

Change of journey fees waived for students travelling home for Christmas

News story

Admin fees for student to rearrange rail travel between 3 to 9 December 2020 suspended.



- government suspends admin fees to enable students to rearrange journeys during the 'student travel window' of 3 to 9 December
- students are being asked to travel home during this window to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus and protect their families and communities

Students who had already booked train tickets to travel home for Christmas before the announcement of the student travel window can now rebook their tickets to travel between 3 to 9 December (2020) without paying additional fees.

Students who bought an Advance ticket before 11 November (2020) for a date of travel after 9 December can now change their Advance tickets to travel during the window without paying a change of journey fee of up to £10.

Flexible tickets such as Off Peak or Anytime can already be rebooked to another date without payment of an admin fee.

The window from 3 to 9 December, coinciding with the end of the winter term, ensures that students can return home once the national lockdown restrictions have been lifted whilst minimising the risk of transmission of the virus to others.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Students will be eager to be at home with their families after an unprecedented autumn term, and travelling during this window enables them to do so as safely as possible.

By waiving change of journey fees, they can now rebook their tickets without being left out of pocket.

This is an [extension of temporary measures introduced on 26 October \(2020\)](#) allowing train operators and independent rail retailers to temporarily waive the usual change of journey admin fee for Advance tickets where passengers could not travel due to local COVID-19 restrictions.

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Changes to the UK Visa Application Process in Sudan

News story

On 30 November 2020, UK Visas and Immigration's global commercial partner for UK visa services, TLScontact, will take over the running of our Visa Application Centre in Sudan.



On 30 November 2020, UK Visas and Immigration's global commercial partner for UK visa services, TLScontact, will take over the running of our Visa Application Centre in Sudan. The Visa Application Centre will move from its current location at the British Embassy to different premises in Khartoum. The Visa Application Centre and provision of UKVI's front-end services will be managed in Sudan by Remoggo at the following address:

New Visa Application Centre Address
Floor 9
Byblos Bank Africa Tower
El Mek Nimir Avenue
Khartoum

Date of Relocation: 30 November 2020

The Visa Application Centre will be open every week day between 0800 – 1530hrs.

In conjunction with this move, our application process will change. The new customer journey will be as follows:

- UK visa customers complete their applications online at <https://pos.tlscontact.com/>
- All customers in Sudan will now need to make payment of the appropriate visa fee online, in US Dollars, by using a credit or debit card, when they make their application.
- After the visa application has been made, customers will be automatically directed to the TLScontact website to make an appointment at the new Visa Application Centre. *Customers can choose a free appointment and upload their supporting documents directly to the application system. They then attend the VAC to provide their biometrics as usual.
- Customers can choose an assisted appointment, paying a small fee to TLScontact for them to assist them with the document scanning and submission stage. They then attend the VAC to be assisted with final submission, and provide their biometrics as usual.
- There will be no changes in our processing times – UK Visas and Immigration will continue to process visa applications in South Africa in line with global customer service standards. All UK visa applications will continue to be decided by UK Visas and Immigration staff in a fair and objective process. Staff at the Visa Application Centre have no influence at all over the outcome of any visa application.

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PM call with Sultan of Oman: 24 November 2020

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to Sultan Haitham bin Tariq al Said of Oman.



The Prime Minister spoke to Sultan Haitham bin Tariq al Said of Oman this morning, to discuss regional security, trade and the recent progress on coronavirus vaccines.

He reiterated the UK's strong commitment to Oman and pledged to build on our long-standing partnership under the Sultan's new leadership.

The leaders spoke about the crisis in Yemen, and the Prime Minister commended Oman's efforts to bring the parties together and reach a negotiated solution to the conflict.

They also discussed the UK and Oman's collaboration on security and defence, noting the new investment in the UK's logistics hub at Duqm Port.

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[New British Ambassador presents his credentials to the President of Paraguay](#)

World news story

HMA Ramin Navai presented his credentials to President Mario Abdo Benitez as the UK's new Ambassador to Paraguay.



From left to right: Ambassador Ramin Navai, President Mario Abdo and Foreign Minister Federico González

Today, the new British Ambassador to Paraguay Ramin Navai presented his credentials to the President of Paraguay Mario Abdo Benitez, and reaffirmed the UK's friendship and support for Paraguay.

