



<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Correspondence Report</b>
<b>Committee Report Submitted To:</b>	Leisure & Development Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	19 November 2024
<b>For Decision or For Information</b>	For Information
<b>For discussion In Committee</b>	No

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)</b>	
Strategic Theme	Local Economy
Outcome	Council contributes to an increasing tourism spend
Lead Officer	Director of Leisure & Development

<b>Budgetary Considerations</b>	
Cost of Proposal	n/a
Included in Current Year Estimates	<b>YES/NO</b>
Capital/Revenue	n/a
Code	n/a
Staffing Costs	n/a

<b>Legal Considerations</b>	
Input of Legal Services Required	N/A
Legal Opinion Obtained	N/A

<b>Screening Requirements</b>	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

## **1.0 Purpose of Report**

**The purpose of this report is to present Correspondence for Members consideration.**

**2.0** The following items are listed:

### **2.1 Correspondence from the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance (NITA) regarding the roll out of the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) to all non-visa national countries (Dated 31 October 2024)**

The NITA has secured a meeting with the Minister for Immigration, Seema Malhotra, on 13th November to discuss concerns they have about the introduction of the ETA and the affect it will have on visitor numbers.

The draft letter included outlines these concerns, potential impact on the tourism economy along with a proposed solution.

Council may wish to consider writing a letter of support for the ETA exemption as proposed.



**Seema Malhotra, MP,**  
**Minister for Immigration and Citizenship**  
Home Office,  
2 Marsham Street,  
London, SW1P 4DF

Dear Minister Malhotra,

The Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance (NITA) represents the diverse sectors that drive the tourism economy in Northern Ireland. On behalf of our members, we are writing to express our serious concerns regarding the economic impact of the upcoming Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) requirement.

Our primary concern is the adverse effect the ETA will have on the 70% of international visitors<sup>1</sup> who enter Northern Ireland via the land border. The anticipated administrative burden and legal uncertainties this measure introduces risks a significant decline in visitor numbers. This trend is already evident, with tour operators beginning to exclude Northern Ireland from their itineraries starting for 2025.

Tourism is one of the six key areas of cooperation outlined in the Good Friday Agreement. For over 20 years, Tourism Ireland has promoted Northern Ireland overseas as part of a single, unified Island of Ireland destination, supported by more than £1 billion in cross-border promotional investment. In the current economic climate, with the cost-of-living crisis impacting domestic markets, international tourism is essential to sustaining and growing our industry. Our sector has shown resilience, emerging from the pandemic with determination to recover and expand. However, seamless travel within the island of Ireland is critical, and the introduction of the ETA for major international markets, such as the USA and Europe, places 20% of total tourism spend—amounting to approximately £200-£250 million—at considerable risk.

It's important to note that this estimate does not fully account for the economic impact of day trips, which are not consistently reported for Northern Ireland. Given the short distance from Dublin to Belfast, many independent travellers and tour operators include Northern Ireland as a key day-trip destination. NITA anticipates that such day trips would be the first casualty should the ETA become mandatory for border crossings.

This situation is unsustainable, especially given increased business costs, including higher Employer National Insurance Contributions, lower thresholds for contributions, and a rising National Living Wage. Tourism businesses must be given the opportunity to maximise turnover and profitability to sustain and create jobs. Spending by international tourists far exceeds that of visitors from domestic markets, and we must avoid erecting barriers that could dissuade these high-value travellers from visiting Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland is unique within the UK, sharing the only UK land border with an EU member state. Many overseas visitors are unaware that Ireland comprises two jurisdictions and may not realise they are crossing into the UK when they travel to Northern Ireland.

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<sup>1</sup> promotable visitors include holiday makers, those visiting family and friends, conference, trade/fair/exhibition including those travelling as part of a tour group or travelling independently.

There are no visible immigration checks at the border, and visitors will not be alerted to the ETA requirement. However, under the current legislation, visitors who unknowingly fail to obtain an ETA face serious legal consequences.

The tourism industry in Northern Ireland, represented by NITA, is united in its opposition to the ETA requirement for the small numbers (in UK terms) crossing the land border into Northern Ireland. We believe that tourism in Northern Ireland is an unintended casualty of this legislation, and we proposed a targeted solution to the previous government. This proposal, which advocates for an exemption for non-visa national visitors entering Northern Ireland via the land border, garnered support from the Shadow Secretary of State, at the time, and all Northern Ireland political parties. Additionally, we have received support from the House of Lords Justice and Home Affairs Committee and the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly, all recognising the impact on tourism and the need for a solution that preserves seamless travel.<sup>2</sup>

We welcome your planned meeting with the NI Minister for the Economy, Conor Muphy MLA, on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024, and we urgently request your serious consideration of our proposed exemption.

With the ETA rollout imminent, swift action is essential to safeguard the tourism industry and economy of Northern Ireland from unintended consequences.

Yours sincerely,

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<sup>2</sup> House of Lords Justice and Home Affairs Committee Inquiry  
<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/44826/documents/222689/default/>  
British Irish Parliamentary Assembly report - [British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly | 63rd British-Irish Parliamentary](#)