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The Royal Commonwealth Society and partners launch campaign to restore visa-free travel for South Africans visiting the UK

The Royal Commonwealth Society and partners will today launch a grassroots campaign which aims to restore visa-free travel for South Africans visiting the UK.

The launch will take place at The National Liberal Club in London with expected attendance by over 50 members of the South African diaspora in the UK, as well as representatives from the campaign's key partners.

The campaign, which centres around a [petition](#), urges the UK and South Africa governments to work together in returning to a visa-free system for South Africans visiting the UK for tourism or business. It will run until February when the petition will be delivered to officials at No. 10 Downing Street.

Tim Hewish, Director of Policy and Research at The Royal Commonwealth Society said: "We encourage the 200,000 South Africans living in the UK to sign this petition and share it widely with their friends and family in Britain and in South Africa. By doing so we will show both governments that there is growing public support for this change."

Since 2008, South Africans wishing to visit the UK have had to pay £87 (1,477 ZAR) for a six-month visa, or £330 for a two-year visa. Put off by the mounting costs of travel, one outcome has been a marked drop in South Africans visiting the UK. In 2015, Britain welcomed 30% less, roughly 100,000 fewer South Africans to its shores than in 2006.

But it's not just South Africans wishing to visit family or friends in the UK who are losing out. The cost to the UK economy is estimated at £128 million and 2,370 jobs.

Leading anti-apartheid campaigner, Lord Peter Hain said: "A return to visa-free travel would help rebuild bonds between families, as well as directly boost UK tourism by attracting fresh numbers of South Africans, and restore visitor numbers to 2006 levels of over 350,000."

Haniff Hoosen MP, Shadow Minister of Home Affairs in South Africa said: "Historically, there have been very strong ties between our two countries. It does not make sense that goods produced in these two countries can pass freely but the visitors cannot ... I will continue to advance the interests and benefits of this campaign in the South African parliament..."

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THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY

NOTES TO EDITORS:

View the Change.org petition: [Restore visa-free travel for South Africans to the UK](#)

Download the two-page campaign factsheet: <https://www.thercs.org/assets/Research-/RCS-SouthAfricaVisa-WEB.pdf>

The Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) founded in 1868, is a network of individuals and organisations committed to improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens across the world. Through youth empowerment, education and advocacy, the RCS promotes the value and values of the Commonwealth. www.thercs.org

Partners:

South African Chamber of Commerce www.southafricanchamber.co.uk

The South African www.thesouthafrican.com

Sable Group www.sable-group.com

Philip Gamble & Partners www.philipgamble.co.uk

South African Diaspora United www.sadiaspora.org.uk

The campaign is supported and promoted by Democratic Alliance Abroad UK www.da-abroad.org

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