

Calls for the government to begin 'criminal action' against P&O Ferries

Labour has called on the government to begin "criminal action" against P&O Ferries after the firm sacked more than 800 of its workers on the spot last week.

Shadow transport secretary Louise Haigh said the government must "immediately" commence criminal action against P&O Ferries "for their flagrant breach of employment law".

"It should mean unlimited fines, not only for the company but for directors and managers or any of those who are complicit," Ms Haigh added.

The Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union has claimed replacement crews are being paid less than minimum wage.

Labour is calling for all contracts with P&O Ferries owners DP World to be suspended until the matter is resolved.

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Answering Labour's urgent question on the matter in the Commons, Grant Shapps confirmed the government is reviewing all contracts it has with both P&O Ferries and parent company DP World in the wake of the shock firings.

"The way that these 800 loyal and experienced workers were treated by P&O Ferries last week was shameful and utterly unacceptable," the transport secretary said.

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"Of course we understand the financial pressures that many businesses face right now and regretfully and sometimes redundancies are inescapable, but there is no excuse, no excuse for what we saw occur last Thursday."

Mr Shapps added that the first he heard about the situation was "at about 8.30pm in the evening" through a communication with his private office which indicated that "P&O would be

making redundancies the next day".