

News story: New UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services centres open

From today (Friday 2 November), people applying for work or study visas, settlement or citizenship from within the UK will be able to make appointments to use new, modernised and efficient service centres.

The first centre will open in Manchester on Friday 9 November 2018 and will be followed by new centres in Birmingham, Glasgow, Cardiff, Belfast and Croydon. In addition, there will be 50 enhanced service centres nationally, which will be available to customers for a charge, and a premium lounge located in London.

The modernised service will mean that most people applying in the UK will be able to submit their biometric information including photos, fingerprints, and signatures as well as their supporting evidence at a single appointment.

The current system requires an individual to make an application, send their documents to UKVI, who retain them until the application is completed, and enrol their biometrics separately.

To help improve peace of mind for customers using the centres, it will now be possible, in the majority of cases, to take digital copies of evidence meaning that people won't have to hand over important documents, such as passports, while their applications are processed.

The Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes said:

We are committed to delivering a modern, convenient and easy to use service for UKVI customers.

These new service centres located across the country are a key part of our vision for a system that supports its customers and provides peace of mind whilst they are making an application.

The majority of people will now complete their applications online via an intuitive and easy to use system before attending one of the UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services centres (UKVCAS), which will be delivered by commercial partner Sopra Steria.

Customers will be led through an online application process making it clear what they need to do, what supporting evidence they will need and where they need to go to complete their application.

Free appointments will be available for everyone, however, customers will also have the option to purchase added value services such as same day

appointments and [On Demand services](#).

In addition, there will also be 7 dedicated Service and Support Centres (SSC), which will transform the experience for people who need more support with their applications.

Experienced frontline Home Office staff will help those who need extra support to better understand their circumstances and if necessary, take the appropriate safeguarding action.

These SSCs will be in Belfast, Cardiff, Croydon, Glasgow, Liverpool, Sheffield and Solihull, and will open in January 2019.

[Further information on these services](#).

[News story: A Joint Effort – Integrating Advanced Materials onto Military Platforms](#)

This forthcoming Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) competition is looking for innovative joining technologies that enable the use of advanced materials and/or designs on military platforms in land, sea and air environments. This is a parallel call between the UK and Australia.

Many different materials are within scope, including joining combinations of composites, metals, ceramics and polymers. Potential joining solutions should provide enhanced capability through one of the following:

- improved performance through use of new material combinations or structural designs
- improved durability of structures through better joints
- improved ability to maintain joints through the life of the military platform

Phase 1 of the campaign will have £500k available to fund multiple proposals. This campaign will be supported in Australia by the Next Generation Technologies Fund in a parallel competition. It is anticipated that additional funding will be available for further phases.

A competition [event](#) will be held on 28 November 2018 in central London.

This event will allow you to find out more about the competition, as well as meet the DASA team, technical experts from the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, front-line users and potential collaborators. There will also be a chance to book one-to-one sessions with the project team.

If you are interested in attending this event, please [register for an entry ticket](#). Places are limited and so please register as early as possible.

[News story: Progress on health and wellbeing in the Civil Service](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content] Blog by Jonathan Jones, Permanent Secretary of the Government Legal Department, and Civil Service Health and Wellbeing Champion

[News story: What support is available for my small business?](#)

Access finance available to support small businesses

[Start up Loans](#) of up to £25,000 can give you a much-needed boost if you're just starting out or looking to scale up. Or take a look at the [British Business Bank's Finance Hub](#) for more finance options for smaller businesses.

If you are an entrepreneur or small business located in the North of England, the [Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund](#) could provide the funding you need to help your business realise its potential.

Growing ideas

[Innovate UK](#) supports businesses to develop and realise the potential of new ideas through funding and research collaboration. Their [Knowledge Transfer Network](#) also connects you to expertise, finance and markets to commercialise your innovation.

Attract investment and diverse talent

[Venture capital schemes](#) can help you raise money for your company. Our 4 schemes offer tax reliefs to investors, designed to help your business grow by attracting investment.

[Start-up visas](#) and [Innovator visas](#) make it easier for you to access

international talent. Tech Nation offers a dedicated [Tech Nation](#) visa to bring international tech talent to the UK.

Get support and insight for your tech business

[Tech Nation](#) provides programmes to support UK tech businesses, as well as access to free online courses to build digital skills.

Tech Nation's [Data Commons for UK Tech](#) provides a detailed view of the UK's digital economy and is a rich source of market intelligence and insight.

Become more competitive by making a few simple changes

[Be the Business](#) provides practical tools and resources and can help small businesses across the UK supercharge productivity.

Get in touch with your local Growth Hub

[Your Local Growth Hub](#) can connect you to the right business advice and support at a local and national level, no matter what size or sector you're operating in. This is available in England only.

