



Justice and Home Affairs Committee

Corrected oral evidence: Electronic border management systems

Tuesday 12 March 2024

10.35 am

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Members present: Lord Foster of Bath (The Chair); Lord Bach; Baroness Buscombe; Lord Dubs; Lord Filkin; Lord Henley; Lord McInnes of Kilwinning; Baroness Meacher; Baroness Prashar; Lord Sandhurst; Lord Tope.

Evidence Session No. 3

Heard in Public

Questions 40 - 48

Witness

I: Hon Alexander Downer AC, Chairman of Policy Exchange, former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Commonwealth of Australia, and author of the *Independent Review of Border Force* (2022).

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

1. This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witness

Hon Alexander Downer AC.

Q40 The Chair: Welcome to another meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Committee where we continue our investigation into the UK's preparedness for the introduction of two EU border schemes and our own ETA. We have two sessions today and we are delighted that our first witness is the honourable Alexander Downer. Mr Downer, would you be good enough to introduce yourself for the record?

Alexander Downer: I am the current chairman of Policy Exchange. I am the former Foreign Minister of Australia. I worked for several years for the United Nations and then became the Australian High Commissioner in the UK. For some years after that I worked at King's College London, setting up and running its International School for Government and I have completed my term there. Now I am the chairman of Policy Exchange and do a number of other commercial things.

I was asked by Priti Patel, when she was the Home Secretary, to do an independent review of Border Force—a pretty comprehensive sort of mandate. I produced a report in the middle of 2022, which I presented to her.

Q41 The Chair: Thank you very much indeed. We will begin by looking at the 2022 investigation that you did. How responsive was the Home Office to having independent scrutiny of Border Force?

Alexander Downer: I have to be frank and say that overall it was very supportive in two ways. First, it provided I think seven Home Office officials to support the work that I did. Obviously it was essential to have a substantial amount of support to get a comprehensive view of Border Force. Secondly, I found that in every case the Home Office—and I include Border Force—was responsive to any request that I made. It was accessible.

There was one occasion when I wanted to see some advice that had been given to the Home Secretary on dealing with the small boats issue. I wanted just to see the legal advice and there was hesitation in that case on the part of the Home Office. It had to arrange a further meeting with me and its lawyers to make sure that, in sharing that advice—it included legal advice and recommendations to the Home Secretary—it would not compromise a case it had before the courts at that time. That was resolved. This was two years ago but that is the only example I can recall of there being any hesitation on the part of the Home Office or, more specifically, Border Force. They were very accessible.

Q42 The Chair: That is very useful to know and encouraging. The outcome of your report had a number of recommendations and comments, but one thing in particular that our attention was drawn to is your description of the Border Force as an organisation performing at “sub-optimal level”. Do you want to tell us how you came to that conclusion and, more importantly, whether you believe that Border Force is fit for purpose?

Alexander Downer: Whether it is fit for purpose or not is a huge issue. It obviously does the job. At the time—so not now; this is two years ago but might still be the case now—there were two or three quite specific and very public problems. One of them was the huge queues that accumulated at Heathrow Airport for people who either have visas or, if they have UK passports, have children so have to show the passports of the children who cannot use e-gates. Huge queues were developing that could have people waiting for an hour or more just to show their passports or their visas and passports. That was clearly a very substantial problem and there were all sorts of administrative reasons why the queues were so bad. I examined that and it is spelled out in the report that I produced, with some recommendations for dealing with that problem. In that sense, Border Force was certainly performing suboptimally; it is not appropriate to have visitors to the UK, whatever the purpose of their visit, waiting for an hour or even longer in queues.

The Chair: Can I stop you there so that we can have a clearer understanding? You have described the problem—huge queues, people waiting a long time and so on. What conclusion did you draw about the nature of the problem? Was it that the staff lacked the training or equipment or simply that there was an insufficient number of staff to do the job?

Alexander Downer: I think there was a sufficient number of staff. My report makes the point that Border Force overall has an on-paper complement of about 10,000. At that time it had only 9,100 people working for them. I do not think shortage of staff was the problem and, by the way, I do not think, as people normally do, that shortage of money was the problem. I think it was an organisational problem.

