



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

May 2020

## THE UK BORDER DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

I assure constituents that Ministers in the Home Office and across Government are working hard to ensure that the UK immigration and border system can continue to function effectively during the current outbreak. The Home Office is making available all relevant Personal Protective Equipment to Border Force staff

Procedures at the border strictly follow the very latest public health guidance and this has been the case from the beginning of the outbreak. As the number of infections fall in the UK, it is crucial that we prevent re-infection from abroad. That is why from 8 June passengers arriving in the UK will be required to self-isolate for 14 days, during which time they could be contacted regularly to ensure compliance.

On migrants' attempts to cross the Channel from mainland Europe, Ministers and Home Office officials meet regularly with their counterparts in France to work together on tackling illegal migration, as agreed under the Sandhurst Treaty framework. Ministers also continuing to work closely with the National Crime Agency and French counterparts to increase surveillance, step up patrols, and target the organised crime gangs enabling people to undertake these journeys, to stop more boats before they leave French waters. The UK's work abroad, supporting some of the world's most vulnerable people in places like Syria, Afghanistan and East Africa, also aims to discourage migrants from making these perilous journeys in the first place.

I understand that if the occupants of small boats are intercepted by the Border Force or Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) they are medically assessed and transferred for interview by immigration enforcement officers. At this point they may make a claim for asylum and will be processed in the usual way. However, if an individual is known to have made a claim in another country the Home Office looks at the process of returning them as promptly as possible. During the Coronavirus outbreak, a wide range of measures has been implemented to ensure that guidance on social distancing and self-isolation is properly applied.

Knowing the Home Secretary Priti Patel as I do, I am reassured by her determination to tackle both the illegal trade and the hazardous crossings that constituents rightly draw to my attention.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Conor Burns', with a horizontal line underneath.