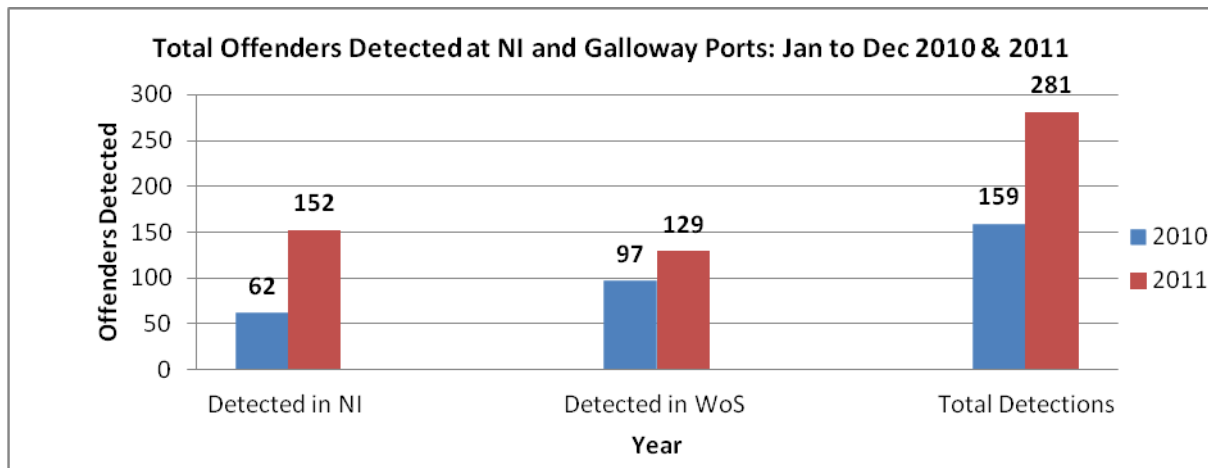
^{2 2} The full background to the conditions of travel across the Common Travel Area and the introduction of the new arrangements at Northern Ireland sea ports can be found at:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/reports/review-ni-sea-ports/>

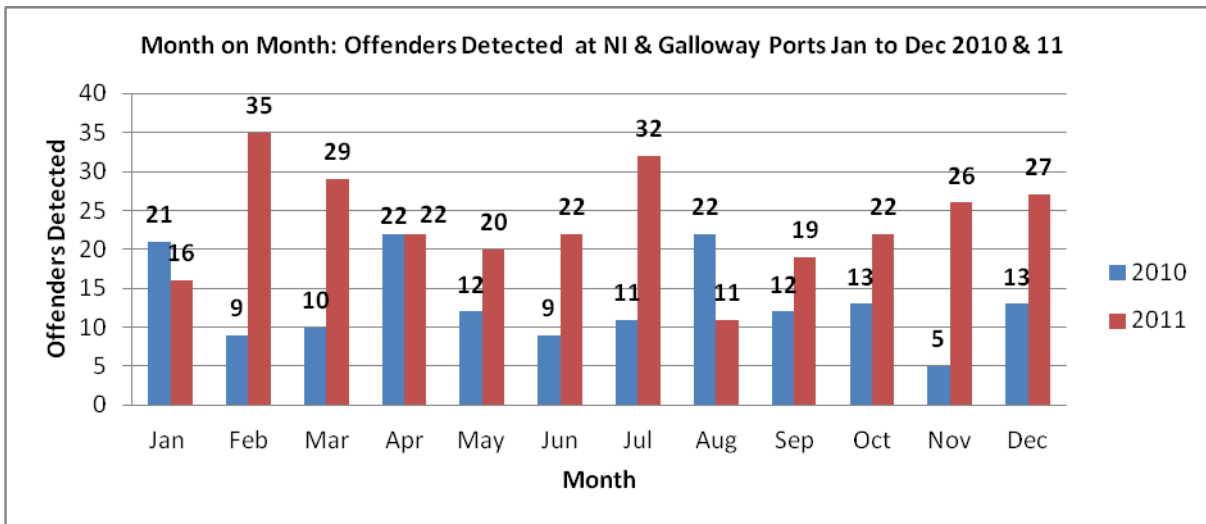
Section 3: Findings

Detection rates at Northern Ireland & Galloway Ports

- 3.1 This review has found that the new arrangements have continued to strengthen our CTA defences across the full 12 months of 2011 with a marked increase in detections on those achieved in 2010 at these ports.
- 3.2 The table below shows the total number of immigration offenders detected by the UK Border Agency at NI sea ports and by Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary at the Galloway ports in both 2010 and 2011.



