

PETER GIBSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Dear Constituent

Thank you for your email about the New Plan for Immigration.

The United Kingdom has a proud record of helping those fleeing persecution, oppression or tyranny from around the world. Alongside providing £10 billion a year to support people through our overseas aid, the UK is a global leader in refugee resettlement. As a country, between 2016 and 2019 we resettled more refugees from outside Europe than any member state of the EU. In total across all Government-funded resettlement schemes, the UK has resettled more than 25,000 vulnerable refugees in need of protection over the past six years, with around half being children. Over 29,000 family reunion visas have also been issued in the last five years.

As you will be aware, the Home Office has published the New Plan for Immigration which seeks to retain this compassionate approach and combine it with increased fairness, firmness and efficiency. As part of this, I welcome the introduction of the Nationality and Borders Bill and its principles that access to the UK's asylum system should be based on need, and that illegal immigration should be prevented.

You will be reassured to know that the Government is strengthening the safe and legal routes for refugees and fixing historic anomalies in British Nationality law. The Government is also committed to ensuring that resettlement programmes are responsive to emerging international crises and that persecuted minorities are represented. The wider Plan also helps refugees once they have settled in the UK through support to integrate into society, help in accessing employment and sponsorship programmes. Those in genuine need will be protected.

I understand that the Immigration Rules already provide a route to regularise immigration status. I welcome the fact that these rules are kept under constant review and evolve in light of feedback and findings of the courts.

A key objective of the Plan is also to deter and prevent illegal entry into our country. By cracking down on illegal immigration, we can prioritise those in genuine need. This will help prevent people making dangerous and unnecessary journeys to the UK through potentially fatal means in small boats or aeroplanes, for example. It also aims to halt the business model of criminal trafficking networks and protect those who are in danger of being trafficked.

It is welcome that the Nationality and Borders Bill seeks to introduce new and tougher criminal offences for those attempting to enter the UK illegally by raising the penalty for illegal entry from six months to four years imprisonment and introducing life sentences for people smugglers. It also will provide Border Force with additional powers, including to search unaccompanied containers located within ports and to seize and dispose any vessels intercepted and encountered.

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I am very clear that people should claim asylum in the first safe country they arrive and we must ensure dangerous journeys are not incentivised. I understand that Ministers have been looking at what other countries do to deter illegal migration and I welcome the fact that this work continues. I believe it is correct to not rule out any option that could help reduce the illegal migration and relieve the pressure on the asylum system.

I can reassure you that the proposals comply with our global obligations including commitments to the European Convention on Human Rights, the Refugee Convention and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. You may also be interested to know that the Home Office launched a consultation to gain insight from stakeholders and members of the public to inform their strategy. I know Ministers are seeking widespread engagement and are currently analysing the feedback received.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to contact me and if I can ever be any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

Yours Sincerely
Peter Gibson

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