The ceremony for the presentation of credential letters took place in the Independence Hall of the Presidential Palace. President Mario Abdo, accompanied by Minister of Foreign Affairs Federico Gonzalez, also received the credentials from the Ambassadors of France and Japan.

The ceremony began with the HMA Ramin Navai's presentation. Ambassador Emmanuel Coucher of France followed, closing with Ambassador Yoshie Nakatani Otsuke of Japan.

President Mario Abdo received credentials from HMA Ramin Navai

After the protocolar ceremony, the new representatives had a brief exchange with President Abdo. HMA Ramin Navai said:

Our countries have a great history of collaboration and we share values that today allow us to have a true and deep friendship.

As British Ambassador I will do everything within my power to continue strengthening the relationship, working with you and your government in pursuit of the prosperity of both our nations.

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Geospatial Commission outlines actions to boost UK's geospatial ecosystem

Today the Geospatial Commission has published its [‘Enhancing the UK’s Geospatial Ecosystem’](#) report. This report outlines the actions needed to nurture the growing UK geospatial economy and realise the vision set out in the [UK’s Geospatial Strategy](#). The recommendations are based on the findings of an independent research study by Frontier Economics into the state of the location data market in the UK, also published today.

Use of location data, also known as geospatial data, is growing across many sectors and industries. Businesses can and do use location data as both a foundational building block, such as in the housing and transport sectors, and within cutting edge technology and data science techniques, such as in the financial services and marketing industries.

The Geospatial Commission’s recommendations focus on three key areas: improving data access; maintaining public trust and driving business adoption. Success requires a whole system and collaborative approach, with action required across the public sector to overcome the barriers and embrace the breadth of opportunities that better geospatial data provides.

Sir Andrew Dilnot, Geospatial Commission Chair, said

Data about location is increasingly valuable to businesses throughout the UK economy, and it is important that the right conditions are in place to support its efficient access, trusted use and swift adoption. The Geospatial Commission has outlined key recommendations and actions, and looks forward to working with key partners across the public sector, to ensure that these conditions are enabled.

I am grateful to Frontier Economics for their thoughtful and rigorous analysis of the UK’s geospatial data market, which takes a unique approach to identifying the full impact of geospatial data throughout the UK economy and is the main basis for the Geospatial Commission’s recommendations.

Background

The Geospatial Commission has published its [‘Enhancing the UK’s Geospatial Ecosystem’](#) report. It outlines areas for action to nurture the growing UK geospatial economy, and is based on the findings of an independent research study by Frontier Economics into the state of the location data market in the UK, also published today.

The report highlights the following three areas and six recommendations that require action now to secure the full potential of location data to the UK:

Improving access to location data – Data holders should consider the public good as a main rationale when making decisions about access to location data.

Action 1: The Geospatial Commission will include the objective that ‘data holders consider the public good in decisions about access to location data’ in its forthcoming guidelines for measuring the value of location data, and for the ethical use of location data and technology in both the private and public sector.

Action 2: Competition regulators, including a future Digital Markets Unit and organisations within the Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum, should consider the potential public good arising from the sharing and reuse of location data when evolving their regulatory approach for unlocking competition in digital markets.

Maintaining public trust in how location data is used – There should be an informed public discourse considering the benefits arising from use of location data and the potential risks to individual privacy.

Action 3: The Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) should provide further clarity on the distinction between personal and non-personal location data.

Action 4: The Geospatial Commission will lead an informed public discourse about the benefits and risks of new applications of location data, starting with a new programme of deliberative public engagement.

Driving location data adoption – Organisations should recognise the additional value that location data can deliver for their business.

Action 5: The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) should further incorporate location data capability as an essential component of their programmes for increasing growth, innovation and productivity within the UK economy.

Action 6: The Government Commercial Function should embed provisions within appropriate government contracts and spend approvals to require valuable location data, generated either directly or as a by-product of the provision of other goods and services, to be retained and made available for appropriate reuse by the government.

Frontier Economics and the Geospatial Commission are grateful to Sir Edward Troup, Sir Ian Diamond, Tera Allas CBE, Amelia Fletcher CBE and John Pullinger CB for their comments as part of the Market Study Expert Panel.