



13 April 2022

Dear Matthew,

MIGRATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

Thank you for your letter of 13 April setting out your current assessment of the Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda as the responsible Accounting Officer. As you know, tackling the longstanding issue of illegal migration is a top priority for this Government.

Working together we have already successfully ended free movement and introduced our new Australian style points-based system, introduced the Government's New Plan for Immigration and the Nationality and Borders Bill. Through these efforts and others, we will deliver a fair but firm immigration system. That means having an asylum system that prioritises support via safe and legal routes for the truly vulnerable, rather than one that is open to gaming by economic migrants and people smugglers, resulting in the loss of life.

As we continue work to deliver these changes, despite best efforts, Home Office modelling forecasts that small boat numbers are expected to rise again this summer.

As Home Secretary my primary responsibilities are to protect the British public and to act in their interest. That means taking steps to address the risks to human life, as well as the soaring costs to the UK taxpayer, that illegal migration entails. Those costs are now at their highest level in over two decades. The cost of the Asylum system stands at over £1.5 billion a year and we are spending over £4.7 million each day to accommodate migrants in hotels.

We know there is no single solution to tackle the issue of illegal migration. While we understand it is not possible for HMG to accurately model the deterrent effect from day one, together with Rwanda, we are confident this policy is our best chance at producing that effect.

It is only by introducing new incentives and effective deterrents into the system, as our international partners like Denmark, Greece, and Australia have succeeded in doing, that we can take on the criminal gangs facilitating illegal entry and break their lethal business model.

I recognise your assessment on the immediate value for money aspect of this proposal. However, I note that without action, costs will continue to rise, lives will continue to be lost, and that together we have introduced safeguards into our agreement to protect taxpayer funding. And while accepting the constraints of the accounting officer framework set out by HM Treasury, I also think there are credible invest-to-save arguments in the long term.

Finally, I also want to recognise the efforts of our frontline staff who have professionally and unstintingly responded a series of unpredictable migration flows to the UK as a result of events outside of their control. Each day I am struck by the extremely challenging work we are asking Home Office officials and Border Force operational staff at all levels to undertake. It is with this in mind that I also believe there is an imperative to act now to mitigate the impact on staff wellbeing as well as departmental operational and financial pressures in the longer term.

It would therefore be imprudent in my view, as Home Secretary, to allow the absence of quantifiable and dynamic modelling – which is inevitable when developing a response to global crises influenced by so many geopolitical factors such as climate change, war and conflict — to delay delivery of a policy that we believe will reduce illegal migration, save lives, and ultimately break the business model of the smuggling gangs. I am therefore formally directing you as Accounting Officer to take forward this scheme with immediate effect, managing the identified risks as best you can. I am grateful for our joint work on this issue, and I look forward to continuing to work with you to deliver for the British people.

With all good wishes


Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary