

Meg Hillier MP  
Chair, Public Accounts Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0PW

**By Email Only**

12 February 2021

Dear Chair,

**DIGITAL SERVICES AT THE BORDER**

At our session with the Committee on 1 February 2021, Paul Lincoln and John Gillan committed to write with some additional details. As Accounting Officer, I am responding on behalf of the Home Office.

**Border Crossing staff training.**

The Committee asked for further details of the target of 7,000 users to be trained on the Border Crossing system by June 2021 and the number of staff currently trained.

Border Crossing is designed and scaled to support the use of the system by 7,000 potential users at launch. Within that initial capacity, however, the modelled requirement for the number of users who will need to be trained on Border Crossing to meet the anticipated operational demand from 30 June 2021 is 4350 staff. This number assumes that passenger arrival figures would be in the region of 140 million as seen in previous years. The additional 2650 capability provides capacity for future growth and demand.

The Department is confident that we will meet the 4350 staff trained target. Users are trained as close as possible to the time they use the system, to ensure maximum retention of skills and knowledge. During the current rollout, which commenced on 1 December 2020, Border Force has trained over 1600 users so far, of whom approximately 300 are currently using the live system. These figures increase daily as Border Crossing is rolled out to new ports each week. Border Force has the ability and flexibility within the training programme to be able to increase or decrease training to meet any changes in operational demands.

**General Aviation and General Maritime.**

You asked about Border Crossing's capacity to carry out checks at smaller, private airports and maritime ports. As explained in the hearing, Border Crossing will

provide capability to undertake appropriate checks for all travellers at primary control points for rail, maritime and air.

For all other non-primary control points involving General Aviation and General Maritime, as part of the broader Border Crossing roll out, we will be introducing new mobile hardware devices to officers. These have improved mobile and wireless connectivity to enable them to check passengers at these smaller ports securely.

### **£173m additional whole life cost following programme reset.**

The Committee asked for a breakdown of the £173m additional costs associated with resetting the programme. As stated in the session, following the reset in March 2019, changes to the scope and the three-year extension to the timeline for delivery, the whole life costs of the programme will increase by £173m, including:

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| • Border Crossing                                                                                                                        | £50m |
| • New FBIS <sup>1</sup> requirements linked to leaving the EU                                                                            | £20m |
| • Enabling the end of dependence on the Warnings Index, including by improving our watchlisting and search capability                    | £24m |
| • Live support of new systems as they come on line and until programme closure                                                           | £23m |
| • Improved Port Office Infrastructure (POI), including installation of resilient networks and provision of mobile devices                | £17m |
| • New design and product teams to redesign and provide better traceability of requirements (in line with the IPA review recommendations) | £20m |
| • Business change, programme governance and leadership, PMO support, commercial and financial support (across three financial years).    | £19m |

Of the above expenditure, the Committee were particularly interested in the breakdown of the £50m investment for Border Crossing:

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| • Development and testing of Border Crossing including: data security classification changes; the ability to check the current immigration status, including the EU Settled Status, of each passenger; and interfaces with other Home Office systems | £30m |
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<sup>1</sup> Future Border and Immigration System

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| • Building and equipping datacentres                                               | £9m |
| • Additional security by enhancing our checks of travel documents                  | £5m |
| • Creating and upgrading the interface between eGates and Border Crossing          | £3m |
| • Real-time connectivity to the Interpol stolen and lost travel documents database | £3m |

**Time difference of SIS II and Interpol uploading of data.**

The Committee asked about timeliness of provision of information to the frontline. There is an automated upload of incoming Interpol circulations to domestic systems. Information is available via policing systems within hours of receipt and is available at the border within 24 hours. This is a comparable timeframe to the previous system of SIS II alerts being available at the border. We have also put in place arrangements such that if the NCA is notified a case is urgent, then specific alerts can be uploaded to domestic systems more rapidly. Information is therefore quickly accessible and technical work is already in train to expedite access further.

As noted at the hearing, the generation of new alerts via Interpol is a more manual process. However, operational partners have worked to ensure UK data, previously shared via SIS II, has been circulated via Interpol where appropriate. We will continue to work with partners to support Interpol and make the exchange of law enforcement alert data as effective as possible.

I will continue to keep the Committee up to date with progress and expenditure of the programme, including through my Accounting Officer assessments of the programme.

Yours sincerely,



**Matthew Rycroft**  
**Permanent Secretary**