

# GAR Procedure for UK Flights

David Mumford

8 January, 2026



**Update Jan 2026**

## **The UK's Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme enters full enforcement on 25 Feb 2026.**

From this date, when submitting a General Aviation Report (GAR), all pax must hold valid permission to travel, either a UK/Irish passport, valid visa, or a valid ETA. GAR submissions may now return a "No Record of Valid Permission to Travel" response if this requirement isn't met. There are some crew exemptions, but these are complicated so review the latest UK Home Office FAQ for details. Ensure all documentation is checked in advance to avoid delays or denied entry, and remember the fine for a GAR screw up is hefty and falls onto the PIC!

**Update Sep 2025**

Since April 2024, there have been major changes to the UK's General Aviation Report (GAR) submission for international flights. Here's a reminder of what you need to know.

- **The GAR form is now required for departures (not just arrivals).**
- **You have to submit it via an online portal, or through a third-party app (no longer directly to UK Border Force via email).**
- **If you get it wrong, you can now get fined up to £10,000 (there were no fines before). These apply to both the operator AND the captain.**

These rules apply to all international flights arriving/departing the UK (including within the Common Travel Area: Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands). Details on how the rules work within the CTA are explained below.

You can read the rules in full on the UK Government website, but here's a summary of the main points:

## How to submit the GAR

You need to submit info online about the flight and crew/pax, no earlier than 48 hours and no later than 2 hours prior to the expected time of departure. There are 3 ways to do this:

### 1. The government's free-to-use online portal.

Alternatively, you can download this GAR template (Excel doc), complete it electronically and upload it to the portal.

### 2. Approved third-party applications: Rocket Route, OnlineGAR

### 3. Direct connections: FB01, Streamlane, Mobile-Edge, PnrGo

More info on the UK government site [here](#).

After you submit the GAR, **you should get a response telling you whether that crew/pax is allowed to travel**. It will be one of the following (thanks to our friends at FlyingInIreland for this table):

Response Message	Action
Valid permission to travel	<p>The Home Office can find a valid permission to travel for the person. Pilots, operators and agents are not required to check visas, but Passport or Travel Document checks still apply. They must check that the passport or travel document presented is genuine and valid, and that the person is the rightful holder.</p> <p>For more information on checking passports and travel documents click <a href="#">here</a> <a href="#">Guidance on examining identity documents (publishing.service.gov.uk)</a></p>
Authority to carry granted	<p>Pilots, operators and agents are required to check visas for Visa Nationals. Passport or Travel Document checks apply for all passengers. They must check that the passport or travel document presented is genuine and valid and that the person is the rightful holder.</p> <p>For more information on checking passports and travel documents click <a href="#">here</a> <a href="#">Guidance on examining identity documents (publishing.service.gov.uk)</a> Follow this link to check visa requirements <a href="#">Check if you need a UK visa - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a></p>
Authority to carry refused. DO NOT BOARD.	<p>This response message will not be displayed on the screen. Pilots, operators and agents will be instructed not to board an individual (NO BOARD) via a call and email when Authority to Carry (ATC) has been refused.</p>

**Because fines apply if the GAR is submitted incorrectly, many handling agents may no longer be willing to do it on your behalf.**

If you're not already using a third-party application, the safest option is to set up an online account and handle the submission yourself.

# Submit a General Aviation Report (GAR)

Use this service to:

- Submit a GAR
- View or cancel a GAR and edit draft GARs
- Add, remove or manage people on your flight

**Start now** ➤

## Common Travel Area flights (Ireland, Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Northern Ireland)

Flying within the CTA is where GAR rules can catch people out. On top of the standard UK GAR, there are two extra layers to watch.

First, some destinations have their own local GAR forms. The **Channel Islands (EGJJ/Jersey, EGJBGuernsey) require local GARs inbound and outbound, and the Isle of Man/EGNS has its own form too**. Requirements can vary, so best practice is to confirm with your local handler. **Opsgroup member report:** *At EGJJ/Jersey, Border Force has at times required full residential addresses for crew and pax, and commercial operators also need local permits separate from UK CAA permits.*

Second, the 12-hour police rule. If you are flying to or from the CTA and using a UK aerodrome that is not police-designated, extra steps apply. **For private flights, you need to notify the local police at least 12 hours in advance**. For commercial flights, it's stricter: you must obtain prior police approval before operating from a non-designated aerodrome. **Opsgroup member report:** *A flight originally planned from EGKB/Biggin Hill to EGJJ/Jersey made a last-minute stop in EGTK/Oxford. Because Oxford is not police-designated, the 12-hour rule kicked in. The crew had filed a GAR only a few hours before departure, so Border Police enforced the rule and the jet was stuck in Oxford overnight.*

For Northern Ireland, the designated ports are **EGAC/Belfast City, EGAA/Belfast Intl, and EGAE/City of Derry**. If you use any other airport, you must notify the local police at least 12 hrs in advance (GAR@psni.pnn.police.uk).

You can find the full list of police-designated aerodromes in Annex A of the official UK GAR guidance.

## Getting it wrong

Again, check the official guidance on this, but here's what "getting it wrong" basically means:

- Failing to provide correct info about the flight and people on board.
- Not submitting it within the required timeframe (no earlier than 48 hours and no later than 2 hours prior to the expected time of departure).
- Not doing it in the flight format (i.e. through the web portal or via an approved third party).

## The big things to know / watch out for:

- **Fines:** Getting it wrong could mean a fine for the “owner or agent and captain”. So that means the operator AND captain are subject to enforcement action and fines. These start at £5,000 for first-time offenders (ouch!), subsequent breaches start at £7500, followed by the maximum of £10,000.
- **Errors on the GAR submission:** Watch out for incorrect spelling of names, omitting middle names, not using the full names exactly as shown on passports, and incorrect crew assignment (which pilot is the PIC). Anything like this is likely to get you a “warning” from UK Customs on arrival, and potentially a fine if it happens again. ***Opsgroup member report:** At EGPB/Edinburgh, Border Force issued a non-compliance report because a crew member’s middle name was missing from the GAR, even though it appeared on the GenDec. All given names (including middle names) must be included in GAR submissions. When using the GAR portal, enter the middle name(s) in the “Given name(s)” field along with the first name.*
- **Last minute changes:** Bad news. If you get an extra passenger last minute, or someone shows up with a different passport than the one you sent on the GAR submission, you have to file a new GAR and then wait 2 hours until you depart. Same applies if you change your arrival airport in the UK. One exception here: if a passenger was provided on the GAR and they do not travel, a new GAR is not required to be submitted.
- **Diverts:** If you have to divert due to weather, that’s fine. If this happens, UK Border Force want you to call them if you can, on +44 300 123 2012. Make sure you’re diverting to the alternate listed on your flight plan (should also be an international airport with Customs). If you’re diverting somewhere other than what’s listed on your flight plan (i.e. it’s an emergency), call UK Border Force after you land to explain.
- **Late departures:** If the flight will operate on the same day, albeit later, no new GAR submission is required. If a flight is delayed to the next calendar day, a new GAR must be submitted.
- **Early departures:** If you depart early headed to the UK, don’t update the GAR! ***Opsgroup member report:** We had a flight to UK that departed 45 mins early, so we thought it wise to update the GAR to correct ETA. This resulted in a UK Customs warning for ‘submitting’ a GAR once flight airborne (8hr leg). We’ve been told that we should not have updated the ETA and it is UK Customs’ responsibility to keep up to date with the ETA.*

#### More info

Check out this page from PnrGo. It has a bunch more info for pilots and operators, including a recent webinar recording plus an extensive Q&A on this topic.

