Ministry of Justice

Catherine McKinnell MP
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
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Dear Chair,

HMP WYMOTT: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JUNE 2025 – 31 MAY 2026

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Wymott. I have noted all the recruitment and membership challenges faced by your Board and appreciate the effort and commitment you and your colleagues have put into capturing your helpful observations. I hope these pressures ease forthwith.

I was saddened to hear eleven prisoners died during the reporting year. Every death is upsetting, and more so when it is self-inflicted, and I offer my condolences to the friends and family of all the deceased. I would like to reassure the Board that any recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman will always be taken very seriously.

The Government recognises the very real difficulties faced by those subject to indeterminate (IPP) sentences, their families, and the professionals and organisations working to help them move forward safely. It is right that the IPP sentence was abolished in 2012 and on 1 September the Lord Chancellor announced that the Government will bring an end to the sentence for those who continue to serve it and will bring forward legislation to do this by the end of this Parliament. Public safety will always be the Government's top priority, but we must balance that with fairness. Any reform must be developed carefully and informed by a thorough assessment of the legal and operational implications. A further announcement will be made later this year.

In the meantime, decisions about release remain for the independent Parole Board, which must be satisfied that an individual's risk can be safely managed in the community before directing release. The Government will continue to do as much as possible within the existing legal and operational frameworks to support people in prison to progress towards safe and sustainable release. The power to recall is a vital public protection measure, and all offenders supervised under licence in the community are liable to be recalled to prison if they fail to comply with their licence conditions in such a way as to indicate increased risk. IPP offenders are subject to a higher threshold for recall, in that in addition to evidence of increased risk, there must also be evidence of a "causal link", that is, the offender's behaviour and circumstances are similar to those at the time of the offence(s) which attracted the IPP sentence in the first place.

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I understand the Board's concerns about staffing levels at HMPs Wymott and Garth in the context of the new prison to be opened. There is no doubt sufficient numbers of skilled and experienced staff are fundamental to maintaining safe, secure and rehabilitative prisons.

I can assure you that there are recruitment efforts at all prisons where vacancies exist or are projected, including to support expansions, with targeted interventions applied to those prisons with the most need. For public sector prisons, HM Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) assess staffing requirements for expansions and factor them into vacancies up to 18 months in advance of opening, to ensure recruitment happens on time and enables the build-up of experience needed. We recognise that the new prison will draw from the same pool of potential prison officers as neighbouring establishments, increasing competition within the local labour market. HMPPS will continue to monitor the staffing position at HMPs Wymott and Garth and other nearby prisons, and take targeted action to support recruitment and retention where pressures arise.

I note that your report has raised several matters for the attention of HMPPS and responses to those issues are set out in the attached annex. Issues raised for the attention of the Governor will be addressed locally who will continue to keep you aware of progress as work continues.

Although there are numerous issues to be resolved at HMP Wymott, it was reassuring to hear about the good work of the safer living team together with the support provided to neurodiverse prisoners, and that keywork sessions are moving in the right direction. I was also encouraged to note the increased diversity of the officer workforce and recognise the resilience of the kitchen staff in the face of continued challenges.

The Lord Chancellor and I appreciate the valuable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are very grateful for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Wymott.



Catherine McKinnell MP
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending

Annex

HMP WYMOTT: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JUNE 2025 – 31 MAY 2026

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Drone Incursions

HMPPS shares the Board's continued concerns regarding the threat posed by drone incursions. A project for site wide replacement of window grilles is in the final stages of development. The grilles are currently being manufactured and once this is complete, indicative project timelines will be available. As mentioned in last years' response, a project for the replacement of windows on C,D,E,F,G and H Wings continues to be explored.

HMP Wymott will also continue to work closely with regional security teams, local police, headquarters' security functions, and the nearby HMP Garth to prevent the ingress of illicit items via drones. Intelligence gathering, targeted searching, perimeter patrols, CCTV monitoring and the use of specialist search capabilities remain key elements of the response at HMP Wymott. Prisoners identified as being involved in the coordination or facilitation of illicit activity are subject to robust disciplinary measures. HMPPS will continue to pursue additional physical security measures and other infrastructure improvements where possible, alongside emerging technological solutions designed to strengthen the estate's capability to detect and respond to drone activity.

Infrastructure and Accommodation

HMPPS is committed to delivering sustained improvement in living conditions across the prison estate and recognises the significant infrastructure challenges across several residential areas at HMP Wymott. A range of bids for HMP Wymott have been received by headquarters' estates team and it is continually reviewing the investment required across the estate. The following projects are being considered for the prison: walkway roof and gutter repairs; site-wide shower replacement and emergency lighting; smoke extraction on I Wing; building management system and ancillaries; and window replacement across C,D,E,F,G and H wings. A feasibility study into the long-term viability of A and B wings has also been commissioned. If the refurbishment of A and B wings is approved, closure of these wings would be likely and Rapid Deployment Cells may be used to facilitate the works.

All proposals are underpinned by data collected through condition surveys, which assess the fabric, cells and critical assets at each establishment. These surveys inform long-term forward maintenance registers, enabling works to be prioritised against future capital budgets across the whole prison estate. A programme of maintenance and improvement works will continue at HMP Wymott, with priority given to projects that have the greatest impact on prisoner living conditions, staff working environments, and operational resilience.

Kitchen Upgrade

An Outline Business Case was submitted for the kitchen refurbishment on 1 October 2026 and remains at an early stage of development. A temporary kitchen facility has been approved and is being progressed to provide additional resilience and support food service delivery whilst longer-term options for a permanent solution continue to be developed. This interim investment will help mitigate some of the pressures associated with the current kitchen infrastructure and improve operational continuity. In the meantime, temporary repairs, equipment replacement, and

enhanced maintenance arrangements continue to be utilised to ensure meals are delivered safely and consistently to prisoners.

Healthcare and Maintenance Contracts
The Board can be assured that robust contract management arrangements, performance monitoring meetings, and escalation processes are in place to ensure concerns are raised and addressed appropriately. Where performance falls below expected standards, issues are formally challenged through established governance arrangements and improvement plans.

The prison continues to work constructively with both providers and welcomes ongoing engagement at regional and national level to ensure future contractual arrangements continue to reflect the needs of HMP Wymott, including the challenges associated with an ageing site and an increasingly complex prisoner population.

The healthcare provider is aware of the concerns around waiting times for the optician and ultrasound scanning and this has been escalated to NHS England Commissioners and a business case submitted for consideration. If supported, additional funding will be secured to deliver increased provision to target waiting lists and stabilise the appointments.

Lifts and Stair Lifts
The lifts and stairlifts across the establishment are unfortunately unreliable and prone to breaking down. Although HMPPS would like to confirm a long-term solution or replacement strategy for these assets, the demand for maintenance and investment across the estate exceeds available funding. Consequently, whilst all requests from the establishment will be considered, HMPPS must carefully prioritise investment to ensure best use of resources, focusing on risk to life, capacity, and decency.