The organisational problem at Heathrow, if I remember rightly—I stand to be corrected because this is two years ago—was that the Border Force staff were in a sense divided into two. There were people who were on what are called legacy contracts and people who were on newer, more flexible contracts. You had a situation where somebody was working on terminal 3 and there was a surge of people coming into terminal 2 and perhaps numbers diminishing on terminal 3. In those circumstances you would expect some Border Force staff to be transferred to terminal 2, but the problem was that those on legacy contracts would not do that.

I could go on about this but there were all sorts of problems with the contracts that some Border Force staff had and they were the ones who had been there before the creation of Border Force, under contracts negotiated with previous organisations. I understood that was being addressed but I made the point in my report that that absolutely needed to be addressed if you were going to process these visas and passports much more quickly.

The Chair: Were there any other issues? Training may be one.

Alexander Downer: If we are talking just about Heathrow, I did not think that training was the problem. I went and watched the Border Force officers at work there and I did not think that there was a lack of training, understanding or knowledge; no, that did not seem to be the problem. I thought there was a broader

issue of training of Border Force officers—that they should have more comprehensive and longer training. By more comprehensive, I mean they should be able to take on different roles within Border Force rather than just stamping passports. That could become boring and repetitive for any Border Force officer or for any person. You need to have them working on the freight side, which is a very important part of what Border Force does, or other aspects of Border Force work, but they can only do that if they have comprehensive training and some of the training was not comprehensive enough. It was too ad hoc.

The Chair: We will move on and have a look at what has happened since and what will happen. I turn to Lord Bach.

Q43 Lord Bach: It is good to hear that the Home Office was helpful to you. It is not always the case apparently, but it is very good to hear that.

Alexander Downer: We can only tell the truth.

Lord Bach: Of course but, as you told us, that was two years ago. Have you had any feedback from the Home Office since then? If there has or has not been, should there be a formal mechanism for follow-up after a report like yours? As a third part of this question, are there areas that it would be helpful for this committee to monitor in the coming months and years? I am afraid that is a bit of a mouthful, but I hope it makes sense.

Alexander Downer: First, there has not been any formal process of feedback or briefing of me on the consequences of the report. I presented the report to the then Home Secretary. I think there have been two Home Secretaries since then, so she is not there anymore and I cannot get any feedback from her. I have had ad hoc meetings, incidental meetings. I have just run into people like the Permanent Under-Secretary, Matthew Rycroft, and asked him how the implementation of the recommendations is going or whether it is going. He has told me that it is going ahead and that the recommendations are being implemented, but that was just in a social setting.

I have run into other people at the Home Office as well because I have subsequently been appointed to the monitoring committee of the Rwanda plan, so I deal with the Home Office. That is an independent monitoring committee but I have to do a lot to do with the Home Office there. I come across people in the Home Office quite often and occasionally have asked them about this report.

There has been no formal process of follow-up with me. Does there need to be? There does not have to be because I have done the report and I have made the recommendations. It would really be out of curiosity and personal vanity that I would want to see my recommendations being fully implemented, but I do understand that it has been implementing the recommendations. It is getting on for two years—20 months or so—since I presented the report. It is getting on with it, as I understand from talking to people there, but it has not completed and some of them will take a long time to complete.

I talked a bit about the issue of the contracts for staff at Heathrow, which was an absolute mess. In my view, as I explained to the unions and they agreed, it was a totally unfair system where privileges were given to some people on the legacy contracts that were not available to people on newer contracts. As I understand it, Border Force has now resolved that problem and I use that as an example. I have been told that that has been resolved and that is good, but there was no formal process of follow-up. Should there be? If you do an independent review, that is it. You do the review and you give your best advice. If the Home Office wants to ask my opinion about something in the future that is fair enough, but I do not think it owes it to me to give me a constant briefing on what it is doing.

Lord Bach: To follow that, we could do with your advice as to what would be helpful for the committee to monitor, in the next months and years—a couple of things that you think we should be looking at.

Alexander Downer: There are two things. One—and it almost never makes the media—is that the work that Border Force does facilitating imports is hugely important. You get stories, particularly in the context of the Brexit debate, about goods coming in either by lorry or directly by ship from the EU, and of course the majority of goods that come in are from beyond the EU.

How does Border Force manage all that? My observation was that it needs better equipment and it does not have much equipment. It has some good scanning equipment, but not a lot of it and some of that is very dated and it takes for ever to buy and implement new scanning equipment. This is not stuff that will make the front page of the newspaper, but it is hugely important to the smooth operation of the economy. By the way, my observation was that it does a pretty good job and certainly makes sure that it does not delay imports, but how effective is its scanning and how good is it at detecting something illicit coming in.