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## London Night Ops: What’s Changing This Summer

David Mumford  
8 January, 2026

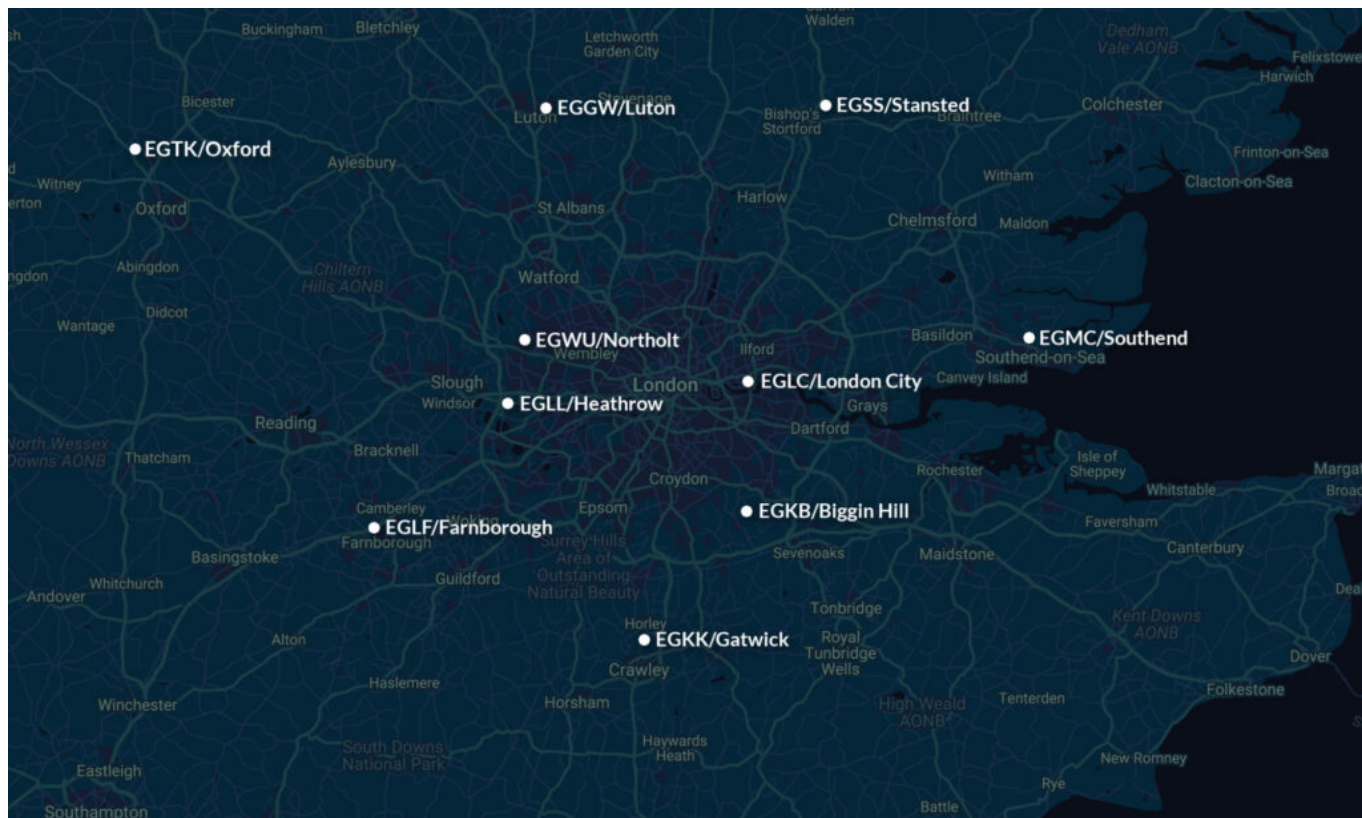


#### Key Points

- **EGGW/Luton will allow a limited number of BizAv night slots this summer (14 Jun - 17 Sep), a rare exception linked to upcoming runway works.**
- **EGSS/Stansted now has only 10 BizAv night slots per week, shared between all FBOs, available until the end of October (unless extended).**
- **EGWU/Northolt will have restricted civilian ops hours in Jun, Jul and Aug due to control tower works impacting ATC staffing, with no weekend flying at all in Jul and Aug.**
- **EGMC/Southend is not available H24. It operates daily from 0600 to 0130 local time, with no night operations permitted - including for QC1 or quieter aircraft.**

Unlike previous summers, EGGW/Luton is making a one-off exception this year by allowing a small number of BizAv night slots, to help manage capacity during upcoming runway works. However, availability is extremely limited, slots are tightly controlled, and subject to withdrawal if airline delays eat into the night hours. EGMC/Southend is no longer a viable late-night option. It now operates strictly between 0600 and 0130 local time, with no movements allowed outside those hours – regardless of aircraft noise level.





*All times shown below are local time!*

## **EGLL/Heathrow & EGKK/Gatwick**

Slots for bizav flights are almost never issued at night, as there is a noise quota system in place between 2300-0700. There might be a few daytime slots available – best bet is to contact a local handler and they will try to sort you out. There's only one FBO at these airports, both Signature: [Ihr@signatureflight.co.uk](mailto:Ihr@signatureflight.co.uk) and [Igw@signatureflight.co.uk](mailto:Igw@signatureflight.co.uk)

## **EGGW/Luton**

There's a change to night operations this summer. **The airport will allow a limited number of night slots for BizAv.** Between 14 Jun – 17 Sep, up to 100 ad-hoc night slots will be granted for flights between 2300-0659 local time, but only for quieter aircraft. Best to check with your local handler whether your aircraft qualifies. These slots are shared across all operators and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. This is a one-off exception, linked to upcoming runway works. Slots will be tightly controlled and may be withdrawn if airline delays push into night hours. A few different FBOs to choose from:

Signature: [ltl@signatureflight.co.uk](mailto:ltl@signatureflight.co.uk)  
 Harrods: [ltl@signatureflight.co.uk](mailto:ltl@signatureflight.co.uk)

## **EGSS/Stansted**

After a full ban on BizAv night slots between 2300-0600 local time from June 1 to Sep 30, limited availability has now returned. Local FBOs confirm that just 10 night slots per week in total are being allocated, shared between all handlers at Stansted. This arrangement is in place until the end of October, though it may be extended through April 2026 before further summer restrictions are reintroduced. A few different FBOs to choose from:

Inflite Jet Centre: [operations@inflite.co.uk](mailto:operations@inflite.co.uk)  
 Universal: [uk@universalaviation.aero](mailto:uk@universalaviation.aero)

Harrods: [stnops@harrodsaviation.com](mailto:stnops@harrodsaviation.com) (Harrods operate two FBOs here: *The Knightsbridge* and *The Brompton*)

### **EGLC/London City**

Open: 0630-2130 weekdays, 0630-1230 Sat and 1230-2130 Sun. There are slots available between these times. [jetcentre@londoncityairport.com](mailto:jetcentre@londoncityairport.com) are who you need to speak to for handling and slot assistance there.

### **EGTK/London Oxford**

Open: 0630-2230 and up to 2359 on request, seven days a week.

