



Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

Rt Hon Chris Heaton-Harris MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

By email only

16 April 2024

From the Chair
Rt Hon. Sir Robert Buckland KBE KC MP

Dear Chris,

My Committee has recently heard that there is ambiguity in whether Common Travel Area (CTA) rights are extended to residents of Northern Ireland who are not British, Irish, or European citizens.

Guidance published by the Cabinet Office and the Home Office in December 2022 reads as follows:

*'Under the CTA, British and Irish citizens can move freely and reside in either jurisdiction and enjoy associated rights and privileges, including the right to work, study and vote in certain elections, as well as to access social welfare benefits and health services.'*¹

However, there is no mention of the rights of legal residents who are not British, Irish, or European citizens and whether they can access the rights afforded by the CTA. Moreover, although the British Irish Visa Scheme (BIVS) allows Chinese and Indian nationals to visit the UK and Ireland with a short-stay or visitor visa, those Chinese and Indian nationals who are legal residents in the UK and/or the Republic of Ireland are still required to apply for a UK or Republic of Ireland visa to travel within the CTA, creating disparity in tourism access for legal residents of Northern Ireland who are not British, Irish, or European citizens.²

I would be most grateful if you could clarify what access, if any, legal residents of Northern Ireland who are not British, Irish, or European citizen have to CTA rights.

¹ Cabinet Office and Home Office, [Common Travel Area: rights of UK and Irish citizens - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/107147/Common_Travel_Area_rights_of_UK_and_Irish_citizens_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf), December 2022

² UK Visas and Immigration, [British-Irish visa scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/81147/British-Irish_visa_scheme_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf), May 2019



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Yours sincerley,

Robert Buckland

Rt Hon. Sir Robert Buckland KBE KC MP
Chair of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee