



TWO YEARS OF SUCCESS



WHY WE FORMED UKCVA

The UK attracts far fewer valuable Chinese visitors than our major European neighbours and our economy loses out by up to £1.2 billion each year.

The UK is not a member of the Schengen Agreement so visitors need to apply for a separate visa to include the UK on a multi-country European tour.

The UK has a biometric visa which means that each individual has to visit a Visa Application Centre in person. Schengen currently does not.

The need to obtain a separate UK visa is a barrier to including the UK on a multi-country tour

The Government is clear that the UK will not join Schengen or remove biometric visas.

The Government had made many improvements to the UK visa application process but visitor numbers remained significantly lower than, for example, France.

UKCVA was established to take a fresh look at how the visa barrier could be lowered.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE



UKCVA researched the issue and its report “Promoting Growth in Britain’s Economy” (January 2012) had one clear recommendation.

Marginal changes to make it easier to apply for a UK visa produce only marginal changes to visitor numbers.

The key to making significant increases was to make it easier to apply for both visas at the same place and time – to present the consumer with a one-stop-shop. This has been the core of the UKCVA campaign.

We proposed that this could be achieved through sharing application forms and sharing Visa Application Centres. One visit, with one set of documents, to apply for both visas.

PROMOTING THE ONE-STOP-SHOP

Following extensive lobbying by UKCVA the one-stop-shop concept has been adopted as the Government’s central policy.

“Efforts are underway to set up a ‘joint shop window’ so that Chinese tourists can apply for a British visa at the same time as applying for a Schengen visa” David Cameron December 2013



In October 2013 Chancellor George Osborne announced a pilot to share visa application forms. This has now been adopted as standard. In our report “Building on Progress”, following a fact finding trip to Beijing and Shanghai, we proposed that the UK should share VACs with one or more Schengen countries. This, together with the form sharing, would create a one-stop-shop. In June 2014 the Home Secretary launched our report and accepted this main recommendation.

In June 2015, the Home Secretary announced a pilot to share VACs with Belgium. This has established the principle of shared VACs, with the agreement of the governments of the UK, Belgium and China as well as the European Union and Schengen.

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS?

In the year that the UKCVA's shared application form proposal was implemented, visitor visa numbers rose **22%** from **320,000** to **390,000**. In contrast, Schengen numbers rose by **8%** in the same period. The Belgium pilot has just started so we have yet to see the results of this.

At the start of our campaign, VisitBritain was forecasting Chinese visitor numbers of **290,000** by 2020. In 2014 the Home Office issued **390,000** visitor visas in China, **35%** above this target.

VisitBritain has revised its 2020 target to **650,000**. UKCVA has established itself as the key lobbying organisation on Chinese visas and developed trust throughout government through its practical solutions to the visa issue. UKCVA's campaign was shortlisted for the PRWeek Public Affairs Campaign of the Year 2014.



WHAT'S THE FUTURE?

We need to continue to ensure that, as much as possible, applicants face only one process when applying for both visas. Our core programme for the future has three elements:

1. Continue to promote the one-stop-shop

- Keep pressure on the Government to continue with the pilot, make it a success and expand it to larger countries.
- Encourage promotion of the new UK/Schengen gateway offer to increase visitor numbers

2. Explore and promote other ways to reduce the need for two separate visa applications.

- As an example, UKCVA believes that making the 10 year, multiple entry visa the standard would remove the need to apply for two visas during that period.
- UKCVA estimates this would save the UK Government £19.5 million annually in administration costs and increase visitor numbers by over 250,000, based on the experience of the USA, adding over £335 million pa to the UK economy.

3. Respond to the introduction of biometrics by Schengen

- In October 2015 Schengen will introduce biometric visas. Depending on how the UK responds, this could be beneficial or detrimental to UK visitor numbers.
- The level playing field this creates will only work to the UK's favour if applying for both visas isn't made more onerous.

KEY MILESTONES



Home Secretary Theresa May speaking at UKCVA reception June 2014

- Immigration Minister addresses UKCVA Visa WorkShop – **May 2013**
- Chancellor launches shared application form pilot in Beijing – **October 2013**
- UKCVA visits Beijing for fact-finding trip of Visa Application Centre and Processing Centre – **October 2013**
- Home Secretary launches UKCVA Visa report and accepts its main recommendations as government policy – **June 2014**
- Home Secretary launches shared Visa Application Centre pilot – **June 2015**



VISA ALLIANCE

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