

Border Force operates a fleet of cutters, including HMC *Vigilant*, to patrol and protect our coastlines.



Photo: Alamy

PROJECT KRAKEN

Turning local knowledge into national security with a law enforcement operation

Border Force achieved record-breaking success this summer, with detections and seizures at an all-time high. More than 15.6 tonnes of cocaine were seized by the law enforcement agency in June, July and August, including a shipment worth £1m at London Gateway port and several hundred kilos of the drug taken from a boat in Somerset. To compare, this three-month amount was more than half the total seized in 2024.

As well as the drugs trade, UK coastlines are often scenes of other illegal activity, including theft, smuggling and criminal damage, which can often be linked to terrorism and other serious crime. So how are the Border Force and law enforcement agencies fighting back? The answer lies in Project Kraken.

Contributing to national security

Project Kraken is a national initiative to raise public awareness of terrorism and criminal or suspicious activity around UK coasts and borders. This includes marinas, moorings, smaller ports, docks and on water itself.

Project Kraken began in 2007 and has evolved from a niche maritime awareness campaign into a nationally recognised platform for community-led vigilance. Powered by Crimestoppers, it allows members of the maritime community anonymously to report any concerns or information they have about potentially criminal activities around our coastlines. It's part of a broader Border Watch ►

SEE IT, REPORT IT, PROTECT IT



HMC Vigilant with a seized yacht at Newlyn harbour in Cornwall. Knowing what is and isn't normal in your coastal location is of great worth to Border Force.

initiative that also includes Project Pegasus (general aviation) and Project Falco (security education across both sectors).

'In recent years, we've refreshed and refocused the campaign to increase the flow of information and public engagement,' explains Border Force's National Lead Andrew Seaman. 'We've expanded partnerships, modernised messaging and aligned Kraken with broader national security priorities.'

This new system has built trust by partnering with respected pillars of coastal communities, such as the National Coastwatch Institution.

Building a clear picture

Project Kraken plays a key part in the UK's layered approach to national security. 'Kraken complements wider

efforts to tackle organised crime, terrorism and border threats,' says Andrew. 'It's a network of agencies and individuals working together to keep our coastline safe, and using local knowledge to protect national interests. It empowers people to report suspicious activity, helping law enforcement build a clearer picture of what's happening around our coastline.'

For example, one of the main risks to border security is at-sea drop offs, or ASDOs. 'We're asking coastal communities to remain vigilant for unusual activity involving high-powered boats, particularly those recently purchased or berthed without a clear purpose and appearing out of place for the area,' Andrew explains. 'These vessels, often rigid-hulled inflatable boats (RHIBs) or similar craft equipped with twin engines, can be indicators of the ASDO method.'

This involves motherships, often commercial vessels, dropping goods

such as Class A drugs into the sea using floating devices and equipped with GPS trackers attached.

A daughter vessel, typically a fast RHIB, then locates the package using GPS. However, these tags can fail, allowing dangerous amounts of drugs to wash up on the coastline, posing serious risks to wildlife and anyone who might stumble

upon them. But if vigilant members of the maritime community are aware of the signs of ASDOs and report them via Project Kraken, these shipments can be seized by Border Force.



How to help

So what can the boating community do to support the project? The answer is use their local knowledge. 'You know your port, harbour, coast and community better than us or anyone else,' confirms Andrew. 'If you see suspicious activity at sea, in port or while walking the coast, please report it.'

An example of what might be considered suspicious activity is new boaters with questionable motives, new boats without the correct



Photo: Alamy x2

Inset: Andrew Seaman, Border Force's National Lead.
Left: Suffolk Police Community Support Officers examine a boat at Orford.



Armed naval personnel remove a large shipment of cocaine. Organisations and communities working together means more criminal activity can be stopped.

Photo: Alamy

equipment or vessels arriving or departing at strange times or tide. Be alert to anything that feels out of place, such as vessels operating without lights or markings, people accessing restricted areas or behaving unusually, or unattended packages or containers at sea or along the coast. Surveillance of port infrastructure or security setups is another activity that can be a sign of criminal intent.

Things to look out for while at sea include large floating packages, or lobster pots in an unusual location with items inside and possible GPS devices attached.

'You'll know what's out of the ordinary,' says Andrew. 'If something doesn't sit right, trust your instincts and report it. Your local knowledge is one of our greatest assets.'

Even if you're not sure, make the call – it's completely anonymous and there are no repercussions if it turns out to be a false alarm. 'Every report helps build a clearer picture of what's happening around our coastline and helps keep it safe for everyone,' Andrew explains. So it's worth making that call.

Empower communities

'Due to operational sensitivity, we can't share specific success stories,' says Andrew. 'But I can confirm Kraken is contributing valuable intelligence to border security efforts.'

Andrew is keen to stress that Kraken is more than just reporting, however. 'It's about empowering coastal communities, building trust and creating a culture of shared responsibility across the maritime domain. We want to protect the community, the space and the environment we all love to enjoy and relax in from being infiltrated by criminals' intent on causing harm.

'As the national lead, I'm committed to ensuring Project Kraken continues to thrive, is embraced by coastal communities, and remains a trusted tool for protecting our shores.'

To find out more about Project Kraken, please visit www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-suspicious-behaviour-at-sea-project-kraken



Reporting activity to Project Kraken

Seen something that's made you feel suspicious? Examples can include:

- Seeing boats moored up in strange or isolated places or at strange times
- Boats coming together and meeting up with items being exchanged
- Boats unloading scared or suspicious people, or unloading packages
- Suspicious items washed up on the coast (do not touch or remove)
- People attempting to signal or guide boats offshore
- People putting objects into waterways near bridges or marinas
- People taking an interest in port security or buildings – maybe taking pictures or videos, or trying to gain access to restricted areas
- High-powered, twin-engine vessels in areas where they seem out of place or at unusual times

Reporting is anonymous and handled by trained call handlers at Crimestoppers, not police officers. Your information is passed on 100 percent of the time, and you cannot be traced. Just call 0800 011 3304 or use the QR code below. If it's urgent, call 999.

You can help promote Project Kraken on social media by interacting with its posts, powered by Crimestoppers. Add the hashtag #ProjectKraken