The thing you probably want to know about Oxford is while it takes just over an hour to drive to London, making it the furthest away of all the "London" airports, it also charges much less in handling fees. You can contact the FBO at [ops@londonoxfordairport.com](mailto:ops@londonoxfordairport.com)

### **EGLF/Farnborough**

Open: 0700-2200 weekdays, 0800-2000 weekends – but no extensions possible. Farnborough is a dedicated business aviation airport and can be contacted at [ops@farnboroughairport.com](mailto:ops@farnboroughairport.com)

### **EGKB/Biggin Hill**

Open: 0630-2300 weekdays, 0800-2200 weekends. On UK bank holidays, weekend hours apply. Biggin Hill is one to consider for smaller corporate and charter operations. A dedicated bizav airport, only 12 miles outside of central London, and no slots required. A couple of FBOs to choose from:

Executive Handling: [handling@bigginhillairport.com](mailto:handling@bigginhillairport.com)

Jetex: [fbo-bqh@jetex.com](mailto:fbo-bqh@jetex.com)

### **EGWU/Northolt**

Normally open: Monday to Friday 0800-2000, Sat 0800-1500 and Sun 1200-1900. So not great for night flights, but pretty handy otherwise as Northolt is one of the closest GA-accessible airports to central London, as well as the closest airport to EGLL/Heathrow (8 miles away). **But this summer (Jun through Aug), opening hours for civilian ops are being restricted due to infrastructure works at the control tower impacting ATC staffing.**

In Jun, ops are limited to Monday to Friday 0800-1800 and Sunday 1000-1700 local time, with Saturday fully closed. In Jul and Aug, weekday hours return to 0800-2000, but there will be no weekend flying at all, as the airport will be open for military traffic only. Any bookings outside these hours will need to be moved or cancelled.

Bear in mind it's a dual use military/civil airport, so you'll need PPR, but they're normally quite quick to approve this.

Universal is the FBO here: [northolt@universalaviation.aero](mailto:northolt@universalaviation.aero). Check here for more info.

### **EGMC/Southend**

**Open daily from 0600 to 0130 local time.** No operations including for QC1 or quieter aircraft are permitted outside of these hours. Extensions are not possible and night operations are not allowed under any circumstances.

You can contact London Southend Jet Centre FBO here: [ops@londonsjc.com](mailto:ops@londonsjc.com)

## **EGBB/Birmingham**

*Correct, not a London airport!* Just a bonus one for you, because outside of all those listed above, this is probably the next closest airport to London that is open at night. Two FBO options here, both open H24 – but night time operations are available on request and subject to additional out-of-hours fees:

XLR Executive Jet Centre: [jetcentre@xlrbermingham.com](mailto:jetcentre@xlrbermingham.com)

Signature: [bxh@signatureflight.co.uk](mailto:bhx@signatureflight.co.uk)

## **Send us your spy reports!**

Send us your Airport Spy reports for all these airports so we can share the gotchas, the things to know, contacts to contact and anything else useful.

**What's Airport Spy?** Well, you write a quick little postcard with “what happened” when you went to some airport somewhere. Then you, and others (that's the magic), can refer to your notes for future flights to the same place.



Got some intel?

## **Are you an Airport Spy?**

You go to unusual places and see curious things. Your turboprop friends envy you. Now, it's time to give back.

For your next trip, pack a notebook, and file your Spy Report below. You'll get a weekly ops briefing in return.

[File your report](#) ➔

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# **UK Electronic Travel Authorization - The BizAv Guide**

David Mumford  
8 January, 2026





#### Key Points

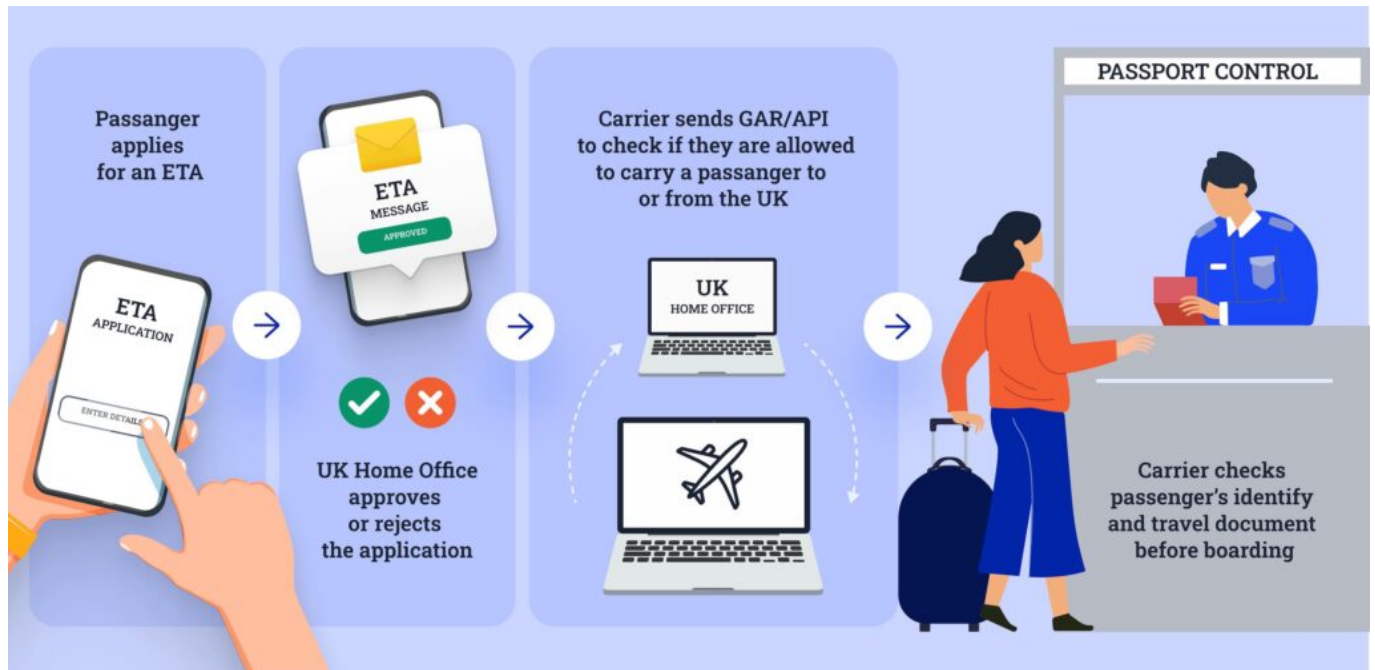
- **The UK is bringing in an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme for passengers, much like the US ESTA.**
- **It started in Nov 2023 for travellers from Qatar. It then applied to travellers from more Gulf states from Feb 2024. Nationals from a long list of countries (includes the US) will be able to use this from 8 Jan 2025. Then there's another list (pretty much everywhere in Europe) who can use this from 2 April 2025 (can apply from March 5).**

The UK will be implementing its Universal Permission to Travel (UPT) scheme in 2025. Under a new Carrier Liability Scheme, operators will be obliged to check immigration permissions for non-visa nationals (in addition to visa nationals). This will affect both GAR and API submissions.

With ESTA in the States, eTA in Canada, and ETIAS coming soon in the European Union, the introduction of Electronic Travel Authorisation in the United Kingdom comes as no surprise. What does ETA mean and how can operators prepare for the upcoming changes?

