

## [News story: Customer enquiry service changes](#)

How you contact UK Visas and Immigration is changing.

From 1 June, all customer enquiries will be handled by a new commercial partner Sitel UK.

The new contract will see a number of changes for customers. These changes help the government reduce costs and ensure those who benefit directly from the UK immigration system make an appropriate contribution.

The main changes for customers applying from outside the UK are:

- all phone numbers and opening hours will change
- the number of languages offered is reducing to 8 including English
- customers who contact UK Visas and Immigration by email will be charged £5.48

You will need to pay using a credit or debit card for contacting us by email. The charge includes the first email enquiry you send and any follow-up emails to and from the contact centre relating to the same enquiry.

The way you pay to use the telephone service will remain the same using a credit or debit card.

If you do not have access to a credit or debit card, you may choose to use a trusted 3rd party such as an agent or sponsor.

There are no changes to services if you are contacting us from inside the UK.

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## [World news story: Speech by His Royal Highness Prince of Wales in Romania](#)

Check against delivery

Domnule Rector, Doamnelor și Domnilor,

Sunt profund mișcat și foarte recunoscător pentru marea și deosebita onoare pe care mi-o faceți în această după-amiază.

To have a doctorate bestowed on me by the oldest university in Romania, not to say one of the most prestigious in Europe, is very flattering indeed. It

is now almost exactly twenty years since my first visit to this part of your wonderful country, in 1997. In the intervening period I have managed to travel to other parts of Romania, but that first visit to Transylvania made an indelible impression on me. I saw a hilly, wooded and fertile landscape, still cared for by the small-scale farming communities that created them, and an extraordinary cultural continuity – in many villages, the family names are closely associated, historically, with these places – the same families have been caring for the land for hundreds of years.

Since that visit I have grown to appreciate and to love these landscapes and communities more and more.

It is rare, perhaps unique, in Europe to find well preserved and functional, productive landscapes at such a large scale. I was astonished to find how the grasslands are so wonderfully rich in wildflowers, and also in butterflies – with over two hundred butterfly species in Romania, compared to forty in the United Kingdom – other invertebrates and vertebrates, including important wolf, bear and raptor populations. These species all indicate the overall health of the whole ecology of these landscapes. And yet they are very productive. Studies carried out by the European Union show that smaller-scale farms in Romania, and more widely in Europe, are actually twice as productive per hectare than larger-scale farms. These special producers are farming with Nature, but they do need help to obtain a proper value for what they make, and a proper connection to the market. Given an integrated approach to rural development, these problems can be solved and, if they are, the communities will continue to prosper, and to protect wildlife-friendly farming.

All of us in the wider world have a lot to learn from Transylvania's farmed landscapes. They have spiritual as well as social, economic and ecological significance. Does this matter in today's more cynical age when there is such an obsession with "efficiency" and convenience? Yes, it does – because the essential point is that in these landscapes Man is still living in harmony with Nature – a harmony that has been largely lost in most parts of Europe, and with disastrous results to our environment. Here Man produces food in a truly sustainable way, without destroying Nature or fighting Nature, but in partnership with Nature.

□ This is an important theme that I have been trying to stress for many years – to a chorus of scepticism. However, it would seem that the tide is beginning to turn and more and more people can see the costs of the industrialization of landscapes and food production, with a loss of the natural capital that sustains us all. Short-term gains will be followed by the collapse of natural systems in the longer-term. This is a collapse that can already be seen.

In contrast, the Transylvanian farmed landscapes offer many models of sustainable living, food production and biodiversity conservation. Conventional Nature reserves are probably not the answer to saving these special places for posterity, which require an holistic, landscape-scale approach that avoids creating islands of diversity surrounded by damaged lands. The existing richness of animal and plant life, certainly by comparison with other countries in Europe, demonstrates that farming and

biodiversity can indeed survive together to enhance and complement each other.

There is no doubt that grassland is central to this farmed landscape. A long history and continuation of traditional, non-intensive management practices – mixed farming, little or no fertilizer input and low stocking densities – has allowed the great diversity of wildflowers and wildlife to survive. These low-input, permanent grasslands still possess an abundance of wild plants and animals that have disappeared from much of the rest of Europe. As you know far better than me, they yield meat, milk and cheese, and other commercial products such as honey, wild fruits and medicinal plants. It is a buffered, productive ecosystem.