- 3.3 **281** immigration offenders were detected between January and December 2011 compared with **159** detections during the same period in 2010.
- 3.4 The collective increase represents **a rise of 77%** on the equivalent detection rate in 2010 with detections at both sides of the Irish Sea increasing on average between 13 and 23 per month.
- 3.5 The UK Border Agency increased its deployments by just under **50%** during 2011 and has increased the number of offenders it detected at NI sea ports **from 62 to 152**. This represents a **145% increase** on its 2010 detections.
- 3.6 The police at the Galloway ports have also increased their previous detection rate, from **97** detections in 2010 to **129** in 2011. This represents a rise of **33%**.
- 3.7 The table below shows the month on month detection comparison for both years.

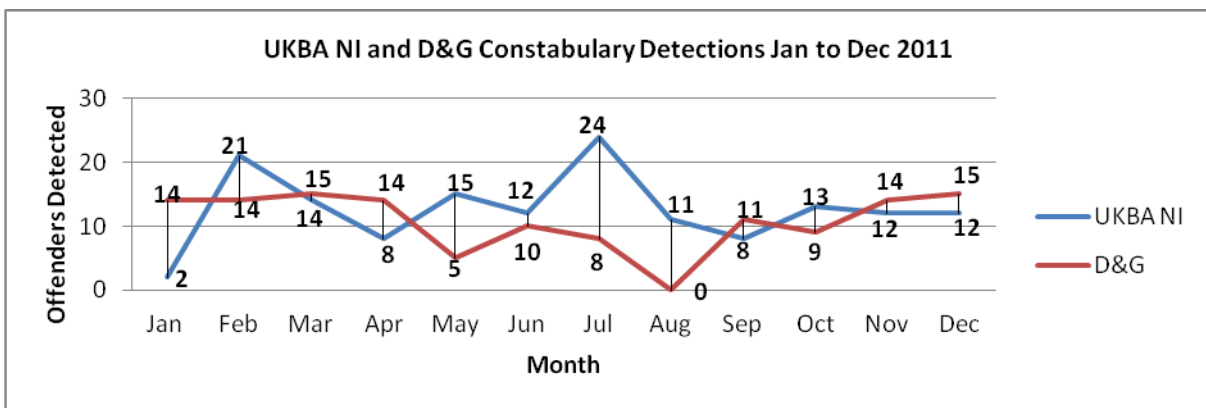


3.8 With the exception of 3 months, there was a significant monthly increase in the number of people attempting to abuse NI and Galloway ports across the year.

3.9 The **281** offenders intercepted during 2011 comprised of **over 60 different nationalities**. With few exceptions, travel patterns and offender profiles were random.

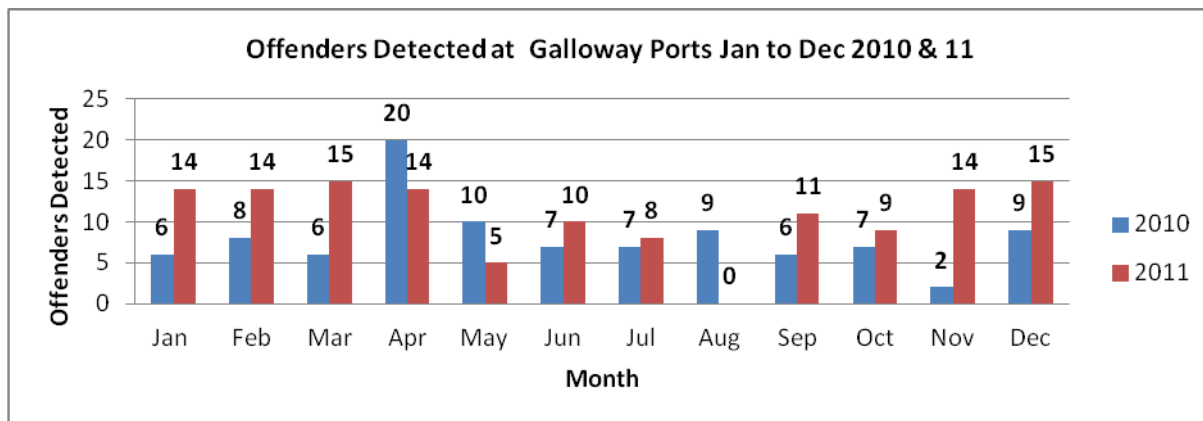
3.10 The overall effect was that while the 50% increase in UK Border Agency deployments to NI sea ports significantly increased its detection of offenders and prevented high numbers from reaching Scotland, the overall volume and spread of unlawful travellers in 2011 outstripped UKBA capacity needed to reduce the immigration burden on Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary.

3.11 The table below shows the comparative UK Border Agency/ Police detection trends over the 12 months of 2011.



3.12 The majority (54%) of offenders detected in 2011 were intercepted by the UK Border Agency in Northern Ireland compared with 39% in 2010.

