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6 April 2022

Dear Lord Hair,

Nationality and Borders Bill: Lords Report Stage 8 March 2022

At Report stage of the Nationality and Borders Bill, I committed to writing to you about the potential impact the UK's Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme might have on Rally Ireland.

As I understand it, Rally Ireland last took place in 2009 as part of the World Rally Championship (WRC) calendar which is a global rally competition.

If another WRC event, such as Rally Ireland, was to take place in the UK again, a participant could use the provisions for sportspersons in the visitor route(s) to enter the UK, providing they meet the eligibility requirements. Standard visitors can stay in the UK for up to six months. Under the Standard visitor route a sports person may:

- o take part in a sports tournament or sports event as an individual or part of a team; and
- o make personal appearances and take part in promotional activities; and
- o take part in trials provided they are not in front of a paying audience; and
- o take part in short periods of training provided they are not being paid by a UK sporting body; and
- o join an amateur team or club to gain experience in a particular sport if they are an amateur in that sport.

Alternatively, it might be more appropriate for a participant to enter under the Permitted Paid Engagement visitor route, which is for experts in their field, coming to the UK to undertake specific paid engagements, for up to one month.

Those who are non-visa nationals will not have to obtain a visa prior to travel to the UK as a Standard visitor or under the Permitted Paid Engagement visitor route but would instead require an ETA to travel to the UK. As now, those who are visa nationals would have to obtain an entry clearance in order to travel to and enter the UK. These persons will not require an ETA.

At present, non-visa nationals (including EEA citizens) coming to the UK for up to six months as visitors (and in limited other categories) can travel to the UK solely on the basis of their nationality, evidenced by their passport or other travel document. This information is sent to the Government by the majority of carriers as Advance

Passenger Information shortly before the individual embarks on their journey. This means that UK border control and law enforcement authorities have less information and time to assess the risk posed by most non-visa nationals in advance of their arrival in the UK. The ETA scheme will, therefore, enhance the Government's ability to screen people in advance of arrival and prevent the travel of those who pose a threat to the UK.

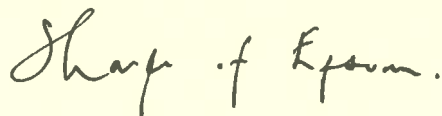
There are several countries that already operate similar systems, such as the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, meaning that it is already a familiar concept to many travellers.

I recognise this will be a change for many travellers. The Government is therefore committed to ensuring that the process for obtaining an ETA will be quick and light touch in order to reduce any potential burden on travellers. The ETA Scheme will be fully in place by the end of 2024. Prior to this launch, the Government will launch a wide ranging and comprehensive communications campaign to ensure that the ETA requirement is communicated clearly. We will work across government, utilising internal and external stakeholders and a variety of communication channels to ensure the communications campaign tackles any misunderstanding about the requirements to travel to Northern Ireland.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to explain, again, the Government's position on the application of the ETA scheme on the Northern Ireland/Ireland border. As now, individuals arriving in the UK, including those crossing the land border into Northern Ireland, need to continue to enter in line with the UK's immigration framework, including the requirement to obtain an ETA when it is introduced. For example, visa nationals are required to obtain a visa for the UK when travelling via Ireland, in order to lawfully enter the UK. This is a well-established requirement, and we are simply extending this same principle to individuals requiring an ETA.

I hope you find this information useful.

I will place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sharpe of Epsom".

LORD SHARPE OF EPSOM OBE