

UK Ministers Allocate Additional £100m to Tackle Channel Crossings

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The UK government is committing an extra £100 million to strengthen efforts against illegal small boat crossings in the English Channel. The funding will support the recruitment of hundreds of new officers, expand cross-border cooperation, and introduce new powers to disrupt people-smuggling operations.

The announcement comes as the number of illegal Channel crossings continues to surge. More than 25,000 people have made the journey so far in 2025, the highest number recorded by this point in the year, marking a 51 % increase from 2024. The spike has prompted ministers to bolster enforcement and intelligence operations both domestically and overseas.

A key part of the plan involves funding for the National Crime Agency to hire up to 300 additional officers and deploy advanced surveillance technology. The Home Office also intends to step up its targeting of criminal gangs using social media to promote crossing services or fake documentation. Legislation currently progressing through Parliament will make such online content a criminal offence.

The government's new approach includes a pilot "one in, one out" agreement with France. Under the plan, individuals arriving illegally by boat may be returned to France, while the UK would take in a similar number of vetted asylum seekers from French facilities. Ministers argue this would discourage dangerous crossings and create a more controlled migration process.

Home Secretary Yvette Cooper described the move as part of a broader strategy aimed at dismantling people-smuggling networks and restoring order to Britain's borders. She pointed to the creation of a new Border Security Command and enhanced international cooperation as signs of serious intent.

However, opposition parties and some Conservative MPs remain sceptical. Shadow Home Secretary Chris Philp criticised the announcement as insufficient, calling it a short-term response that fails to

tackle systemic issues. Calls have intensified for the reintroduction of offshore processing centres and faster deportation procedures.

Protests have also grown in areas housing asylum seekers, particularly around hotels used as temporary accommodation. Campaigners argue that the government has failed to address the strain on local communities and the ongoing asylum backlog.

The Home Office said part of the £100 million will also fund intelligence gathering in key transit countries across Europe, Africa, and Asia, and provide additional resources for teams tackling illegal working and smuggling within the UK. The government hopes the measures will deliver meaningful results in stemming the rising number of Channel crossings.