#### **Part of the bigger picture: Universal Permission to Travel**

ETA is a digital record linked to a person's passport (valid for 2 years, or less if the passport expires). It is being introduced as part of a broader scheme called Universal Permission to Travel. The general aim of UPT is to strengthen the UK border security by ensuring that **all travellers have a valid travel permission in advance**. The plan is for the majority of these permissions to become **digital-only** in the future (e.g. e-visas). This way, operators will be able to check and confirm a passenger's permission prior to travel. This will reduce the number of people denied entry at the border, and the associated detention and removal costs (which operators need to bear).



## Who and when: The scope of the UK ETA

In general, the UK ETA applies to **visa-exempt passengers and those who do not have a UK immigration status**. There will be some limited exceptions for those who cannot be required to hold a permission, e.g. diplomats.

### ETA will not be required for people with either:

- a British or Irish passport;
- permission to live, work, or study in the UK;
- a visa to enter the UK.

People living in Ireland who are not Irish citizens will only be exempt if: they are legally resident in Ireland, do not need a visa to enter the UK, AND they are entering the UK via the Common Travel Area. All three conditions must be met.

It's worth noting that **ETA is also required for passengers transiting through the UK**.

The launch of ETA will happen in phases:

1. **From 15 Nov 2023:** the nationals of Qatar.
2. **From 22 Feb 2024:** the nationals of Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.
3. **8 Jan 2025:** loads more nationalities – basically all of the world except Europe.
4. **2 April 2025 (can apply from March 5):** pretty much all of Europe.

You can see the full lists of nationalities here.

Travellers can apply for the ETA here. Expect a confirmation within 3 working days, often quicker. The cost is £10. The ETA is valid for two years, and can be used for multiple visits, but if you get a new passport within that time then you'll need to apply for a new ETA.

**There are some nationalities who won't be able to apply for the ETA.** The ETA scheme is broadly for visitors who do not need a visa for short stays to the UK. Travellers who currently need a visa will most likely continue to need one when the scheme goes live.

### **New ETA: What does it mean for operators?**

The introduction of ETA has affected the Authority to Carry regulations, which constitute the UK's "no fly" scheme. **Travellers who are refused an ETA, as well as those whose ETA gets cancelled, are now included on the list of people whom operators cannot carry to or from the UK.**

An operators may get fined (up to a max of £50,000!) when:

- they do not check if they can carry a person;
- they carry a person who has no valid permission to travel.

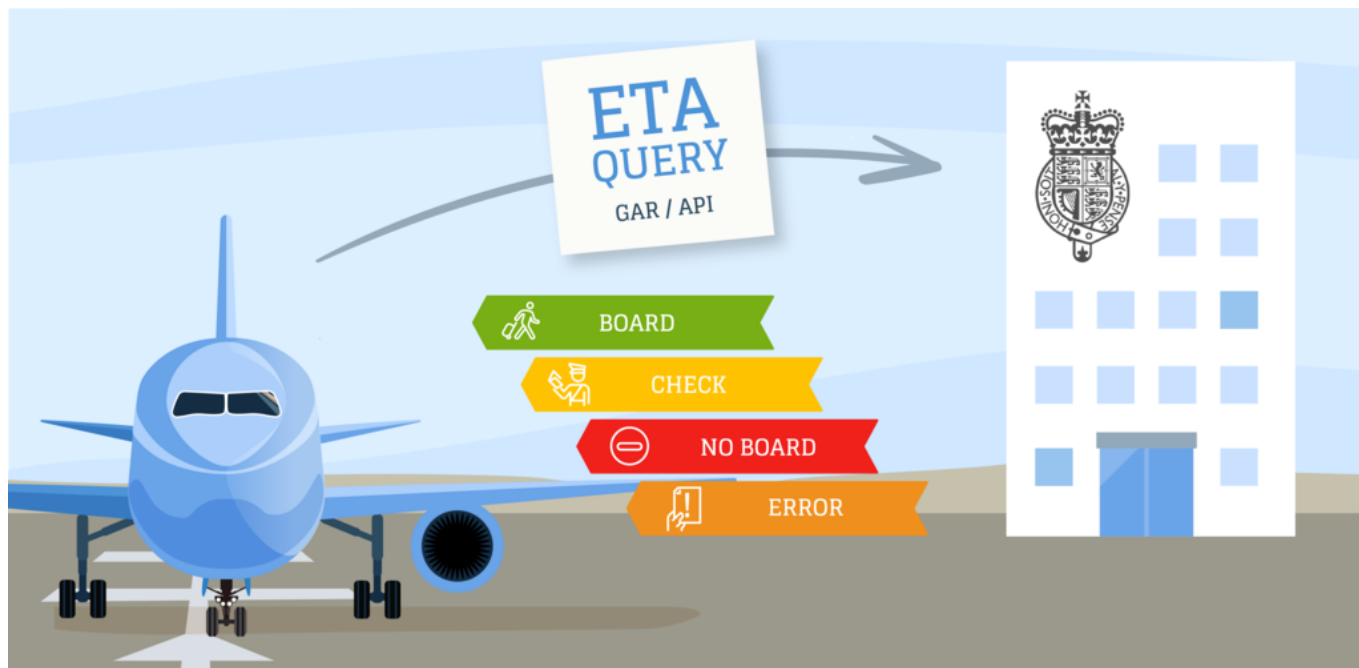
This means that operators will need to send their API data in an 'interactive' way in order to check the ETA status (the submissions will trigger a response from the Home Office). There are different ways to meet this requirement (depending on the type of operation and terminal type):

- submitting GAR data manually via the sGAR web-portal;
- submitting API data from DCS via the UK iAPI system;
- requesting a third-party (e.g. your Ground Handler / FBO / Data Provider) to submit the data on your behalf.

### **ETA status check: Four possible outcomes**

Regardless of the submission method, there will be four basic results (board / check / no board / error), with additional codes or descriptions for operators to know what needs to be done:

- **BOARD:** A valid permission to travel has been found. Once the identity and passport / travel document check is completed, the passenger can board the plane.
- **CHECK:** There is no record of a valid permission to travel. The operator has to conduct a manual check of immigration or exemption documents as well as identity checks. If the check is satisfactory, the passenger may board.
- **NO BOARD:** The permission to carry is refused. The person must not board the plane. Carrying such a passenger entails a risk of a civil penalty.
- **ERROR:** The permission to travel cannot be confirmed due to some missing data. The operator should correct the data, resend it, and wait for the check result.



### What are operators expected to do now?

Passenger scenario	Action for the operator
Passenger has a Visa or Biometric Resident's Permit	Verify the visa or check the validity of the Biometric Resident's Permit (a valid visa or Biometric Resident's Permit is still recognized as a travel permission, just like ETA)
Passenger has an ETA	OK to board
Passenger is still waiting for their ETA application to be approved	OK to board
Passenger did not apply for an ETA	Ask them to apply before boarding
Passenger/UK confirms that the ETA has been rejected or cancelled	Do NOT board

It is also important to know that operators **must continue to check the passenger's identity and travel document** (ETA changes do not affect these checks in any way).

### Does this all apply to Private Flights too?

Yes. The scheme applies to all operators – including General Aviation.

### Do flight crew need an ETA?

No, not for most flights. We asked the UK authorities this question, and they said:

- Crew who arrive and depart by aircraft as operational crew within seven days of arrival will not require an ETA.
- Crew who are arriving in the UK as deadheading or positioning crew do not qualify for this exemption – they will need an ETA. However, the UK does operate a concession for deadhead and positioning visa national crew leaving by 23:59 the day after their arrival.

