

Baroness Wilcox

Parliamentary Secretary for Business,
Innovation & Skills

The Viscount Waverley
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

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You tabled the Parliamentary Question below, and Lord Shutt of Greetland said that I would write with the substantive answer.

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effect of (a) restrictions on access to the United Kingdom, and (b) the ease of applying for entry visas to the United Kingdom, on attracting trade, investment and tourism to the United Kingdom. HL1783

This Government is committed to introducing a limit on the number of non-EU nationals coming to live and work in the UK. On 28 June the Home Secretary published a focused consultation document containing proposals for the mechanism through which a limit will be operated. On the same day she commissioned the independent Migration Advisory Committee to provide advice on the level of the limit in its first year of operation.

The UK visa operation meets the UK Border Agency's strategic objectives of protecting the UK border and of taking fast and fair decisions, which are consistent with the needs of trade and investment. The performance of the visa service against its customer service standards is published online at www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas. The UK Border Agency seeks to provide a first class service to legitimate travellers and migrants, and is developing a range of premium services which will help meet the needs of businessmen.

UKTI figures on the UK's inward investment performance for 2009/10 showed that the UK had attracted 1,619 investment projects, 1,024 from companies headquartered outside the EU. The United Kingdom is rated the most attractive location for investment in Europe (European Attractiveness Survey 2010, Ernst&Young); at US\$1.1 trillion the United Kingdom's capital stock of foreign direct investment is one of the highest three in the world - equalled by France, exceeded by the USA (UN Conference on Trade and Development figures, 2010). In 2009/10 UKTI assisted over 23,000 companies to develop their international trade capabilities.

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In the context of tourism, we want to ensure that we maximise the opportunity of the 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games to create a lasting economic legacy. While protecting our borders remains an overriding priority, this will mean looking at our pre-entry and on-entry arrangements for visa nationals to ensure that they are as user-friendly as possible. UKBA and DCMS are looking closely at the scope for doing so.

I will arrange for a copy of this letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

best wishes
Judith

BARONESS WILCOX