



29 January 2021

Dear Committee Chair,

### **UPDATE ON HONG KONG BRITISH NATIONAL (OVERSEAS) ROUTE**

Following previous correspondence, I am writing to update you on the upcoming launch of the Hong Kong British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) route from 31 January 2021.

This new immigration route will provide a path for BN(O) status holders from Hong Kong, and their eligible dependents, to come to the UK to live, study and work. After five years in the UK, BN(O) status holders and their family members will also be able to apply for settlement, followed by citizenship after a further 12 months.

This recognises the historic commitment of the UK to the people of Hong Kong, and specifically to those who elected to retain their ties to the UK through obtaining BN(O) status.

We acted swiftly to develop this route, recognising the unique circumstances facing BN(O) status holders and their family members. Additionally, ahead of the route opening, we also enabled eligible BN(O) status holders and their dependents wishing to leave Hong Kong before 31 January 2021 to be granted Leave Outside Rules at the UK Border.

I am also pleased to announce that from 23 February 2021, applications to the route can be made through a fully digital process, using the new technology developed for the UK's points-based immigration system.

This means that if an eligible applicant holds a BN(O), Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), or EEA biometric passport, they will be able follow a quicker and easier process by submitting their biometrics to validate their identity through a smartphone app, rather than visiting a Visa Application Centre. Successful

applicants will receive a digital status, which they will be able to check and prove online.

BN(O) status holders and their dependents are the second group after EEA nationals to have access to this new digital process, which further upholds our commitment.

As you know, the introduction of the Hong Kong BN(O) route follows the imposition of the National Security Law on Hong Kong by the Chinese Government in June 2020, which restricted the rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong and breached the Joint Declaration.

My officials are also working with colleagues across Government, the Devolved Administrations and alongside civil society groups and others to ensure BN(O) status holders and their dependents feel fully supported and welcomed when starting their life in the UK

Further detail about the route, including detailed applicant guidance, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hong-kong-british-national-overseas-visa-applications>, which will be replaced by the following page on 31 Jan: [www.gov.uk/british-national-overseas-bno-visa](https://www.gov.uk/british-national-overseas-bno-visa)

I look forward to discussing this with you and the Committee in due course.

*With our good wishes*  


**THE RT HON PRITI PATEL MP**  
**HOME SECRETARY**