Border Force obviously has its big successes—illicit drugs, cigarettes, tobacco products and so on. It does a pretty good job but who knows what slips through. The better equipment it has, the better the capacity it will have to monitor what is coming into the country. You cannot open every single container coming in. It has capacity—and this is true of any country—to scan only 1% or 2% of the containers that come in and it tends to operate on the basis of tipoffs received.

It is well worth the committee investigating this issue because it goes to the efficient working of the economy. I am not a British citizen—I am a foreigner—but, for those of you who are engaged with the Brexit debate, it is very interesting to look at how imports from the EU have been affected, there no longer being a single market. Border Force has had to handle that. You never hear this about any government agency, but I think it did an amazingly efficient job, an incredibly good job. Not everything it has done, as I have been explaining, is good but that is.

The other thing to monitor is the introduction of the electronic travel authorisation and how Border Force will get on with its very ambitious and appropriately ambitious plans to facilitate the issue of visas, having the checking done before the

border rather than at the border and the introduction of facial recognition. At the moment, as you know, e-gates passport recognition, but there are ambitions to introduce facial recognition technology. This will take quite a long time and it is never easy to get the technology right, but good luck to it that there are these ambitions to make the border more efficient.

- Q44 The Chair:** We will come on to that in a bit more detail, because we are very keen to hear your thoughts, given the Australian experience. Before we move on, I do not know if you have had an opportunity to look at any of the reports recently published by David Neal, who was the former Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration. I know that he was involved with your report in some way. One of the concerns that he expressed in a report was the issue of equipment. Can you tell us anything about the links between the work he did and the work you have done and whether there are common issues that you have noted in the separate reports?

Alexander Downer: I have not been reading his reports, in all honesty. That has not really been my remit and he had a different role from me, but nevertheless I came to know him through the work that I did on this review of Border Force. I went to see him in his office and spent an hour or so with him then. I got to know him and, to tell you the honest truth, we got on pretty well with each other and have had a few private lunches together. It is probably not a very parliamentary thing to say but he seemed like a good bloke to me.

The Chair: You can describe him as you like.

Alexander Downer: He is a good bloke and an engaging person. I know what he thinks, roughly speaking, but the issues he has been talking about more recently—I have been in India for the last month so I have not been following what he has been saying very closely but I can see that he has been saying quite a lot—I do not have any comment to make on that.

- Q45 Lord Henley:** Twenty months ago in your report you said that you did not have confidence that the Government would be able to deliver the 2025 strategy on time. As you have just said, you are still seeing Home Office officials through Rwanda and other things, so you have contacts there and occasionally had lunches with David Neal in the past and things like that. Do you think they are making progress? I am also interested in whether they are making progress on not just the bit that we are most concerned about—people crossing the border—but, as you mentioned, freight and, therefore, questions of biosecurity. You talk about lack of equipment there and you mentioned drugs. I was thinking particularly about imports—going back to my days in Defra—of trees, plants, wood and all the problems they can bring in. Are there problems? Are they making progress?

Alexander Downer: I am 20 months out of date. I can compare my experience of the Australian counterpart organisation: there is a body in Australia called AQIS, the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, which is much more rigorous than Border Force. Australia and UK are both islands and have some similar requirements

for ensuring that invasive plants and species do not come into the country, with all the consequences that there could be for agriculture and the environment more broadly.

Border Force had a long way to go to get on top of that inspection issue. It obviously does it but does not devote a lot of resources to it. My sense is that it devotes resources to it when it has time and is not under pressure in some other area. That is the impression I had then. It may have fixed all these problems since then but that was my sense at the time.

Lord Henley: Do you still have a feeling that you are 20 months out of date, even with your contacts with the Home Office, with how they are getting on?

Alexander Downer: I have not asked them that specific question, so on that specific question I am 20 months out of date, but not in every respect. I have talked a little bit about the contracts that the staff at Heathrow Airport have. I have been briefed on that by them quite recently at my request, so I am up to date on that.

Lord Henley: Going back to the staff issue, they are now all on contracts that allow them to move around much more, which presumably improves productivity, their working environment and their interest in the job, rather than always doing the same thing—or am I putting words into your mouth?