Another thing to watch out for if flying to the UK with ground crew or engineers on board who are intending

to work airside. These staff are **not allowed to enter as crew on a gendec** – you must get a work permit for them 48hrs in advance. The only alternative is to apply to the UK Border Force to make an exception, in which case you need to fill out this form and email it to them.

### What about the UK GAR rules?

Effective 6 April 2024, there were some big changes to the UK's General Aviation Report (GAR) submission for international GA flights:

- The GAR form is now **required for departures** (not just arrivals).
- If you get it wrong, **you can now get fined** up to £10,000 (there were no fines before).
- You have to submit it via an **online portal**, or through your handler, (no longer directly to UK Border Force via email).
- And after you submit it, you will get a response telling you whether that crew/pax is allowed to travel (you will still need to check their passport/visa/travel docs etc).

More info on these new GAR rules can be found [here](#).

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**Thanks to PnrGO for help with this article!** If you're flying to the UK and are impacted by these changes, you can contact PnrGO if you'd like to save yourself some UPT/ETA/GAR/API related misery – they have some tech that lets you do all of this automatically. [Click here for more info.](#)

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## UK Air Passenger Duty Rate Hike

OPSGROUP Team  
8 January, 2026





The UK Air Passenger Duty Rates are increasing!

### **What:**

Air Passenger Duty rates – a charge for each passenger on flights originating in the UK.

### **Who:**

It applies to **fixed wing aircraft weighing 5,700 kg or more** (12,500 lbs) and only applies to passengers you have onboard, not your crew. It applies to private non-revenue and charter flights too.

### **There are some exemptions:**

- Emergency, training, military, humanitarian, search-and-rescue and air ambulance flights
- Cargo flights
- Transit passengers possibly
- Tech stops so long as no-one gets on or off
- Not really an exemption, but if a passenger has an onward connecting flight it only looks at the first leg when deciding what to charge

There is also an '*opposite exemption*' which applies to passengers on flights using aircraft of 20,001 kg (44,094 lbs) or more with fewer than 19 seats. For this they **apply a premium rate** which is in fact about double the standard business/first class rate.

### **When:**

The new rates come in from **April 1, 2023**, and will be applied for the tax year 2023-2024. (So if you're reading this post after March 31, 2024 then this probably won't be accurate anymore.)

### **Where:**

#### **Everywhere in the UK.**

They are based off where the journey ends outside of the UK. "*This is their final destination*" as HMRC state quite dramatically on their website.

### **How:**

They are introducing new bands – specifically, **a new domestic band and a new ultra long-haul band**. Current rates will also increase.

- The new **domestic rate will be set at £6.50** (that's actually been reduced from £13)
- The new **Ultra long-haul rate will start at £91**

From April 1 there will be **4 (instead of the current 2) bands** – Domestic, A, B and C.

Band	Distance from London to destination capital city
A	0 to 2,000 miles
B	2,001 miles to 5,500 miles
C	over 5,500 miles

Of course, it is the UK so never just that simple. There are also **3 types of rate, based off seat pitch:**

- **Reduced:** seat pitch less than 40" (1.016m)
- **Standard:** seat pitch more than 40"
- **Higher (the premium rate we mentioned earlier):** airplane weighs 20 tonnes or more but has 19 or less seats.

If you go to this page you can see all the destinations and which band they fit into, as well as a lot of info on how to calculate your seat pitch and the rate you need to pay.

## Rates from 1 April 2023

Destination bands	Reduced rate	Standard rate	Higher rate
Domestic	£6.50	£13	£78
Band A	£13	£26	£78
Band B	£87	£191	£574
Band C	£91	£200	£601

So the new ultra long-haul rate is the one that will really sting. This is for flights to countries whose capitals are over 5,500 miles from London, and so that includes key hubs like Bangkok, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, where the rate will now be as high as £601 per pax depending on how much leg room they have!

If you want more information then you can find it in several places:

- The HMRC webpage on the changes
- The HMRC webpage for checking specific rates
- Talk to **Ann Little** on the phone at 03000 586096 or by email: [ann.Little@hmrc.gov.uk](mailto:ann.Little@hmrc.gov.uk)

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## The 45.5T Elephant in the Security Room

OPSGROUP Team  
8 January, 2026



What do 9 African elephants and a G700 have in common?

*They both weigh over 45,500 kilograms.*

And that's the weight threshold you need to know about if you're planning on heading to the UK anytime soon...

**Why?**

**There are some rules about security screening for heavy jets!** Here's how it works:

- **Any outbound public transport (charter, scheduled or commercial) flight on an aircraft over 10 tonnes (22,000 lbs) MTOW needs to be security screened**
- **All aircraft (including private flights) with a MTOW over 45.5 tonnes needs screening.**

And remember – the MTOW is what it says in your aircraft manual. We ain't talking the weight on the day.

**What does 'Security Screening' mean?**

Here is a link to the EU regulation.

Yep, it's an EU regulation but this is basically what still applies in the UK as well.

**Why do they have this regulation?** It is all about making sure people and their stuff are protected.

*So "acts of unlawful interference with civil aircraft that jeopardise the security of civil aviation should be prevented by establishing common rules for safeguarding civil aviation. This objective should be achieved by setting common rules and common basic standards on aviation security as well as mechanisms for monitoring compliance."*

The common rules it speaks of are the screening of luggage, people, checking nothing is hidden on the aircraft, etc.

## Why MTOW?

And why that particular MTOW? Why not something like number of seats?

No one knows (i.e. someone probably knows, but we don't know).

*If YOU know then email us at [news@ops.group](mailto:news@ops.group) We can't stop wondering now.*

## Why are we talking about it?

Well, there has been some confusion at some UK airports, particularly for **Part 91 folk**. And there has been some disruption at some UK airports with **operators experiencing lengthy delays**.

One member reported having to adjust their departure date and time by nearly 4 days...

## There are actually two *things* worth highlighting:

First of all, specifically in the UK, there are **continuing staff shortages** and this can mean delays in security screening availability. **Airline operators are always prioritised** which means you might experience delays, and you might even find flights cannot be accommodated.

## The solution?

- **Book in advance and use a handling agent** – preferably the main FBO for an airport. They are generally very helpful folk who want to help as much as possible (and can help deal with the airport authorities).
- **Don't make last minute schedule changes** and expect them to be able to leap in and immediately do a security screening for you.
- **Head to dedicated BA/GA airports** when you can. Somewhere like EGLF/Farnborough is going to be able to accommodate you more easily than the likes of EGLL/Heathrow (although even EGLF told us requests with less than 4 hours would be difficult on busy days).
- **Avoid operating into larger airports at peak times** (when the scheduled folk are heading in and out).
- **Have a backup plan airport** – if your agent is telling you it is going to be tough to accommodate you and you know you cannot delay your departure, then fly somewhere else that can!

## UK rules aren't exactly the same as US.

In the US the **regulation applies to Part 121, 135** etc. Not necessarily part 91 though. In the UK it applies to anyone and everyone. If your MTOW is over 45.5 tonnes (100,309 lbs) then you're going to need a security screening.

Here is a link to the NBAA's handy article about the US side of things.

## Anything else?

Here is a link to the UK Gov travel guide site.

You can find things on all topics from hand luggage restrictions to everything else on here so a good spot to head to if you want more info on the specifics (although we reckon just ask a handling agent at the airport you are heading to!).