Get advice on selling overseas

If you are a small business invested in or currently selling overseas visit [GREAT](#) for guidance on exporting, access live export opportunities, find an online marketplace to sell your products overseas and access the right finance and insurance to help you win vital international contracts.

Make tax more straightforward

We've made some fundamental changes to the way the tax system works. If you are a VAT-registered business the [Making Tax Digital service](#) will help make sure you get your tax right through the keeping of digital records and using software to submit your VAT return.

Take on an apprentice

Grow your own skilled workforce you need by taking on an apprentice. You can get [government funding](#) to cover some of the cost of training and assessing an apprentice if you're in England.

The government has recently launched a [new website](#) with details about how businesses can make the most of our apprenticeship reforms.

Apply for government contracts

Our [Contracts Finder](#) lets you search for information about government and

agency contracts worth over £10,000 and explore information on previous tenders to understand what opportunities there might be for your business.

If you're having any issues with not being paid on time, the [Small Business Commissioner](#) can provide advice on late and unfair payment, to help you take action and work to resolve disputes.

The free Business Support Helpline can also help you find the right advice and support at all stages of the business journey – whether you're starting out, growing or looking to stay ahead. Find contact details for [your area](#).

Business Representative Organisations (BROs) and UK Trade Associations

Business Representative Organisations are set up to help your business. Each sector has its own Organisation that you can search for online.

Prepare your business for EU exit

The UK will leave the EU on 29 March 2019. Leaving the EU means your business may need to prepare for change.

You can find up to date [information](#) to help you understand how leaving the EU may affect your business and what you can do to get ready.

[Press release: 'Exceptionally rare' 19th century marble sculpture' at risk of export](#)

- Culture Minister steps in to prevent Antonio Canova's 'Bust of Peace', valued at £5.3 million, from export
- Bust deemed to be a significant cultural object symbolising end of Napoleonic era and return of peace to Europe after years of conflict

An original work by one of the greatest 19th century sculptors is at risk of being exported from the UK unless a buyer can be found to match the asking price of £5.3 million.

The white marble 'Bust of Peace', made by Antonio Canova (1757-1822) has been blocked from export by Michael Ellis, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, to provide an opportunity to keep it in the country.

The neo-classical bust, one of a handful of original works by the Italian neoclassical artist that remain outside museum collections, was sold to a

private buyer at Sotheby's in July 2018. Until then, it had been more than 200 years since it had last been seen in public.

The decision to defer the export licence follows a recommendation by the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, administered by The Arts Council. They made their recommendation on the grounds that the sculpture is closely connected with the UK's history and national life.

It can be seen to symbolise the return of peace to Europe after years of struggle and unrest during the Napoleonic era, which culminated in the Battle of Waterloo, where Napoleon was defeated.

Michael Ellis, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, said:

Canova is widely recognised as one of the greatest sculptors of his – or any – era.

The 'Bust of Peace' combines a crucial moment in our history with beauty and elegance, pointing to a more peaceful future ahead. Therefore it is essential that we do our best to save this superb item for the benefit of the nation.

The bust is one of Canova's celebrated 'Ideal Heads:' female heads carved in marble, just under life size, representing a different conception of beauty and presented as gifts to friends and patrons who had helped him.

It was carved between 1814-15 and may have been given to John Campbell, Lord Cawdor, in part to thank him for his help in repatriating art looted from Italy by the French armies during the Napoleonic Wars. It was the first such bust to reach Britain, and the first to be presented to a British patron after Napoleon's defeat. It was displayed at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1817.

Following Lord Cawdor's death in 1821, the bust remained under the ownership of five generations of descendants in his family mansion of Stackpole Court in Pembrokeshire. However by the time the contents of the home were sold at auction in 1962, the bust's significance had been lost. When it was sold, the head was simply described as "a white marble bust of a lady wearing a diadem," without attribution.

The location and storage conditions were unclear for the following 50 years, until its re-emergence at an auction in 2012.

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest member Aidan Weston-Lewis said:

This outstanding bust was probably given by Canova as a token of friendship and gratitude to his most loyal British patron and champion, Lord Cawdor. Over nearly three decades, Cawdor

commissioned several of Canova's most celebrated works, including the reclining and standing versions of Cupid and Psyche, both now in the Louvre.

Due to political circumstances and periods of personal insolvency, he took possession of only a few, although among them was the Amorino now at Anglesey Abbey (National Trust), the first sculpture by Canova to come to Britain. As a testament to the special relationship between a brilliant and innovative British patron and statesman and the greatest artist of his day, every effort should be made to retain the Bust of Peace in the UK".

Canova's works are revered for his subtle artistry, sensitively working the surface of the marble, thereby giving his works a texture unparalleled by any of his contemporaries.