Alexander Downer: That is pretty much what I said. I understand that that is happening now. It is also fairer because a lot of the people on the legacy contracts would not work in teams and that is very inefficient. You get much better outcomes, better work morale and better productivity if they work in teams. Under the legacy contracts they would not work in teams and now they do. Planes start coming in at about 5 am. They come in at 6 am, but Border Force people have to get ready from about 5 am onwards, and so you have to go to work at 5 am. People on the legacy contracts did not much fancy going to work at 5 am, but the problem is it meant that others had to, because people do have to go to work at 5 am if international flights are coming in from 6 am onwards. Now there is a fairer arrangement, as I understand it.

Q46 **Lord Filkin:** Given your experience in Australia and on the review, you are very well placed to look to the future and give us your judgment on how you think the role of Border Force may need to change. If you could still concentrate on our focus, which is electronic border management rather than the wider domain of its role and skills, I would be very interested to hear your views.

Alexander Downer: I definitely think that the use of technology and the efficient and rapid uptake of technology by Border Force is the future. The future will facilitate people coming into the country and, for that matter, leaving the country. It is quite good to know who is leaving the country as well as who is coming in. Secondly, and I mentioned this already, it is facilitating goods trade into the UK as well as out of the UK, but most importantly for Border Force into the UK. Technology is the key to all of this but, where the technology is just being

developed, it is fair enough. Border Force itself mainly does not develop the technology; it is done by private companies, as you can imagine. But Border Force needs to be able to purchase and use that technology.

There are huge problems with its procurement programme. Procurement was done through the Home Office. It was not done on a just-in-time basis, meaning that particular pieces of equipment would become redundant and then it would order the new pieces of equipment to replace them, so you had a gap. It needs to build in a lifetime schedule for the equipment that it has. It needs to be technology friendly and willing to adopt new technology.

There are some risks with adopting new technology. The e-gates are pretty good but they do not always work. If they all go down, which occasionally happens—very occasionally but it has happened—there is chaos at the airport. No one can get into the country. There are always risks with technology but, if you can make this new technology work well, it will mean that people and goods will be able to come into the country more quickly, saving a lot of money and anxiety.

Lord Filkin: I will just focus the question a little. Clearly you are right that it begs a lot of the skills of management in specifying, introducing and procuring the right technology equipment. There is a big challenge there. If we focus back on the border officers themselves, who are the users of the equipment, what different skills will they need from what they already have to be able to operate the systems well?

Alexander Downer: It stands to reason that Border Force officers will have to understand the technology. By definition, they do not understand technology that has not been introduced yet. You might not need so many Border Force officers, but they will need to be more technologically and digitally skilled.

I spoke earlier of the aspiration to introduce facial recognition. You get issued with your electronic travel authorisation from the country you are coming from and, when you arrive in the UK, your face is recognised just through facial recognition technology. They will have to know how that all works and what to do if it stops working.

Lord Filkin: Will there still be a role for—as we heard a lot from a previous witness—almost instinctive judgment made by an experienced border officer about whether someone is a cause for concern or not? Of course you never know whether that instinct is correct or not, or should have been and was not. What do you say about that?

Alexander Downer: That is 100% right. It is so true. The experienced Border Force officer will be quite good at detecting people who may be suspicious.

Lord Filkin: How do we know that?

Alexander Downer: It is because of the success rate they have in catching people. I suppose the simplest way of putting it, because this relates to freight as well, is that

Border Force tells me that experienced officers are able to identify lorries or cars coming in at Dover that look suspicious and they will inspect them. Of course, they do not have a 100% hit rate. Sometimes they may look suspicious and it turns out that they are entirely innocent, but the inexperienced Border Force officer will not be able to detect that.

It is the same at airports. When you walk through Heathrow, as I did only on Thursday night, and you go through “nothing to declare”, you see two or three Border Force officers standing there. You think to yourself that they are not taking the slightest notice. That is good; they are not taking any notice of you because you are not cheating. But they have a system to monitor passengers as they arrive and they can see from their behaviour whether they are likely to be people of suspicion, in particular in that instance people who are bringing drugs into the country.

The Chair: Before we move on, you said something that I thought was quite interesting in response to Lord Filkin. You said that, with the advent of electronic border systems, we may not need as many members of the Border Force. Is that your view?

Alexander Downer: Yes. You might use them for other purposes, and you probably would, but you certainly would not need the same number of staff if you introduced a more sophisticated electronic visa system, by definition.

