

Border chaos fear

Tens of thousands of Britons with dual nationality risk being stranded abroad when the Government introduces computerised border controls.

The Daily Telegraph has learnt that the £1.2 billion "e-borders" system was not designed with individuals who hold two passports in mind.

At present, dual nationals (who were born outside Britain) usually use the passport of their birthplace to go home and their British one to re-enter Britain. Travellers born in the US, for example, use their American passport when booking a flight from Britain and when entering and leaving the US – as required by US law – but a British passport on returning to Britain.

The "e-borders" system will log passenger information according to the data provided by the airline, which in most cases will be from the non-British passport used for the outbound journey. As a result, a dual national – even if readmitted to Britain by an immigration officer on showing a British passport – could be registered as an alien with no more rights than any other tourist, and limited to six months in the country.

On a subsequent trip, such a

person attempting to return to Britain could be recorded as having broken immigration law. An airline, under the "e-borders" system, would be denied permission to carry the passenger home. Even if a British passport were presented, it would have to be verified by the nearest consulate or by the Passport Agency in the UK.

Australians, Americans, New Zealanders, Canadians and South Africans who have adopted British nationality are among those likely to be affected. There are more than half a million people born in these countries in the UK.

Airlines are concerned about the "e-borders" system. "It was not designed for dual nationals," an industry source said. "This really will create a challenge for the authorities. As things stand [people] will not be able to leave Britain on one passport and come back on another."

A UK Border Agency spokesman said: "With dual passports, you need to use the passport you bought the ticket with; that is the passport that is registered with Advance Passenger Information. If you don't use that passport, then you will not be able to travel."
David Millward,
Transport Editor