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# UK Airport Border Force Strikes

Chris Shieff

8 January, 2026



Border Force workers are planning to strike at several major UK airports from December 23 – 31. In some case the impacts are expected to be **major**, and will affect GA/BA operations along with scheduled airlines.

Here's a rundown of everything we know so far.

## What's happening?

The UK's Border Force union has announced one thousand workers will strike over the holiday period amidst an ongoing dispute over pay and conditions.

It goes without saying it is a busy time of year – ten thousand flights, and hundreds of thousands of passengers, are set to be directly affected. The Government has rushed to bring in **military staff, civil servants and other volunteers** to temporarily try and take up some of the slack.

## Which airports are affected?

Six big ones:

- EGLL/Heathrow (Terminals 2 – 5)
- EGKK/Gatwick
- EGBB/Birmingham
- EGFF/Cardiff
- EGPF/Glasgow
- EGCC/Manchester

Signature FBO advise that impacts will be felt at all airports, but **EGLL/Heathrow** looks set to be the most heavily affected.

## Dates and Times

The strike action will be **24 hours a day**, with the exception of December 26 and 31, where it will end at 7am.

## What will the impact be?

Passengers are likely to experience **extensive delays** through passport control. For FBOs, it is important to **advise them of your planned arrival as early as possible** so they can make arrangements. They may struggle to find available staff to attend to you and your passengers.

Inbound aircraft may also be hit with traffic jams leading to **extended holding and possible diversions**.

On December 22, the UK CAA published the following Notam:

B3204/22 NOTAMN Q) EGXX/QAFXX/IV/NBO/E  
/000/999/5504N00500W999 A) EGTT EGPX B) 2212220001 C)  
2212312359 E) UK BORDER FORCE ARE DUE TO STRIKE AT  
BIRMINGHAM (EGBB), CARDIFF (EGFF) , LONDON GATWICK (EGKK),  
GLASGOW (EGPF), MANCHESTER (EGCC) AND LONDON HEATHROW  
(EGLL). DURING STRIKE PERIODS DELAYS MAY BE EXPECTED FOR  
DEPARTURES/ARRIVALS INCLUDING HOLDING AND POSSIBLE  
DIVERSIONS. CONSEQUENTIAL IMPACTS MAY ALSO BE EXPERIENCED  
AT OTHER AIRPORTS DUE TO THESE STRIKES. AIRLINES AND CREWS  
SHOULD FUEL PLAN ACCORDINGLY FOR THE DURATION OF ANY  
STRIKE ACTION, INCLUDING POSSIBLE DISRUPTION BEFORE AND  
AFTER THE STRIKE PERIODS AND DELAYS IN OBTAINING DIVERSION  
CLEARANCE. SOME AIRPORTS MAY DECLINE ROUTINE DIVERSION  
REQUESTS DUE TO HANDLING CAPACITY BUT WILL ACCEPT  
AIRCRAFT DECLARING AN EMERGENCY SITUATION. FLIGHT CREW  
ARE REMINDED TO USE CORRECT TERMINOLOGY REGARDING FUEL  
STATUS WITH ATC WHEN FACING DELAY OR DIVERSION SITUATION AS  
DESCRIBED IN UK CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY SAFETY NOTICE SN-  
2019/002, UK AIC W084/2022 AND EUROPEAN UNION AVIATION  
SAFETY AGENCY SAFETY INFORMATION BULLETIN 2018-08. 2022-  
12-0227/AS4.

The moral of the story seems to be to **take more fuel**.

If you do find yourself in a queue and low on gas, they want you to be familiar with the **correct terminology with ATC** to get the message across. The Notam above references the following three docs:

UK CAA Safety Notice – Protecting Final Reserve Fuel and The Minimum Fuel Declaration.

UK AIC W084/2022 – Diversion Requests in UK Airspace.

EASA Safety Bulletin 2018-08 – In Flight Fuel Management.

## **I don't have time for that. Just give it to me straight.**

The docs all deal with **unanticipated delays** and give a reminder that it is up to the crew to monitor fuel in flight and advise ATC if they will be landing with minimum legal reserves, or less.

There are two ways to do it:

Say '*minimum fuel*.' This isn't an emergency, but you're already landing close to final reserve fuel. You cannot accept any further delays without chewing into your FRSV.

Declare an emergency, '*Mayday, mayday, mayday fuel...*' The rule is pretty clear cut on this one. If you will be landing at the nearest suitable aerodrome with less than your planned reserve fuel, you must declare an emergency.

There is also some guidance on **how to request a diversion**. In a nutshell, ask for it early. The CAA advise it takes ATC 5-10 minutes to grant a request, sometimes longer. Behind the scenes, there are phone calls to be made.

It is also not uncommon in the UK for a **requested diversion to be refused** – it is at the aerodrome operator's discretion. Stand availability, handling and other factors all come into play. They recommend operators pre-arrange their options for diversion.

Bear in mind the weather is also a challenge at the moment and may compound the situation!

## **More Information About the Strikes**

The UK FCO has the official word. You can find it [here](#).

## **We'll Keep You Updated**

We'll update this article, along with any operational impacts, as more info comes to hand. If you experience disruptions yourself, we'd love to hear from you. You can reach us on [news@ops.group](mailto:news@ops.group)

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# **UK Free Route Airspace**

OPSGROUP Team  
8 January, 2026





December 2 has been a big day in the UK – it marks the **biggest airspace change ever implemented in the United Kingdom.**

A big portion of UK airspace is now free route airspace, and here's what you need to know about it.

### **What is 'free route' airspace?**

In '*not* free route airspace' you are confined to what is effectively a motorway (freeway if you're American) in the air – a big corridor, defined by points along it, and you follow these until you reach your junction and turn off. It is rarely the most direct route.

Free route airspace allows you to route from a defined entry to a defined exit point direct. Straight through the fields if you like. It also allows more freedom for operators to fly the most time or fuel efficient route, taking into account weather.

### **The benefit is big.**

That it is.

The new airspace structure in the UK is expected to **save around 500,000 nm a year** of flying and that means a big reduction in CO2 – they are estimating around **12,000 tonnes a year.**

Here is NATS own article on it.

### **Where is this airspace?**

It is in northern UK and **consists of 150,000 nm<sup>2</sup> of airspace** over the North Sea, Scotland, North Atlantic, Northern Ireland and a small portion of northern England – so within the Scottish UIR, London UIR and Shanwick OCA, and affecting the route network over some international waters. There will also be FRA in the London UIR within the region known as the PEMAK Triangle and TAKAS box.

This airspace accommodates up to **2000 flights a day** and supports around **80% of transatlantic traffic.**

The Free Route Airspace is **H24** and between **FL255-FL660.**

You can find the full info on the relevant airspace here, including dimensions and how it links with other high seas airspace.

### Where else is this happening?

You might want to take a look at the Free Route Airspace implementation taking place across **the rest of Europe** as well. This has been going on a little longer, and large areas of Europe already have it implemented.

They are also working on cross-border activities which may create even more direct routings in the future.

