

Witness name: Karen Whitehouse
Statement number: 2
Exhibits: 3 (INQ007646,
INQ007648,
INQ010666)
Date: 6 March 2025

THE CRANSTON INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF KAREN WHITEHOUSE

I, KAREN WHITEHOUSE, C/O The Government Legal Department, 102 Petty France, Westminster, London SW1H 9GL, **WILL SAY** as follows:

1. I make this second written statement in order to correct a small number of minor factual inaccuracies included within my written statement dated 08 November 2024 (the "First Written Statement"). Whilst the First Written Statement was accurate to the best of my knowledge and understanding as at the date it was signed, as a result of the ongoing process of disclosure undertaken by the Home Office and other Full Participants to the inquiry since, I now understand certain statements made therein to be incorrect. References to paragraphs below are references to paragraphs of the First Written Statement.
2. I have also taken the opportunity to add further, limited explanation or detail where I feel that it could be helpful to the inquiry in fulfilling its Terms of Reference in respect of the tragic events which the inquiry is examining.
3. At paragraph 20, I stated that in relation to the HMCG events tracker, "*BFMCC had direct access to the tracker*". I now understand that, as at the date of the incident the inquiry is examining, Border Force Maritime Command Centre

("BFMCC") personnel, including myself and my colleague Thomas Willows, only had 'read-only' access to the tracker, which had been granted on 21 November 2021. Only Liaison Officers based at the Joint Control Room in Dover were able to both read and amend the HMCG tracker at that time, with access having been granted on the same day as to BFMCC personnel, that being 21 November 2021.

4. At paragraph 30, I stated that *"...on the night of 23 November I was working on my own, with a colleague available who was working remotely"*. Having reviewed the documents provided with my Evidence Proposal, I now believe that that colleague, Mr Willows, was not working remotely but instead was working alongside me at the BFMCC in Portsmouth. Should I have needed to communicate with Mr Willows then I would have done so verbally, given that our desks at the BFMCC were in close proximity, which also explains the lack of any email correspondence between us during that period. The expectation of Border Force Maritime Command ("BFMC") was that BFMCC personnel would be physically based at the BFMCC on 'red days' or 'amber days', however, we were able to work some shifts remotely on 'green days', when the demands of Op Deveran would allow us to do so.
5. At paragraph 43, I stated that *"My colleague Tom Willows, a BF officer, was working from home and available if I needed anything. If I needed to communicate with Mr Willows then I would have done so by mobile telephone. I cannot recall contacting him that night and have not located any emails between us."* As explained above, I now believe that Mr Willows was not working remotely but instead was working alongside me at the BFMCC.

6. At paragraph 49, I stated that, *“The first entry in my daybook... is a set of coordinates which I believe came from HMCG by telephone. I was given the coordinates 51° 04.9N 00° 58.04E”*. I understand that Mr Willows has since listened to the audio of the call, and has confirmed that that call was made by himself to HMCG in order to confirm the accuracy of the coordinates which had been included on the French tracker (INQ007646). I now believe that all telephone calls made by BFMCC to HMCG, or received by BFMCC from HMCG, on the night of 23/24 November 2021 were made or received by Mr Willows.
7. At paragraph 50, I stated that *“I do not have access to the initial call but it is possible that I asked for updated coordinates, noting the length of time which appears to have passed since the boat was sighted at those coordinates (approximately an hour and 20 minutes prior)”*. As explained, I now believe that Mr Willows made that call.
8. At paragraph 51, I state that I had read the transcript of the call with HMCG at 01:24 (INQ007648) and confirmed that I was the person they spoke to. As explained, I now believe that Mr Willows made that call to HMCG.
9. At paragraph 52, I stated that *“I first became aware of incident ‘Charlie’ when I received the second telephone call from HMCG at 01:124”*. As explained, I now believe that Mr Willows made that call to HMCG and thus any reference to information conveyed by HMCG included therein would have been conveyed to Mr Willows. The reference to *“01:124”* is a typographical error, and should be read as *“01:24”*.

10. At paragraph 53, I stated that *"I did not make a note of everything HMCG told me"*. As explained, I believe that HMCG would have told Mr Willows that information.

11. At paragraph 56, I stated that *"I would have relayed these ETAs to HMCG..."*. As explained, I believe that any such information would have been conveyed to HMCG by Mr Willows.

12. I note that at paragraphs 53, 56, 66 and 67, I referred to calls that I made to, or received from, commander Toy. Given that I believe that Mr Willows was working alongside me at the BFMCC, I consider that it is currently impossible for me to confirm whether Mr Willows or I made those calls.

13. At paragraph 56, I stated that *"I informed RCCU that HMC Valiant had 11 persons on board (crew) and a Criminal and Financial Investigator ("CFI")..."*. Given that I believe that Mr Willows was working alongside me at the BFMCC, I consider that it is currently impossible for me to confirm whether Mr Willows or I made that call.

14. I have been shown a Standard Operating Procedure ("SOP") which details the practices and procedures for BFMCC personnel (INQ010666). I can confirm that I would have seen and been familiar with that SOP as at the time of the incident.

15. I hope that this further written statement assists the inquiry and the parties involved in it.

Statement of truth.

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed: *Karen Whitehouse*

Date: 6 March 2025