The diversity of grasses and wildflowers, including numerous orchids, wild sages and other mint relatives, and twenty to thirty or more clovers, trefoils, vetches and other legumes, provides quality feed for farm animals. These grasslands represent more or less intact, traditionally managed ecosystems, including soils and soil micro-flora. Pockets of dry steppic grassland on South-facing slopes and the steep hummocks, or *movile*, that are a feature of the Saxon Villages, and damp grassland in valley bottoms with a rich wet meadow flora are especially rich.

They maintain both rich biodiversity and the “goods and services” of a healthy and stable environment. They reduce or prevent soil erosion, they lock up carbon and they soak up rain and slowly release clean water into wells, streams and rivers, providing both flood prevention in wet conditions and a secure water supply in dry periods. The mosaic of wildflower-rich grasslands and adjacent ancient woodlands generate income from tourism, being ideally suited to activities such as mountain bike trails, horse riding, walking, painting and natural history. Food products from this most healthy environment, of high quality and with a distinct regional identity, will increasingly attract consumers prepared to pay premium prices. Honey and jams made locally from wild meadow and woodland edge fruits are literally “bottled biodiversity”...

These farmed landscapes and the villages that support them are at the very heart of Romania’s rural economy and culture. Nevertheless, this valuable ecosystem and its wild plants and wildlife are every bit as threatened as any in the modern world, even if the whole system appears substantially intact. The impressive legacy of the historical Romanian, Saxon and Székely farming communities should surely be integral to future economic growth, and conservationists can help local people and Nature by showing how to combine the best traditional farming practices with innovative technology. It would be a complete tragedy to lose that intangible sense of place, which can happen so easily. Instead, it is vital to ensure that an enhanced rural economy can again provide a good livelihood – and one linked directly to the landscape – for farming communities in Transylvania. And in a countryside that combines natural beauty and a living productive ecosystem...

I have been asked many times why I come so often to Romania, what is it that makes it so special, so attractive?

For me, the answer is clear: you, my Romanian friends; your natural and cultural landscape, your traditions, but also your capacity to innovate and change. What you are after centuries of history – your identity, and what you can do; the energy of change you can mobilize. This is what makes you special in the world.

Your architecture, your beautiful farmland, your biodiversity, your pastures, meadows and orchards, the mosaic of habitats and the diversity of your communities and traditions, in Transylvania and across Romania; all these, together, are a treasure – your treasure to the world.

It seems to me that, sometimes, you are not fully aware of all this. It is easy to forget, lured by the rhythm and challenges of our modern society. When you are looking to the future, please keep these values in mind. They are unique. When you want to modernize, to change, to transform – and Romania has so many things to do, to change, to modernize – I do so hope that you will be able to do it in a way that would give more value to your treasure; that will preserve your communities and your landscapes; that would bring what you are already into what you want to become.

I am always amazed by the exceptional creativity of your youth – in IT, research and innovation, creative arts. This is part of your treasure as well.

Your brand as a country is precisely this blend of values and authentic traditions; the architecture, the taste of your food, the ancestral fabric of your communities, of natural values; the unique biodiversity, the landscapes – as well as your capacity to innovate. This is what makes you special. This is why I always return to Romania and this is why a part of my soul is always here.

Modern life doesn't mean to forget the values of the past and to replace everything with new things, but to combine in a smart way the fundamental values of our cultures and traditions with innovation and new technologies – without severing the bond between human society and Nature.

Romania has a fascinatingly diverse and ancient history inherited from the Dacians, and on which to build a life based on a harmonious relationship with Nature. During previous centuries, other civilizations enriched the local one with cultures, traditions and architecture based on the same principle of respect for a harmonious relationship with Nature. This is a richness which could be an asset for modern Romania. It would be wonderful, indeed, if schools and universities in Romania could cultivate the idea that Nature and living traditions are an asset for modern life. That is the only way to build a sustainable material and spiritual future – and one in which Romania would be uniquely placed to innovate without ever losing her precious soul.

