

House of Commons: Written Statement (HCWS1361)

Home Office

Written Statement made by: **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Migration and Citizenship (Mike Tapp)** on 25 Feb 2026.

The Enforcement of Electronic Travel Authorisation

Today, 25 February 2026, marks a significant milestone in the transition to a fully digital immigration system with the UK moving to full enforcement of its digital 'permission to travel' requirements. Firstly, everyone (except British and Irish citizens and some other exempted cohorts) wishing to travel to the UK will need a 'permission to travel', and this requirement will be enforced. And secondly, from today most visa nationals applying for a visit visa will receive an eVisa only, replacing physical visa vignette stickers.

This marks a further step in the move away from paper-based evidence towards secure, digital records linked to the passport used for travel. Carriers, including airlines are required to check that passengers hold permission to travel through automated checks against Home Office records before boarding.

The permission to travel must be in the form of:

- an [Electronic Travel Authorisation](#) (ETA);
- an [eVisa](#) (a digital record of identity and immigration status), or
- other [acceptable physical proof](#), where permitted.

Wherever possible, the permission will be digitally linked to the passport being used for travel, enabling status to be confirmed quickly and securely. Anyone who has an eVisa must ensure their travel document is linked to their visa via their UKVI account, to ensure the smoothest travel experience. This also applies to those with status under the EU Settlement Scheme and I particularly urge everyone in that group to ensure that their latest passport is linked to their UKVI account.

The benefits of introducing a digital permission to travel requirement are twofold. First, we will know more about people before they travel to the UK, strengthening the security of our border, enabling a more targeted approach to border control with more efficient processing of arrivals. By maximising the use of upstream interventions, we are preventing people who pose a threat to the UK from traveling in the first place, by refusing them permission to travel here.

Second, this approach enables the Government to deliver key innovations through end-to-end digitisation, making it easier for people to come to the UK to live, study, work or visit, thereby boosting the UK economy through tourism, trade, and investment opportunities.

The Home Office continues to promote the ETA scheme and transition from physical immigration status documents to eVisas through a comprehensive programme including media activity, GOV.UK, extensive stakeholder engagement, cross government engagement and targeted

customer communications. In parallel, we have undertaken extensive engagement with carriers to ensure they are prepared for these new requirements.

Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) for non-visa nationals

The ETA scheme was launched in October 2023 with over 19.6m ETAs granted up to September 2025. Phased rollout brought EU nationals into scope in April 2025 and, since then, it has become a universal requirement for all eligible non-visa national visitors, which is now being enforced from today, 25 February 2026. Public and stakeholder communications have been ongoing since 2023 and we continue to update guidance on GOV.UK, work with FCDO posts and engage directly with carriers and the travel and tourism sector.

With the ETA requirement now in force, carriers such as airlines are required to check passengers hold the appropriate permission before they travel. Linked to this, carriers may be liable to a penalty if they bring someone to the UK who does not have the correct documentation or permission. Passengers can also check their ETA status and expiry online: [Check your electronic travel authorisation \(ETA\) - GOV.UK](#).

Dual Nationals

[British citizens](#), including dual nationals, are not eligible for an ETA and should prove their permission to travel and enter the UK border with a valid British passport or a passport containing a Certificate of Entitlement (CoE) to the right of abode. From tomorrow, 26 February 2026, the CoE will be available in digital form, linked to their passport. Without either of these documents, British Citizens risk being refused boarding or may experience delays when travelling to the UK from today, 25 February 2026. Further information: [Electronic travel authorisation \(ETA\): guide for dual citizens - GOV.UK](#)

The nature of British nationality law means there is no central register of British citizens or British dual nationals and therefore no mechanism to directly contact all those who may be affected. We have, however, taken active steps to raise awareness of what this means for dual British citizens. Public information strongly advising dual nationals to travel with a valid UK passport or CoE has been available since October 2024, including official guidance on GOV.UK, and we included guidance for dual citizens in our ETA communications campaign which has been running since 2023. In November 2025, we announced the enforcement of ETA from 25 February 2026, which included information about the requirement for dual citizens: [No permission, no travel: UK set to enforce ETA scheme - GOV.UK](#). We provide explicit written and spoken guidance to people who naturalise or register as British citizens, including through their application and at citizenship ceremonies, and since the start of the year we have also emailed people who have registered or naturalised in the last 10 years where we hold useable contact details.

This supplements our wider updates via GOV.UK, engagement and promotion via Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) networks.