The Chair: Are there not different roles that the electronic borders introduce? The question is: can we see this as a way of reducing the size of Border Force or is it an opportunity for the Border Force to be doing other things that perhaps it has not done in the past, or that are required that were not required, with the introduction of an electronic border system?

Alexander Downer: It might very well decide to do that and there would be a strong argument for that. We talked a bit about biosecurity. You might have more Border Force officers working on biosecurity or monitoring drugs coming in by sea, whatever it is. There are all sorts of other things that Border Force could do; there is no doubt about that. I am not advocating an overall reduction or increase in Border Force numbers, but I am just saying that introducing technology definitely would lead to—as long as the technology works—very substantial improvements in productivity. That is output per unit of labour, so you would need to devote less labour to get the same outcome. You might divert that labour into somewhere else. I do not have a view about that.

Q47 **Baroness Buscombe:** I do not want to lose that point about what we might be giving up in security vis-à-vis digitisation, but I want to focus on Australia to start with.

Alexander Downer: I am sorry to interrupt you, but it is just to say that I know more about the UK Border Force than I do about the Australian Border Force. I have never done a review of the Australia Border Force, but I use it.

Baroness Buscombe: That is fine, but we have a sense that you might know more than you think you know. Australia is renowned as a pioneer for developing

electronic border systems and Australia's approach to borders and immigration is sometimes seen as a useful model for the UK. Are you able to compare the two countries and lessons we might learn from Australia? Our reading and understanding thus far is that Australia has been a little ahead of the game in modernising the systems, notwithstanding that, as our witness last week explained, you are in a rather different situation in Australia with a lot of time in which to assess who is coming across borders across Australia versus the UK, which is very close to other borders.

Alexander Downer: Yes, although computers are able to do that in a nanosecond, so I am not sure that I will buy the time argument quite so readily as your witness suggested.

It is a huge question. UK Border Force and the Australian Border Force talk to each other the whole time. You do not want to underestimate this. A Five Eyes border force meeting takes place every so often, including New Zealanders, Canadians and Americans, although the Americans operate a somewhat different system from the rest of us. If you go to Australia you will notice the Border Force officers look extremely like the British Border Force officers; their uniforms are not identical but they are nearly identical, so they have obviously been copying each other.

Electronic entry into Australia was introduced quite a while before e-gates were introduced here, but it has not been substantially upgraded, or I do not think it has been or have not noticed it has been. Why do I say that? Because I use it and it looks the same as it has for years.

You have a two-stage process in Australia. You put your passport into an e-reader and it prints out a ticket for you. Then you take the ticket to the Border Force officer and you put it in. The Border Force officer does not look at your passport—it saves them the trouble of doing that—but it is a two-stage process, whereas it is a one-stage process here, which is better for the traveller. There is not an equivalent of lorries coming into Australia but the technology for freight is very similar.

Baroness Buscombe: I think that after last week's meeting some of us felt a real concern that we may be losing some security with technology. With a two-stage system, that ticket might give the Border Force person an opportunity to think, "Hang on a minute; this does not feel right" and this is concerning. Are we endeavouring to make it an easy and good experience for the traveller at the expense of security? I remember in New Zealand that you go through all this good stuff and then get your boots checked to make sure you are not treading seeds and things into New Zealand. I suspect that may still exist.

Alexander Downer: That is done in Australia too.

Baroness Buscombe: There you go, but we do not do any of that. What are we risking here? You say that we should monitor the development of the ETA. That is really important, is it not?

Alexander Downer: There are two things here. There is whether the person themselves is a person of concern. In the case of Australia, there is a universal visa system. Unless you are an Australian, no matter what country you come from, you need a visa to come to Australia. It is electronic like the American ESTA and the ETA that is being introduced here and in the EU. We have had that in Australia for many years. People say that New Zealanders are exempt from that, but they are not really. When they buy an air ticket or—an unlikely event—a sea ticket to Australia, it automatically comes with a visa attached. In other words, the Department of Home Affairs in Australia, which is the equivalent of the Home Office—it even, literally, copied the name—its computer systems work out whether this is a person of concern or not.

The second thing is whether they are bringing material into the country that is of concern. In Australia, there is a check done of your luggage. You collect your luggage from the carousel and then form into yet another queue—there are lots of queues at airports. A Border Force officer decides whether you can just go straight through, out the exit—this is after your passport has been approved—and you have got into the country, or whether they should inspect your luggage. Again, this is a judgment made by Border Force. The volumes are so great that you could not inspect everybody's luggage, otherwise the whole system would simply crash.