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# News story: Prince Harry unveils the UK team for the Invictus Games 2017

Prince Harry joined the 2017 UK team of Wounded, Injured and Sick (WIS) Service personnel and veterans for their first official team photograph at the Tower of London today. Following the unveiling, Prince Harry, who is patron of the Invictus Games Foundation, joined competitors at a reception in Plaisterers Hall.

The Invictus Games harness the power of sport to inspire recovery and generate wider understanding and respect for those who serve their country. Getting involved in sport provides significant physical and mental health benefits including increasing self-confidence and psychological empowerment.

More than 300 WIS personnel and veterans applied for one of 90 places available on the team. Selection criteria included the benefit the Invictus Games will give an individual as part of their recovery, combined with performance and commitment to training. 62% of the team are new to the Invictus Games with only 8% having competed in the two previous games, London 2014 and Orlando 2016.

The UK team will join 16 other nations at the third Invictus Games from 23-30 September in Toronto, Canada. They will compete across 12 sports: athletics, archery, wheelchair basketball, road cycling, powerlifting, indoor rowing, wheelchair rugby, swimming, sitting volleyball, wheelchair tennis, the Jaguar Land Rover Driving Challenge, and a new sport for 2017, golf.

The 2017 UK team captain has been named as former Army Major Bernie Broad. He served in the Grenadier Guards for around 30 years and due to injuries sustained in an explosion in Afghanistan 2009 lost both his legs below the knee.

He said:

The Invictus Games are empowering and inspire all of us as competitors to be the best version of ourselves. It allows us to be judged on what we can achieve, rather than what we can't.

To simply be selected for the UK Team was an amazing achievement. To then be further selected as the UK Team Captain filled me with such immense pride and it is a huge privilege to be given this honour.

Between now and the Games, training will take place across the country at recovery centres and other external venues to train and develop the team.

The UK delegation to the Invictus Games Toronto 2017 is being delivered by a partnership comprising The Ministry of Defence (MOD), Help for Heroes, and The Royal British Legion.

The full team list can be found on the [Help for Heroes website](#).

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## **[News story: UK Armed Forces recognised for support to UN Peacekeeping](#)**

Today (29 May) is the annual International Day of UN Peacekeepers, which was marked by a number of events in London on Wednesday.

The day also commemorates those who have lost their lives while serving on Peacekeeping operations. Over 100 UK service personnel make up part of more than 3,500 personnel from around the world who have died serving as UN Peacekeepers since 1948, and they were remembered during a ceremony and wreath-laying at the Cenotaph.

Commander of Joint Forces Command General Sir Chris Deverell and Foreign Office Minister for Asia and Pacific Alok Sharma laid wreaths during the event, and wreaths were also laid by representatives from nearly 100 Embassies and High Commissions, the Chief Inspector of the Constabulary, UN Veterans Association, widows and schoolchildren.

The Band of the Welsh Guards performed at the wreath-laying, and Wednesday's events also included a Conference at the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI), opened by Vice Chief of the Defence Staff General Sir Gordon Messenger.

Vice Chief of the Defence Staff General Sir Gordon Messenger opened a conference at the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies. Crown Copyright.

Over 690 UK military personnel are currently deployed in support of multiple UN Peacekeeping missions, the majority in South Sudan, Cyprus and Somalia. The largest of these deployments, with nearly 400 British troops now deployed, is in South Sudan to support the UN's mission in country.

Commander of Joint Forces Command General Sir Chris Deverell said:

Today, on the International Day of UN Peacekeepers, we pay tribute to the 3,500 personnel from over 120 countries who have died while serving the United Nations. When peacekeepers deploy they do so on behalf of the international community and in support of efforts by previously warring parties to find a path to peace. I am grateful to each person who deploys, and very proud that over 690 members of the UK Armed Forces are currently deployed as part of this effort.

The UK contribution to the UN Mission in South Sudan includes engineering tasks and the construction and running of a temporary field hospital, to be followed by a permanent facility which will provide medical care for over 1,800 UN Peacekeepers and UN staff.