This position is longstanding. Under the Immigration Act 1971, British citizens cannot be granted an ETA, a visa or other immigration permission. To enter the UK as a British citizen, people must evidence their right of abode by presenting a UK passport or a foreign passport endorsed with a CoE. Where all supporting information has been provided, people can expect their UK passport within 3 weeks when applying from the UK, and within 4 weeks for most applications from outside the UK. Where a dual national holds a foreign passport, His Majesty's Passport Office reserves the right to request the original document to support completion of its checks. However, a colour photocopy of the foreign passport will usually suffice to help meet travel needs while the application is in progress.

ETA enforcement does not change this legal framework. What changes from 25 February 2026 is that carriers are now required to apply permission to travel checks consistently for non-visa

nationals, in the same way that carriers already do for visa nationals, to avoid the risk of a penalty. We recognise this represents a change to how some British dual nationals experience pre-departure checks, particularly where they have travelled historically on a non-UK passport. Our approach aligns with that of comparable countries, such as the US and Australia.

Transitional arrangements and temporary measures

We do not plan additional grace periods. The ETA scheme has been rolled out to eligible nationalities since October 2023, and our approach has been clearly communicated throughout. A further transitional phase has been in place since roll out completed in April 2025, meaning the requirement to have an ETA was not strictly enforced by carriers, giving passengers time to prepare.

Alongside this, we have supported carriers to prepare for these changes through sustained engagement, technical readiness work, partner materials, webinars and the introduction of a 24/7 Carrier Support Hub. We have engaged with over 55,000 check-in agents globally to embed these checks in day-to-day operations.

Recognising the potential impact on dual British nationals, we have issued temporary operational guidance to carriers on the acceptance of alternative documentation. This includes carriers accepting, at their discretion, an expired UK passport (issued 1989 or later) alongside a valid non-visa national third country passport, where biographic details match. This is a short-term transitional measure and remains an operational decision for carriers. It does not replace the requirement to hold a valid UK passport or a valid CoE.

Carriers may also contact the Carrier Support Hub, who may be able to confirm British citizenship for those with a digital record on the UK's immigration and passport systems. This service is available to carriers only and our clear advice to passengers remains that they should travel with a valid British passport or CoE to ensure the smoothest experience. Carriers remain responsible for ensuring that passengers are adequately documented for travel; carrier liability requirements remain in force, and carriers may face charges if they transport passengers who do not have the required permission to travel. Carriers also set their own operating processes, and the decision on whether to carry a passenger is their commercial and operational decision.

Emergency Travel Documents remain available for urgent travel in defined circumstances. Adults and children who have previously held a UK passport issued after 1 January 2006 can apply where they need to travel urgently. [Travel urgently from abroad without your UK passport: Who can apply - GOV.UK](#). Where a person has not previously held a UK passport, they can only apply if their urgent travel meets the exceptional circumstances criteria, for example urgent medical reasons or attending the funeral of a close relative. This long-standing arrangement is unaffected by ETA enforcement, but it does not remove the need to hold the correct documentation for future travel.

In line with current practice, on arrival at the UK border, Border Force will continue to assess a person's suitability to enter the UK and may conduct additional checks if required.

We will continue to take a compassionate and pragmatic approach to travellers who experience genuine difficulty while this process settles. The clearest way to ensure a smooth journey remains travelling with a valid UK passport or a CoE to the right of abode.

Transition to eVisas

Over 10 million people are already using secure and convenient eVisas, which are replacing physical immigration status documents such as biometric residence permits (BRPs) and visa vignette stickers in passports. We are now in the final phases of implementation, with eVisas becoming the default evidence of status for most immigration routes to the UK.

From today, 25 February 2026, most visa nationals applying for a visitor visa will receive an eVisa only, replacing physical visa vignette stickers.

These changes streamline the process for visa applicants who now only need to visit the Visa Application Centre (VAC) once to confirm their identity and receive their passport back at the appointment. Decisions will be communicated by email, and for those granted a visa, they will create a [UKVI account](#) to access their eVisa.

Eligible applicants applying for evidence of exemption from immigration control from outside the UK will also receive a digital record of exemption instead of a physical vignette, allowing carriers and UK Border Force to confirm exemption status automatically through existing checks.

By the end of 2026, the Government intends to stop issuing all physical visa vignette stickers in passports, with all successful visa applicants receiving an eVisa. The latest information on the transition to eVisa is available here: [Updates on the move to eVisas - GOV.UK](#)

The enforcement of the ETA requirement, alongside the continued transition to eVisas, reflects our commitment to modernising and further securing the UK border. They also lay the foundations for a contactless UK border in the future.

Members may wish to signpost their constituents to further information about these changes. Supporting materials can be accessed here: [eVisa partner pack](#) and [ETA partner pack](#) including key messages, factsheets and materials that may be shared to amplify these changes.