

News story: ePassport gates to ease travel for passengers from more countries

From summer 2019, eligible travellers from Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand and the United States will be able to use the ePassport gates at 14 ports, both in the UK and at Eurostar terminals at Brussels and Paris.

The ePassport gates expansion will provide an automated route through the border for an estimated additional 6 million international travellers arriving in the UK every year. The move is the next step in the government's continuing programme of work to roll out digital technology at the border and is expected to significantly improve the flow of passengers at busy airports such as Heathrow.

ePassport gates, which are currently available for British and EU nationals, provide a faster route through the border as they allow eligible passengers to be processed quickly and securely. All passengers are automatically checked against Border Force systems and watchlists. The technology also allows Border Force officers to focus on other priority work such as identifying potential victims of trafficking.

Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes said:

We want to encourage people who boost our economy through tourism and business to travel to the UK, while at the same time maintaining border security. Expanding the number of nationalities eligible to use ePassport gates supports this aim.

Increasing the use of digital technology is part of our ambitious programme to improve the passenger experience and meet the challenge of increased passenger numbers.

ePassport gates use facial recognition technology to compare the passenger's face to the digital image recorded in their passport. The system is monitored by Border Force officers and anyone rejected by the gates will be sent to an alternative channel to have their passport checked.

There are now 259 ePassport gates in operation at 14 ports around the UK and juxtaposed control locations. The gates can be used by those aged 18 and over, and who are travelling using a biometric or 'chipped' passport. Those aged 12 to 17 years old, and who are accompanied by an adult, are also able to use them.