# The Home Office response to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration's report:

# An inspection of Border Force operations at Glasgow and Edinburgh airports

# January – March 2019

**The Home Office thanks the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) for his report.**

This inspection examined Border Force operations at Glasgow and Edinburgh Airports. The Home Office's aims at these two sites are to maintain border security, processing all passengers in line with the Border Force Operating Mandate and to disrupt the flow of illicit goods into the UK with minimum impact on legitimate activity. In 2018/19 Border Force processed 6.6 million arriving international passengers at these two airports, with Edinburgh experiencing a 9% growth in passenger numbers on the previous twelve months and so it is pleasing to note that the inspection found that, in terms of its overall management of the immigration and customs controls at Glasgow and Edinburgh Airport, Border Force is broadly efficient and effective.  Border Force is currently investing additional resources into both airports and will continue working in partnership with law enforcement partners and airport operators to provide the best service to the public.  The report identified areas for improvement and the Home Office accepts all the recommendations in the report.

**The Home Office response to the recommendations**

**The Home Office should**:

**Recommendation 1**

**Review the guidance, support and challenge provided to Border Force operational managers regarding the completion of local risk registers, with the aim of ensuring a common understanding of how to complete them thoroughly and consistently.**

1.1 **Accepted.**

1.2 Border Force is in the process of reviewing and refining guidance and processes so that lessons can be learned for risk management nationally with the aim of providing additional guidance to support all operational commands by the end of 2019.

1.3 The new national Border Force operational oversight function will ensure that this guidance is embedded across Border Force operations over the course of 2019.

**Recommendation 2**

**In the case of Glasgow and Edinburgh Airports, ensure that the local risk registers capture all of the risks and issues identified in this inspection, including the need for:**

- **better engagement with the airport operators regarding Border Force's requirements (for accommodation and other facilities), commitments (such as agreed service levels) and obligations (for example, to fund functions, improvements or maintenance)**

- **"rosters" that are supported by managers and staff, do not require constant adjustment and are not overly reliant of Seasonal Workforce (SWF) staff**
- **strategies for maximising ePassport gate uptake**
- **improved recording and protection of information and data**
- **confirmation that the risk assessments underpinning the first-line quality assurance regimes are evidence-based**
- **safeguarding strategies and actions that test for new or changing threats as well as targeting known "high risk" flights**

**making it clear which risks are "owned" locally, which regionally and which organisationally, and identifying mitigating actions and contingencies.**

1.4 **Accepted.**

1.5 Border Force North has reviewed and updated risk registers in light of the comments in the report and is satisfied that current operational risks are appropriately articulated. Progress has already been made since the report was sent to the Department. This includes a review of rostering at both airports to maximise operational deployment, ongoing work to upskill staff in information management and a more focused first line assurance framework. It is clear though that there is more to be done to ensure that local risk registers are up to date and fully reflect operational and other priorities across Border Force.

**<u>Recommendation 3</u>**

**Provide an update on the evaluation of approaches to queue measurement, including progress towards standardisation, consultation with stakeholders and publication of a Service Level Agreement (the Home Office response to the Independent Chief Inspector's report: 'An Inspection of Border Force Operations at South Coast Seaports (January – April 2018)' refers).**

1.6 **Accepted.**

1.7 Since the Independent Chief Inspector's inspection of South Coast Seaports, Border Force has undertaken some initial work to compare and evaluate the approach to queue measurement. This is still ongoing as it was decided that this evaluation work should be expanded to include the impact of ePassport gate expansion to additional nationalities.

1.8 More detailed work on standardising queue measurement now also forms part of cross government work to deliver commitments from the Department for Transport Aviation Green Paper.  To support this, Border Force has been exploring further over the summer of 2019, internally and with industry, how it can achieve a more consistent and standardised method of measuring queues and defining Service Level Agreements with the aim of developing and agreeing a new framework over the course of 2019 and 2020.

1.9 Once we have finished considering the impact on ePassport gate expansion and engaged with industry further, we will be in a position to provide a more substantive update by the end of 2019.