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NEW RULES FOR BUSINESS VISITORS

New rules to safeguard the visitor route into the UK from abuse and keep Britain an attractive place to do business were published by the Government today.

Under new rules visa nationals wishing to come to the UK on business for up to six months must apply for a dedicated new business visa. Non-visa nationals do not require a visa when travelling under this category. Applicants will need to demonstrate they will be undertaking business activity including:

- attending meetings or conferences;
- arranging deals, negotiating or signing trade agreement or contracts;
- undertaking fact-finding missions, checking details or goods; and
- conducting site visits and promotional activities.

In June new visa routes for business, tourist and family visitors were announced in a shake-up of Britain's short-term visa system. The Statement of Intent published today sets out in more detail how the new business visa will work.

Border and Immigration Minister Phil Woolas said:

"Now we are introducing an Australian-style points system for selective migration, it makes sense to tighten visit visas at the same time.

"These changes will help create a fairer Britain with fair treatment for those who play by the rules, but tough action against those who break the law.

"We want the UK to stay open and attractive to both business and visitors. At the same time we are determined to deliver a system of border security which is among the most secure in the world."

Also today, the Home Office set out further detail on two new visitor routes for sportspeople and entertainers, recognising the important contribution these individuals make to British cultural life. These new routes mean that an historical concession which allowed sportspeople and entertainers to come here for a short time without a work permit to take part in certain events will be retained.

Under these new routes the following people will now be able to enter the UK using a dedicated new visa:

- sportspeople and support staff coming for specific events, such as Wimbledon;
- amateur sportspeople joining UK amateur teams for up to six months;

- professional entertainers coming to the UK to take part in music competitions;
- amateur entertainers travelling to the UK for a specific engagement;
- professional entertainers coming to take part in a charity show or where they will receive no fee; and
- professional and amateur entertainers taking part in a 'permit-free festival' such as the Edinburgh Festival.

All of the changes set out in the document published today will sit alongside the Points Based System, which replaces around eighty different work permit routes with just five tiers.

Those travelling into the UK are locked into one identity through the introduction of fingerprinting for all visa applicants, a new hi-tech system for counting people in and out of the country and the rollout of ID cards for all foreign nationals.

Notes to editors:

1. The Government Response to the Consultation on Visitors can be found at:
www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/consultations/closedconsultations/visitorsconsultationpaper
2. In March 2006, the Government published a Command Paper setting out the new PBS, 'A Points Based System: Making Migration work for Britain'. The new system consolidates the many complex routes into just five tiers. It is designed to facilitate entry to the UK of all those wanting to come to work, train and study. The Command Paper can be found at www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk