

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

10th August 2020

Re: Unauthorised Encampments

I am writing regarding the recent consultation on strengthening police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments.

According to Roger Hirst, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex, the current powers available to the Police are not sufficient to deal with the unauthorised encampments in a way that the majority of our communities would expect. Consequently, he has now joined me in supporting the 'Irish Option', and I have enclosed a recent letter that he sent to me, which sets out his position in more detail.

As you will know, we promised in our manifesto to: *"tackle unauthorised traveller camps. We will give the police new powers to arrest and seize the property and vehicles of trespassers who set up unauthorised encampments, in order to protect our communities."*

Certainly, it is encouraging that the consultation on strengthening police powers has now concluded, and I understand that the review period for responses is ongoing. Nevertheless, I am concerned that the coronavirus outbreak will bring about a delay to the publication of the Government's response, and/or the introduction of the necessary legislation to bring about any changes that Ministers may recommend.

The colleagues listed below share my concerns on this matter, and following a recent spate on incidents in local constituencies, which are likely to be repeated regionally and nationally, it is crucial that we act now to ensure the police have adequate powers to deal with incursions before Summer 2021. Therefore, we would seek your assurances that the Government's response to the consultation will not be unreasonably delayed, and that any recommended legislative changes will be introduced for consideration as matter of urgency.

Finally, we would also like to commend the work of Essex Police. They have done so much to reduce the number of encampments, despite operating with powers that are clearly deficient.

With best wishes,



Sir David Amess MP
Stephen Metcalfe MP
Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP