



Charlie Taylor  
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons  
HM Inspectorate of Prisons  
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**MoJ ref:** SUB130771

14 January 2026

Dear Charlie,

### **URGENT NOTIFICATION – HMP SWALESIDE**

Thank you for your letter outlining the concerns raised following the full inspection of HMP Swaleside, published on 17 December, and invoking the Urgent Notification process. I am pleased to provide this response within the 28-day timeframe, in accordance with the established protocol between the Ministry of Justice and HM Inspectorate of Prisons.

You have raised very serious concerns including prisoners feeling unsafe, high levels of self-harm and increasing violence. You said this is exacerbated by the ingress of drugs, largely via drones. Many staff feel demoralised, and you also found issues around their experience and capability with many lacking confidence to challenge poor behaviour. Much of the prison was found to be in a poor state of repair and many wings were dirty. A temporary regime very recently implemented to increase supervision levels and restore order meant prisoners were often spending limited time out of cell and a lack of purposeful activity meant the prison was failing in its core function as a training prison.

Following the appointment of the new Governor in July, she and the Prison Group Director have taken decisive steps to understand the scale of the issues at HMP Swaleside and set out clear priorities to improve safety, security and stability. This is complemented by regional support from the Long-Term High Security Estate (LTHSE) Group and national support from the LTHSE Taskforce that has been operating for the past 6 months with close Ministerial oversight focusing on driving improvements to safety and security across the LTHSE. Within this work is a dedicated project established to consider the function, role and shape of the LTHSE estate going forwards, achieving higher levels of control and behaviour management incentives that encourage sentence progression and improved safety and security.

Both through the existing plans and in this response to your Urgent Notification, the support being provided to HMP Swaleside to improve operational grip and achieve sustained improvements demonstrates this Government's commitment to achieve much needed change. I have enclosed the initial action plan for HMP Swaleside which will be published alongside this letter. The action plan focuses on tackling the most pressing issues including safety, security, staff capability, regime and decency standards, aligning with the ongoing programme of work.

I recognise the severity of your findings and the concern that none of the issues raised at your 2023 inspection have been fully addressed. I assure you that I will be closely monitoring the situation at HMP Swaleside to ensure progress. Whilst unfortunately there are no quick fixes, I am confident that the right support is in place and that the actions identified will deliver the improvements we all want to see.

I would like to thank you and your team for your thorough scrutiny of our prisons, and I look forward to receiving your full inspection report in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Lammy".

**RT HON DAVID LAMMY MP**

**DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER  
LORD CHANCELLOR AND SECRETARY OF STATE FOR JUSTICE**