Baroness Buscombe: Why have we not done anything like this for years? We have been allowing people to come through e-gates and so on; we do not know when they exit: we have no control. Why has the UK lacked this concern to have more checking, if you cannot look at a passport, see where that person has come from and whether they have been denied entry in the past? Why do you think we have not done that?

Alexander Downer: I am not sure of the answer to the question of why it has not been done but obviously one of the requirements—and you touched on this—is to facilitate entry as quickly as possible. Any Government will have to make a balance between facilitating entry and security. There is an obvious trade-off but you have to make some judgments about that. That is why you depend very heavily on experienced Border Force officers who are able to identify suspicious-looking behaviour.

There is one other difference between the UK and Australia. Again, it is a question of bureaucracy. If you are on a plane flying into Australia, the cabin crew will distribute to everybody on that plane a customs declaration card. I think the Americans still do that as well. You have to fill in this card and declare all the things you have. If you have soil on your boots, you have to declare that. If you have been to South America in the last six days, you have to declare that. It is a quarantine question for South America; I am not sure what it is.

In the UK, you do not have to do that. That is great: you just arrive on the plane and do not have to spend time rummaging around in your hand luggage trying to find a pen to fill in the thing; you cannot remember your passport number, so you have to

get out your passport again. These things are all irritating. The British Government presumably have made the judgment that it is too irritating, too time consuming and too difficult. What happens to these millions of these cards?

Baroness Buscombe: Maybe they act as a deterrent. Have we given up?

Alexander Downer: It is a criminal offence to falsify the information on your card and you are reminded of that. Typically the Australian authorities—I guess it is the quarantine authorities—require the aircraft to play a video about biosecurity risk, the danger of bringing in plants, soil, food and whatever it is.

Baroness Buscombe: Maybe we should have one on organised crime coming in.

The Chair: This is an issue that I am sure we will pursue. Unfortunately, we are running out of time.

Q48 **Lord Filkin:** In your review did you look at what I call the back end of the system? Most of our focus is on the front end, finding out who this person is, but that utility is totally reliant on whether you have access to a database that is accurate. You are reliant, therefore, on whether the database that Colombia keeps of people who are criminals or worse is accurate and up to date. Otherwise if it is not accurate, all this front end is useless. Did you look at the back end?

Alexander Downer: I did, yes. We are going to take the example of Colombia—a nice country, do not get me wrong, but one you raised. You are dependent in issuing visas—and a Colombian coming to the UK needs a visa—on information provided by the Colombian authorities, and there is no alternative to that. We have no choice.

To use the example of Australia again, Australians are able to use the e-gates, but any information about an Australian citizen who is travelling to the UK and might be a person of concern will show up automatically. Border Force UK will automatically get that information from Australia, so Border Force is dependent on the Australian authorities identifying people of concern just as it is dependent on the Colombian authorities. You might make a value judgment that the Australian system is better than the Colombian system and that is inherent in the fact that Australians are able to use e-gates, as are EU citizens, New Zealanders and so on.

Lord Filkin: In a nutshell, there are lots of countries in the world and there will be enormous variability in the quality of their records about even people who have already committed crimes. Therefore, that is a very differential risk according to different countries.

Alexander Downer: You cannot avoid that.

Lord Filkin: It may depend on how you apportion the use of your time and staff.

Alexander Downer: That goes to the beginning of the process: will you issue visas to people from that country at all? I was very struck that so many people coming here from a central American country—I am trying to remember which one it was; it

might have been El Salvador—were claiming asylum. I thought that is funny, but they got to the UK because the Foreign Office had deemed that this country—I think it was El Salvador but do not hold me to that—was worthy of giving visa-free entry into the UK. As a result, it was easy for people to game the system. They were gaming the system.

The Chair: That is shades of the decision about Rwanda. I am afraid I have to draw it to a halt, although we could stay for a very long time. We are enormously grateful to you for spending time with us and answering our questions. There will be a transcript of the proceedings, which you will have an opportunity to correct, add to or whatever. If there are any further points you think should be drawn to the attention of the committee, we would be very grateful for anything in writing. On behalf of the entire committee, I say a huge thank you to you for being with us and we look forward to sending you a copy of our report in due course.