

***FIFTEEN MIGRANT COCKLE PICKERS, THOUGHT TO BE CHINESE,  
HAVE DIED IN MORECAMBE BAY***

**A STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE TRAGEDY BY RIGHT REVEREND PATRICK O'DONOGHUE, BISHOP OF LANCASTER and CHAIRMAN OF THE OFFICE FOR MIGRATION POLICY OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES**

**Our heartfelt sympathy and prayers go out to the families and friends of the 15 cocklers, thought to be Chinese, who lost their lives on the treacherous sandbanks and gulleys of Morecambe Bay last night.**

This appalling tragedy raises fundamental questions about whether or not we are providing enough protection to these migrant workers who contribute enormously to our economy and our welfare.

In this regard, it is crucial that MPs of all parties sign up to the Early Day Motion put down by Jim Sheridan MP (Labour, West Renfrewshire) on this matter and to support the Private Members' Bill (7 January 2004) which calls for the registration and licensing of all labour providers, also known as gangmasters.

There are many gangmasters who act legally and responsibly, but recently, too many reports of abuses of health and safety, exploitation and criminal acts of intimidation by unscrupulous gangmasters have surfaced.

**The government ought to recognise that gangmaster voluntary codes are proving inadequate. It is time to legislate for the licensing and enforceable regulation of all gangmasters to ensure proper protection of all workers, be they migrants or indigenous.**

**For further information:**

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