Norway's AIC A03/21 published Oct 2021 provides info on the operations between the FRA in the Finland FIR, Copenhagen FIR, Polaris FIR, Riga FIR, Sweden FIR, Tallinn FIR (known as the **NEFAB FRA** meaning the North European Functional Airspace Block) and, of course, the Scottish FIR. **These are known as the "Borealis Alliance"**. *(Here's a link to the Borealis Alliance Presentation, if you want to find out more about the background and current stages of the overall project.)*

Norway's AIC tells us that flights routing through these airspaces will be eligible for Free Airspace Routings if they have a **planned trajectory within the following vertical limits**:

- DK-SE FAB FRA FL285-FL660
- NEFAB FRA FL095-FL660 (EETT/EFIN FIR FL095-FL660, EVRR FIR FL095-FL660, ENOR FIR FL135-FL660)
- EGPX FRA (FL255-FL660)

Additionally, if you are routing to/from the UK FRA to the NEFAB FRA then you are going to have to **file some intermediary waypoints** because they have a lack of radar cover there. These Entry/Exit points are ATNAK, ALOTI, BEREP, GUNPA, KLONN, NINUN, ORVIK, PEPIN, PENUN, RIGVU.

There is additional information for flight planning in there so we recommend reading it through, and heading to the relevant ANSP for any of those countries if more info is needed.

### Anything else to know?

While cross border operations are in place for much of it, the interface between Shanwick OAC and Reykjavik OAC will not change.

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## Navigating the UK entry rules

David Mumford  
8 January, 2026





England's entry rules became much simpler from October 4, with the scrapping of the traffic light system. Now, there is **just one red list**, and then the rest of the world. There's one set of rules for the red list, and one set of rules for everywhere else.

### **Red list rules**

England **removed 47 countries from its red list** as of Oct 11. So from that date, the only countries remaining on the red list are now: Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Basically, passengers who have been to a red list country within the past 10 days can only enter England if they are a British/Irish National, or have residence rights in the UK. And when they arrive, they must stay in a managed quarantine hotel for 10 days.

Check here for full info.

### **Rules for everywhere else**

This depends on whether a passenger has been vaccinated or not:

#### Vaccinated Passengers

There is no requirement to get a test prior to travelling, or to quarantine on arrival. Pax will still have to get tested a couple of days later, but cheaper/easier options are coming.

#### Unvaccinated or Partially Vaccinated Passengers

It's not great news. Unvaccinated pax will still need to get a pre-travel test within three days of their flight but here's the real kicker: they will have to isolate for ten days on arrival (from anywhere). Fortunately, the test-to-release scheme is still be running to get out of self-isolation early.

Check here for full info.

### **Which vaccines are accepted?**

Oxford/AstraZeneca, Pfizer BioNTech, Moderna, Janssen – plus a few other permutations.

On Oct 11, England added 37 more destinations to its list of countries and territories with approved proof

of vaccination, meaning that arrivals from these places will be able to avoid more expensive post-arrival testing requirements.

### The UK or England?

These rules in their entirety **only affect arrivals in England**. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have all got their own sets of rules.

### What about crew?

England has a dedicated page on the rules for crew, which you can read [here](#).

The key points:

- Crew do not need a Covid test to enter England, even if they have been in a red list country.
- Crew who live in the UK do not need to quarantine, even if they have been in a red list country.
- Crew who **do not live in the UK** must quarantine in their hotel until departure if they are not fully vaccinated, or for a full 10 days if they have been in a red list country.

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## UK to make permit applications tougher for EU operators

David Mumford  
8 January, 2026



From April 2021 onwards, most European operators wanting to do commercial flights to the UK will have to apply for landing permits on a **trip by trip basis**.

After Brexit finally happened back in January, the UK government continued to issue **Block Permits** to EU operators – essentially just permits which last several months and cover any number of flights. These get renewed after three months, conditional on each EU country giving **the same deal to UK operators**.

Here we are, three months later, and with a number of EU countries still not providing these reciprocal deals, the UK government has finally got fed up!

So from April onwards the UK will **only issue Block Permits to operators registered in countries which provide reciprocal deals to UK operators**. According to the EBAA, so far these reciprocal deals have been agreed with **Italy** and **France** – more countries may follow, but the UK CAA say it's not looking likely at this late stage in the game.

**Important to note:** it is operators who are **registered** in these countries (i.e. France and Italy) who can still get Block Permits, not operators **flying to the UK** from these countries. The EBAA explains it like this:

*“For example a flight from Munich to London, the UK CAA would allow for it to be operated by a French operator with a UK Block Permit, under a reciprocal understanding between the UK and France that an equivalent system is in place for UK airlines. In parallel, a German operator would have to apply for a permit for each individual flight on the same route if no reciprocal understanding on a similar approval for UK airlines had not been reached with the German authorities.”*

EBAA is advising all affected EU operators to contact their respective aviation authorities to raise awareness on what the withdrawal of the UK Block Permit scheme would mean for them.

### **How to get a UK landing permit**

So, all non-UK operators wanting to do **commercial flights** to the UK need to get a Foreign Carrier Permit beforehand. That's your landing permit. If you're applying for a **Block Permit**, you use form CPG3201. If you're applying on a **trip by trip basis**, you use form CPG3200.

If you're operating a **private flight**, or just **overflying** the country – **no permit is required** (unless you're doing some kind of delivery or maintenance flight with non-standard airworthiness).

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For more info on Brexit's impact on ops, check out our article from Jan 2021 here. There have been a few semi-important-to-know-about changes, but ultimately, **the big ticket items are all still the same**, and life goes on much the same as it did before – you still need a permit to do a commercial flight, the UK is still part of Eurocontrol, slots are still needed for busy airports, and nav charges are still expensive.

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## **Midweek Briefing 29JUN: Santa Maria Oceanic Strike, US Entry Requirements**

Cynthia Claros  
8 January, 2026

# INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

ISSUED BY FLIGHT SERVICE BUREAU

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**Santa Maria Strike: Four Routes** 29JUN Santa Maria Oceanic has published four special routes for use during the upcoming **"July Friday Strike Series"** ATC Industrial Action. Read the article and then Summer of Strikes.

**New US Entry Requirements** 29JUN The US has updated entry processing through ESTA (the online visa system for countries using the Visa Waiver Program). Read the article.

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**LTBA/Istanbul** has reopened to traffic after a terrorist attack on 28JUN. 40 people were killed in a series of explosions and gunfire at the International terminal on Tuesday evening.

**UMZZ/Belarus** will undergo a re-evaluation of its currency and banks will be closed to the public between 30JUN and 01JUL, if operating to Minsk you should ensure you have sufficient cash available for those days.

**EGZZ/UK** Much has been written about Britain's departure from Europe this week (and we're talking Brexit, not football), but if you're having trouble figuring out how this will affect you as an operator, that might be because it won't. Read the article.

**LGZZ/Greek Islands** Now that summer is here in Europe, the annual capacity challenge at Greek Islands is most acute on weekends, expect healthy slot delays if operating to LGIR (Iraklion) LGKP (Karthos) LGMK (Mikonos) LGZA (Zakinthos) LGSR (Santorini) LGSK (Skiathos) or LGSA (Chania).

**VHHH/Hong Kong** The CAD issued a reminder to operators this week that the airport is under strain, and slots issued must be strictly adhered to. It would seem that the Slot Adherence procedure issued earlier in the year isn't really working. Any local operators have feedback? Let us know.

