



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

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Councillor Steve Pitt and Ms Natalie Brahma-Peal  
Portsmouth City Council  
(sent via email only)

14 November 2023

Dear Councillor Pitt and Ms Brahma-Pearl,

**Re: Border Target Operating Model – Local Authority Recruitment and Funding**

Thank you for your letter of 25 October 2023 regarding Local Authority recruitment and funding for the Border Target Operating Model (BTOM). I appreciate you taking time to outline your views on these matters.

In respect of the point, you raised about a further delay to the implementation of the BTOM, I can reassure you that the BTOM has strong ministerial support, and we expect preparations to continue toward achieving milestones within the published timelines.

Many of your other points reference uncertainty in the data for the future control regime and trade flows through Portsmouth, as well as the consequences this could have for your business model and workforce planning. With respect to these matters, I would like to draw your attention to certain easements that will be in effect from 30 April 2024. As referred to in the guidance material that was recently shared with Port Health Authorities (PHAs) in conjunction with the call for bids for the period 1 October 2023 to 31 December 2023, these easements will be in place to help manage capacity and cost recovery risks.

You should aim to recruit to enable full delivery of BTOM inspection requirements from 30 April 2024. I understand, however, that there may be issues with recruiting to a full capacity by this date, so it has been agreed that PHAs may temporarily, on a risk basis, undertake a decreased rate of documentary checks for medium risk consignments, with prior agreement from Defra. This may occur when it is necessitated by such staffing limitations and there is a significant risk of disruption to throughput at the Border Control Post (BCP). Any transitional arrangements on check rates, will be for a limited period whilst new processes bed in and the operational landscape is better understood. You should work to put in place further staffing, if needed, as a clearer understanding of requirements becomes available.

There is an expectation that PHAs will begin full cost recovery for all BTOM operations through charging from 30 April 2024. Certain transitional easements will be in place throughout the period of 30 April to 31 July 2024, which may reduce your ability to issue charges to recover BTOM operational costs. As such, Defra will accept financial liability in cases where easements have prevented full cost recovery through an inability to issue charges. Defra will factor this into any further announcements of relevant easements.

I understand that Jeremy Grainger from the Cabinet Office hosts regular fortnightly meetings with Portsmouth International Port (PIP) about their plans for the BCP facilities, which provides Government support in resolving any issues accordingly.

I look forward to discussing these matters with you further when I visit you in Portsmouth on 12 December 2023 with other colleagues from the Defra team. In the meantime, do continue to work with Lee Burge and the rest of the PHA engagement team.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joanne Bradshaw', is positioned above the typed name and contact information.

Director, Defra Biosecurity, Borders & Trade Programme

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