

Project Kick-Off Memorandum

To: Route Breaker Taskforce

From: Deputy Director, Route Breaker Taskforce

Re: Reducing irregular migration to the UK via Litorra

Dear project team,

Over the past 12 months, the UK has seen a sharp increase in irregular arrivals linked to the Litorra route. This has drawn sustained ministerial attention and created pressure for rapid progress.

Litorra matters because it is a key transit point on this route. A significant share of people reaching the UK through this route pass through Litorra first, owing to its proximity to the UK.

At present, the UK does not have the level of migration cooperation with Litorra that ministers want. In particular, returns cooperation remains limited. My view is that this is the most important weakness in the current approach. A returns arrangement with Litorra could change the incentives around the route, strengthen the UK's wider response, and demonstrate visible progress.

This view has been reinforced by the positive reaction across government to the recent returns agreement with Generica, another key transit point for irregular arrivals to the UK. While the evidence base is still limited, that agreement has increased confidence that a similar approach may be possible elsewhere.

There may also be an opportunity to make progress now because the UK is already in wider bilateral discussions with Litorra, including on a possible economic agreement. The Litorran government have signalled some willingness to discuss returns as part of these discussions.

Bilateral talks with Litorra are planned for 10 weeks from now, and ministers want to be in a position to take a clear proposal on how to reduce irregular arrivals to the UK via the Litorra route as part of those discussions. This gives us a near-term window to shape the UK approach and inform the government's wider engagement with Litorra.

I would like the team to develop recommendations to significantly reduce the number of people arriving in and remaining in the UK irregularly via Litorra by December 2026. We have 10 weeks to complete this work and provide recommendations in time to support the forthcoming bilateral talks.

Best wishes,

Deputy Director, Route Breaker Taskforce

Appendix 1: Litorra Profile

Litorra is a fictional small northern European country used for this exercise. Its location and coastline make it a useful staging point for one irregular migration route to the UK. Most people using the route are not from Litorra itself but pass through it before attempting onward travel. This makes Litorra an important but difficult partner for the UK.

Litorra is relevant to this work for five reasons:

1. Transit role

Litorra sits on a well-established route used by irregular migrants seeking to reach the UK. It is not the only route, but it has grown in importance over the past two years.

2. Mixed incentives

Litorra has mixed incentives. It wants UK support and legitimacy, but for Litorra the costs of stronger enforcement and returns cooperation may outweigh the benefits.

3. Returns cooperation is limited

The UK does not currently have the level of returns cooperation with Litorra that ministers want. Existing cooperation is viewed as slow, inconsistent and operationally difficult.

4. Wider enablers matter

The route is sustained not only by decisions taken by the Litorran government, but also by enablers operating in and through Litorra, including organised immigration crime, document abuse and facilitation networks.

5. Wider bilateral relationship

The UK is already in discussion with Litorra on broader bilateral issues, including a possible economic agreement. This may create opportunities to increase leverage and incentives, but it may also create trade-offs.

Appendix 2: Route snapshot

| Year | Estimated irregular arrivals to the UK linked to the Litorra route |
|------|--|
| 2022 | 3,100 |
| 2023 | 4,800 |
| 2024 | 4,500 |
| 2025 | 11,200 |