3.13 The table below shows the total number of detections of immigration offenders by Dumfries & Galloway Constabulary during 2011 compared with 2010.



3.14 Over the 12 month period an average of **11** detections per month were made in 2011 by the police at the Galloway ports – up **38%** on the average of **8** police detections per month in 2010.

3.15 Over the same period UK Border Agency detections in Northern Ireland increased to an average of **14** offenders per month – up **160%** on its monthly average of **5** detections in 2010.

3.16 The table below shows that the number of immigration offenders detected attempting to reach Great Britain by ferry from Northern Ireland increased from a collective **98** detections in 2010 to **231** detections in 2011. This represents a rise of **136%**.



3.17 Offenders attempting to travel to Great Britain accounted for **82%** of all offenders detected by the two agencies compared with **62%** in 2010.

3.18 In Northern Ireland **86%** of offenders detected in 2011 were attempting to board a ferry for Scotland. At the Galloway ports, **78%** of offenders detected by the police had arrived on a ferry from Northern Ireland.

3.19 While we cannot be certain, increased economic pressures in Europe and, in particular, in the Republic of Ireland are likely to be factors in the increased numbers attempting to abuse Northern Ireland sea ports to illegally enter other parts of the UK.

3.20 In support of that theory, the number of immigration offenders detected travelling from Scotland to NI sea ports reduced from **61** to **50** – a decrease of **22%**.

The 10 point plan

- 3.21 Overall increased volumes have meant that the effort by Dumfries and Galloway police on immigration matters increased during 2011.
- 3.22 While it has not been able to reduce the immigration burden on the force, the 10 point plan that was introduced in September 2011 has fostered unprecedented levels of cooperation and intelligence sharing between the two agencies that have helped to ensure that greater numbers of attempts to abuse NI sea ports have been unsuccessful.
- 3.23 The force is now dealing with proportionately fewer immigration offenders than the UK Border Agency.
- 3.24 There have been some teething problems along the way. Parts of the plan have needed to be adjusted and other aspects have yet to be fully realised. Both agencies acknowledge that the plan is the cornerstone for an effective partnership and stronger CTA defences when coupled with increased capacity to intercept even more offenders at Northern Ireland sea ports, before they reach Scotland.
- 3.25 A further opportunity has been presented by the opening of a new port at Lochryan in January 2012 and subsequent changes to sailing times from Belfast that have allowed the UK Border Agency to provide increased cover to sailings from Belfast and increase its detection, deterrence and disruption capability at that port.
- 3.26 While it is too early to predict whether a trend is emerging, in the first two months of 2012, Operation Gull detected **23** offenders at NI seaports – a **4% decrease** on the same period in the same 2 months in 2011, 14 offenders were detected at the Galloway ports – a **50% reduction** on the **28** offenders detected by Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary in January and February 2011.
- 3.27 **92%** of all offenders were heading to Great Britain.

Next Steps

- 3.28 Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary's continuing engagement in national security has been recognised by the Scottish Government which has recently increased funding to Dumfries and Galloway by 4 officers to address the threat and increased volumes in passenger numbers. This could lead to further detections of immigration offenders, detracting the force from its core duties.
- 3.29 In parallel, the UK Border Agency will expand its in-country operations capability in Northern Ireland from June 2012 by an additional 6 officers.
- 3.30 This action and the continuing operational partnership arrangements should reduce the immigration burden on Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary from the second half of 2012 onwards.

Section 4: Conclusions

- 4.1 During 2011, the collective efforts of both agencies ensured that increasing attempts by illegal migrants to flout our immigration rules and transit the United Kingdom unlawfully through the land border with Ireland were thwarted.

- 4.2 The UK Border Agency significantly strengthened its coverage and detections at NI sea ports, increasing detections there by **145%** and intercepting the majority of immigration offenders abusing the Northern Ireland and Galloway routes.
- 4.3 The 10 point plan has increasingly strengthened the partnership arrangements between the two agencies at both strategic and operations levels, but has not been enough to reduce the immigration activities carried out by Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary.
- 4.4 Offenders detected travelling through Northern Ireland to Great Britain increased by **136%** in 2011.
- 4.5 The increased threat from the Northern Ireland side of the Irish Sea confirms that our primary internal CTA defences are best placed there, to intercept immigration offenders before they reach Great Britain.
- 4.6 Increased UKBA resources in Northern Ireland coupled with continuous development and refinement of existing partnership arrangements with Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary should systematically increase the proportion of illegal migrants that are detected at Northern Ireland's sea ports, before they reach Scotland.
- 4.7 Both agencies should continue to work together to further strengthen their CTA arrangements over 2012.