



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

**Stephen Doughty MP**

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The Honourable Julie Thomas  
Chief Minister of St Helena

15 October 2024

Dear Chief Minister

Thank you once again for responding so positively to our proposal for the handling of arrivals on the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) and for making time for discussions with Lord Hanson and myself. I am grateful for your approach which reflects the strong relationship and cooperation between St Helena and the United Kingdom.

You are aware that since we first spoke, a political agreement has been reached between the UK and Mauritius on the future of BIOT. This agreement is subject to the finalisation of a treaty and supporting legal instruments which the UK has committed to complete as quickly as possible. Under the terms of this treaty, the UK will agree that Mauritius is sovereign of the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia. When the treaty comes into force, Mauritius will take responsibility for migrant arrivals in the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia.

There have been no irregular migrant arrivals to BIOT since 2022. However, until the treaty is in force it is imperative we do all we can to guard against the possibility that individuals will consider making dangerous journeys to BIOT. The arrangement between the UK and St Helena, therefore, is a time-limited and contingency one that aims to ensure that migrants do not attempt to get to BIOT in the hope of being relocated to the UK, Europe or North America. If we do not close this route down, there is a risk that people smugglers will seek to traffic more people to BIOT.

I am pleased that our officials have been able to agree a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for our signature. This takes into account the changes the St Helena Government have requested. I am also grateful to you for setting out the support that St Helena will need in order to deliver the arrangement. We fully agree on the need to demonstrate to the St Helena community the importance of our joint work, as exemplified by this arrangement.

Following our discussion on 8 October, I am pleased to confirm that the FCDO can commit to a payment to St Helena of £6.65 million at the start of FY 2025/26 to support St Helena's long term economic development by funding projects to improve health and education outcomes, as well as supporting IT improvements. This funding will be separate from our financial aid discussions.

In the event that migrants need to be relocated from BIOT, we will need to agree what form of technical and financial support you will need from the UK Government. It is our intention that the people of St Helena should not be disadvantaged, and we will support the St Helena Government as required to progress this arrangement and assume responsibility for the welfare of the migrants.

In the immediate term, Home Office colleagues stand ready to deliver asylum case management training to St Helena's immigration officials on a date to be agreed. We can confirm that this training could take place as early as late October/early November. The Home Office will also review the learning needs analysis undertaken in October 2022 to identify and address the wider training needs of St Helena's border security officials.

The Home Office also commit to concluding an MoU, the implementation of which will see the UK National Border Targeting Centre undertaking watchlist checks on behalf of St Helena of individuals intending to travel to your location; and providing responses which can inform local decisions.

We understand your concerns about security and capacity on St Helena. In line with the MoU, the UK will, working with the BIOT Administration, screen migrants prior to transfer to St Helena and we will not knowingly transfer any individuals to St Helena who might pose a security risk. Should any transferred migrants subsequently pose significant challenges, we will of course work with you to identify a solution.

I fully agree we will need to carefully manage the announcement of this arrangement, and that our officials should work together on a communications approach which is sensitive to St Helena's reputation as an exciting and growing tourist destination.

I would be grateful for confirmation that you are now content to proceed with the MoU our officials have agreed.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Stephen Doughty". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Stephen Doughty MP**  
**Minister of State for Europe, North America and UK Overseas Territories**

Copied to:

The Rt Hon Lord Hanson of Flint, Home Office  
Governor of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha