

Inspection report published: An inspection of Border Force operations at Glasgow and Edinburgh airports



Publishing the report, David Bolt said:

Glasgow and Edinburgh Airports are respectively the sixth and eighth busiest airports in the UK for passenger traffic. This inspection looked at both, comparing and contrasting where relevant. In terms of the overall management of border security at the two airports, by means of the usual immigration and customs controls, the inspection found Border Force to be broadly efficient and effective. However, there were criticisms from the airport operators and from passengers about the immigration queues, not helped by the absence of a robust, standardised way of measuring queuing times.

A number of areas for improvement were identified at both airports. Some of these were beyond the local Border Force management to resolve, raising the question of how visible they were to Border Force regional and top management and who “owned” the risks. My recommendations were aimed at clarifying this.

The report makes just three recommendations, one related to queue measurement and the other two focused on ensuring that Border Force operational managers, not just at Glasgow and Edinburgh, understand and articulate their risks thoroughly and consistently. At Glasgow and Edinburgh this means engaging more effectively with the airport operators, ensuring that staff ‘rostering’ is efficient and seen as reasonable, maximising ePassport gate uptake, improving the recording and quality assurance of decisions, and ensuring that safeguarding strategies and actions test for new or changing threats as well as targeting known “high risk” flights.

Border Force has accepted all three of my recommendations. It has made some headway with each but is moving more slowly than I might have hoped (the report was sent to the Home Secretary on 13 June). I will therefore be keen to see how far it has been able to progress the work it is doing on risk management and queue measurement by the end of 2019.

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