



**BY EMAIL**

**Rt Hon Priti Patel MP**  
**Home Secretary**

**Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP**  
**Secretary of State for Transport**

11 March 2021

Dear Ministers,

**Heathrow Passenger Queues**

We were very disturbed to learn about the extraordinary length of time it now takes for passengers arriving at Heathrow Airport to enter the UK.

The Home Affairs Select Committee was told by Heathrow, that the new COVID-19 regulations have resulted in queues at the border of up to six hours. This creates a terrible experience for international visitors and, if not remedied, could undermine the positive global reputation that Britain is establishing as a result of the Government's extremely successful vaccine programme.

International visitors, both tourists and businesspeople, are vital to the UK's economic recovery and growth. In London's West End they were responsible, in 2019, for over 50% of our businesses' £9 billion turnover despite being just 25% of our visitors.

It is very concerning that, even at the relatively low levels of international travel, Border Force do not have the resources to manage the new systems that the Government has put in place. While we are not questioning the need for these new measures, it is clear that they must be accompanied by sufficient resources to prevent them creating these unacceptable levels of queuing.

As passenger numbers start to grow there is clearly a risk that the system, which appears to be already at its limits, will simply not be able to cope.

Hopefully the need for these extra measures is temporary, but they should be matched by temporary additional resources.

We ask you to address this issue as a matter of urgency and seek ways to return passenger flow through the airport to its normal standard, whether by diverting any security-related resources currently underused due to the lockdown or by integrating the new requirements into the existing E-gate system.

As Britain starts its economic recovery, and establishes its new position in the world, it would be most unhelpful if international visitors' first experience on arrival creates such a damaging and unwelcoming impression of our country.

Yours sincerely

**Sir Peter Rogers**  
**CHAIRMAN**