News story: 'Outdated' landing cards to be withdrawn as part of digital border transformation

Non-European travellers have been required to fill out a landing card with basic information about themselves and their travel since 1971.

But under proposals published today, the outdated paper-based system, which costs the public around £3.6 million each year, will be replaced as part of Border Force's ongoing digital transformation of border controls. The withdrawal of landing cards will not result in the loss of any data that is used for security checks.

All passengers arriving from outside the EU will continue to be checked against the variety of police, security and immigration watch lists which are used to verify the identity and confirm the status of every passenger arriving at UK airports.

Immigration Minister Brandon Lewis said:

> We are modernising border technology to ensure Border Force staff stop dealing with outdated paperwork and can continue to focus on security and protecting the public.
>
> In addition, this change will improve the experience for arriving passengers so they get an even better welcome when they land in the UK.

The changes will also free up staff and enable Border Force to better deploy their resources.

At the same time, the changes will improve the experience for travellers as passengers will no longer need to fill out the paper cards while on board the flight or in queues at airports and ports.

As a result it is expected that queue lengths will be shortened and passenger flows improved, which has been welcomed by Heathrow airport. Last year, 16.2 million non-EU passengers arrived in the UK.

The proposals are part of the Home Office's ongoing transformation at the border which is enhancing Border Force's ability both to facilitate legitimate travel and ensure the security of the border.

This programme of work has already seen the introduction of 232 e-gates at 21 ports and since June has seen more than a million passengers use them each week.

This has enabled Border Force officers to work on other security and intelligence matters.

The changes are in addition to the ongoing Digital Services at the Border (DSAB) programme, which is modernising technology at the border to improve intelligence gathering on goods and passengers and increase security.

Border Force has also increased the use of Advance Passenger Information, with systems in place to receive data on 100% of scheduled flights for all international journeys to and from the UK.

Today's proposals have been welcomed by industry, who will no longer be required to purchase and distribute landing cards to passengers.

Heathrow CEO John Holland-Kaye said:

> We warmly welcome this proposed change which would give visitors to Britain an improved experience, whilst maintaining a secure border into the UK.
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> In post-Brexit Britain, it will be even more important to show we are open for business and make sure that we give investors, tourists and students a great welcome to our country.
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> We look forward to continuing to work closely with the new Immigration Minister and Border Force over the coming years to keep improving the passenger experience at the UK's border.

Before implementing the proposed changes, the Home Office is today (Saturday 5 August) opening a 4-week consultation with carriers, ports and those that use statistics gathered from landing card data.

It is expected the changes will come into effect in the autumn.