**EFRO/Rovaniemi** has no Jet A1 available from until July.

**LPPS/Porto Santo** is also out of Jet A1 until 01JUL.

**DAAA/Algeria** New fax/phone number for the ACC (Area Control) in Algiers: **+213 (0)21 67 49 27** until 23JUL.

**AYZZ/Papua New Guinea** Reports of civil unrest, student demonstrations across Papua New Guinea started in May 2016 and are ongoing. There have been violent clashes between students, other groups and the police in Port Moresby, Lae and the Highlands.

**PWAK/Wake Island** has advised its High Loader is out of action until later in the year, so for large aircraft like B767 upwards, no offload capability exists for cargo.

**EGZZ/Scotland** (Will we need a new ICAO code soon?) Glasgow ATC – at both EGPK and EGPF – has sporadic closures overnight at present due to staffing issues. Keep an eye on Notams.

**WAAF/Ujung Pandang** has some radar outages affecting high-level overflights, optimum levels may not be available.

**LPPO/Santa Maria Oceanic** has published four special routes for use during the upcoming “July Friday Strike Series” ATC Industrial Action. The Strike Time Period is : 0700-0900Z, during which time only these four routes will be accepted. -ROUTE A- 45N020W 40N030W 37N040W -ROUTE B- DETOX 39N020W 36N030W 34N040W -ROUTE C- LUTAK 36N020W 33N030W 29N040W -ROUTE D- ULTEM 27N040W

**LIZZ/Italy** We have been notified of possible ATC industrial action on 23JUL which was previously scheduled on 05JUL. Details and participation of relevant ACCs are as follows: National strike (ACCs and airports) 0800-1600 UTC. Local strike at LIRA – Ciampino 0800-1600 UTC.

**VCBI/Colombo, Sri Lanka** There was industrial action yesterday, 28JUN, by Immigration Officials, which may continue. Flight delays possible.

**LEZZ/Spain** There was a strike threatened by Apron Controllers at LEMD/Madrid but that was cancelled on Monday.

**LPZZ/Portugal** The seven unions of NAV Portugal sent a pre-notice for an industrial action for ATC and non-ATC personnel, during two hours daily on: 30JUN and 8/15/22/29JUL.

**KATL/Atlanta** Upgrades on the airport have officially started, which will include a new runway, concourse and hotel.

View the full International Bulletin 29JUN2016

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## Midweek Briefing: Chinese Airport Delays, Eurocontrol NOP Changes

Cynthia Claros  
8 January, 2026





**Chinese Airport Delays** 03FEB ZXXX/China This is the busiest travel week of the year in China, with millions travelling for the Chinese New Year on 08FEB. Winter storms are forecast to impose delays across central Chinese airports; those currently affected include ZWWW/Urumsqi Diwopu, ZSNJ/Nanjing Lukou, ZGGG/Guangzhou, and ZHHH/Wuhan Tianhe.

**Eurocontrol NOP Changes** 03FEB There are some significant changes to the daily Eurocontrol Briefings effective this week. Network News is no longer, and the D-1 daily conference is also gone. Instead, an Initial Network Plan is published each day at 1700Z on the **Network Operations Portal**.

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**TTxx/Trinidad and Tobago** The annual Carnival in Port of Spain will take place on 08-09FEB . Travel and tourism activities are expected to continue for up to two weeks after the celebration and will be busiest during weekends. 10FEB (Ash Wednesday) is expected to be the busiest day of the year at the Port of Spain airport.

**EISN/Shannon FIR** Correction \*\* Due to a number of flights deviating from clearances prior to exiting Shanwick OCA, flight crews are reminded that Eastbound route clearances issued by Shannon Control for aircraft **exiting** Oceanic Airspace apply from AGORI, SUNOT, BILTO, PIKIL, ETARI, RESNO, VENER, DOGAL, NEBIN, MALOT, TOBOR, LIMRI, ADARA, DINIM, RODEL, SOMAX, KOGAD, BEDRA, OMOKO, TAMEL AND LASNO. Flights shall not turn **before** these points. In other words: wait until you enter (\*\* Thank you to Shannon ATC for pointing out the error in last weeks bulletin).

**North Atlantic** Effective 04FEB MNPS Airspace is replaced by HLA/High Level Airspace on the North Atlantic – extended with Bodø joining Shanwick, Gander, Reykjavik, New York, and Santa Maria. RNP4 or RNP10 now required. Read our **International Ops Notice 01/2016** or our blog post: **Did you know MNPS is over?**

**Eurocontrol NOP Changes** There are some significant changes to the daily Eurocontrol Briefings effective 01FEB. Network News is no longer, and the D-1 daily conference is also gone. Instead, an Initial Network Plan is published each day at 1700Z on the Network Operations Portal.

**FMMM/Madagascar** CAA have issued a reminder to inbound operators that a Passenger List must be sent 24 hrs prior to departure for Madagascar, by email to gdp@acm.mg.

**MKJK/Kingston FIR** Jamaica, has ongoing issues with radar coverage and serviceability, leading to ad-hoc flow management procedures including 15 minute en-route separation, and 10 minute arrival separation at

international airports. Delays appear likely. Reports welcome to [bulletin@fsbureau.org](mailto:bulletin@fsbureau.org).

**FHAW/Ascension Island** is now operating at Rescue and Firefighting Category 8/RFF8.

**United Kingdom** Last week the UK Registered Traveller Service, which is the equivalent of the US Global Entry program, was expanded to include a few more countries: Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. Additionally, Bristol and Cardiff will be added to the list of participating airports.

**MUXX/Cuba** Flight crews of US based aircraft can now remain in Cuba with their aircraft when traveling to the island nation, instead of having to reposition immediately after offloading passengers. The change took effect on 27JAN, with new amendments to the Cuban Assets Control Regulations and Export Administration Regulations issued by the U.S. OFAC and BIS.

**NCRG/Rarotonga**, Cook Islands has new hours of ATC service: 2050 SUN-0400 MON, 1500 MON-1930 MON, 0530 WED-1400 WED, 2100 THU-1000 FRI, 2100 FRI-1000 SAT, 1400 SAT-1930 SAT, 0600 SUN-1130 SUN. These are UTC/Z Times, local is UTC-10. Raro is an important diversion airport in the South Pacific, especially for Easter Island and Tahiti. ATC is avail with 30 mins PN outside these hours (call +682 25890/71439).

**EHAM/Amsterdam** has raised the minimum vectoring altitude from 1200ft to 1600ft, which seems to spell an end to those super efficient 3 mile final approaches to 06. Still the best Terminal ATC in Europe.

**Europe** EASA has launched a 2 person cockpit survey to open discussion on the impact of their new recommended practice of always having 2 crew members in the cockpit.

**PKMJ/Majuro**, Marshall Islands – ExxonMobil will have no fuel during tanker replenishment, scheduled for 13-17FEB.

**ZXXX/China** This is the busiest travel week of the year in China, with millions travelling for the Chinese New Year on 08FEB. Winter storms are forecast to impose delays across central Chinese airports; those currently affected include ZWWW/Urumqi Diwopu Int'l, ZSNJ/Nanjing Lukou Int'l, ZGGG/Guangzhou, and ZHHH/Wuhan Tianhe.

**ENGM/Oslo** Oslo Airport has started supplying Air BP Biojet via its regular fuel hydrant system, naming three large European airlines as launch customers. It is now supplied from the main fuel farm, via common storage and distribution facilities, without the need for segregated infrastructure. Previously, it had to be provided by fuel truck.

**DNKK/Kano ACC** Nigeria, Area Radar Service is provided H24 from 04FEB.

View the full International Bulletin 03FEB2016