



03/04/2017

**PRESS RELEASE: South Africa visitor visa petition handed in to No. 10 Downing Street with 12,000 signatures**

The Royal Commonwealth Society, with its supporting partners, visited 10 Downing Street to submit a public petition on restoring visa-free travel for South Africans visiting the UK. The business and diaspora-backed campaign received positive support with 12,000 signatures from people across the UK and South Africa.

Since 2008, South Africans visiting the UK have been subject to expensive visa requirements which discourage them making the trip. The cost of such a visa has upset many South Africans that need to visit the UK for business, to see family, or even for a holiday.

Comments recorded during the campaign highlight the levels of frustration:

Nick from Johannesburg said: "I own multiple businesses in the U.K. Having to send my staff over for meetings and business training has become a hassle. It is unreasonable that a modern South Africa, that is part of the Commonwealth, has these restrictions."

Andrew from Port Elizabeth told us: "I need to travel to the UK for business reasons soon, and these visa restrictions make things really difficult."

Lynette from Potchefstroom explained: "We lived in the UK for two years. I studied there. We have friends in the UK. We would like to visit them more often. Visa regulations, the price, and the effort of traveling to Johannesburg for visa applications makes it difficult to travel to the UK."

Sean from Oudtshoorn remarked: "I am a travel agent and business has dropped since we needed visas."

A knock-on effect has seen the annual numbers visiting the UK drop from 351,000 in 2006 to 231,000 in 2015. South African visitors to the UK spent £246m in 2015. Had the UK retained its 2006 South African visitor numbers it would have resulted in an extra £128m per annum as well as an estimated extra 2,000 tourism-related jobs.

The Society's Director of Policy & Research, Tim Hewish, said: "Today is a symbolic moment for our campaign outside what is regarded as the most famous door in the world. I want to thank each and every person who signed the petition. This year the UK and South Africa will have their latest bilateral meeting. At that event we want both sides to acknowledge the campaign's strength of support and discuss workable solutions for a return to visa-free travel that is safe and secure."





THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY

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**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](http://www.thercs.org)

**Partners:**

South African Chamber of Commerce [www.southafricanchamber.co.uk](http://www.southafricanchamber.co.uk)

The South African [www.thesouthafrican.com](http://www.thesouthafrican.com)

Sable Group [www.sable-group.com](http://www.sable-group.com)

Philip Gamble & Partners [www.philipgamble.co.uk](http://www.philipgamble.co.uk)

South African Diaspora United [www.sadiaspora.org.uk](http://www.sadiaspora.org.uk)

The campaign is supported and promoted by Democratic Alliance Abroad UK [www.da-abroad.org](http://www.da-abroad.org)

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