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Border Vision Advisory Group (BVAG) Hackathon – Contactless Travel

With the UK 2025 Border Strategy in mind, the Home Office has been working collaboratively with an advisory group with representatives from the travel and security industry, as well as academics in the field, to understand the short and long-term objectives and challenges for the UK border of the future. The Border Vision team has set up an Advisory Group that provides an opportunity for experts from several specialist fields to work alongside Home Office to drive academic research, spot potential causes of uncertainty, ensure adequate preparation, exploit opportunities and survive threat and horizon scanning to shape the future of border security by developing innovation in border technology and infrastructure.

On 20th May 2021, the BVAG held a hackathon on 'contactless travel', attended by representatives of 16 industry suppliers and 4 academics with expertise and experience in innovation within the security sector and border management. The hackathon aimed to answer the question, '**How does the UK Border establish a contactless travel solution within aviation?**'.

Key Themes/Findings

The event produced a large volume of ideas and creative thinking to support the implementation of a contactless solution at the UK Border, encouraging the Home Office to be innovative and ambitious in its approach.

The future border will likely operate through an interconnected system, where every passenger arriving at the border will be identified and screened against their status unintrusively and with no unnecessary direct interaction with officials. This will free up the highly skilled and trained Border Force Officers to intervene only when required for identification, immigration, and security purposes. Infrastructure will enable a flexible, fluid, and free-flowing approach. The end state solution is to move away from eGates and kiosks to utilise biometrics on the move.

The Home Office will work with industry to understand the latest developments in biometrics and automation technology, ensuring the systems adopted are flexible and future proofed for innovation. This will allow contactless travel to deliver real world solutions in timescales that keep the UK at the forefront of innovation in this space, in an environment where risk strategies around clearing immigration and security checks are evolving at pace.
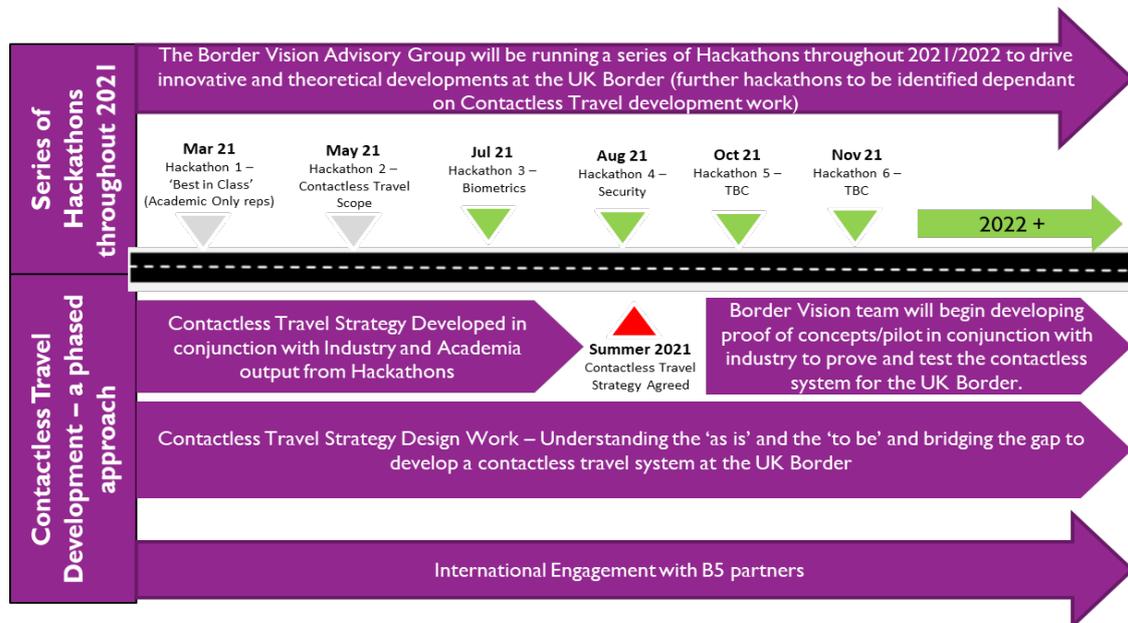
A clear, articulate set of standards will be developed for the use of technology at the UK Border. It is regarded by the industry that the technology that enables contactless travel is already available and ready for deployment. However, the standards for implementation are not clear and the technical adaptations required to meet these requirements will determine the readiness for deployment.

Additionally, a full contactless travel strategy is currently underpinned by the prior implementation of identification, security and immigration checks away from the UK border. The systemic transformation of how passengers will traverse the UK border, based on international cooperation between carriers, ports and the Home Office, is not yet at a maturity level for implementation, but is developing rapidly with a readiness view for the medium term (3-5 years).

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Next Steps/Actions

The data gathered from the Advisory Group Hackathons will be shared widely to enable awareness of industry views as to the challenges and possibilities of automating at the Border and the development of similar transformation initiatives across this space.

In partnership with our stakeholders across Government we will look to incorporate our findings into the contactless travel strategy and test the strategy in the delivery of a series of pilots/proof of concepts to deliver a contactless border that is effective, seamless and uses automation in a constructive, meaningful way.

The 3rd hackathon will aim to answer, '**How can Biometrics be efficiently and ethically used to improve the passenger flow, experience and security at the UK Border?**'. We look forward to sharing the outputs from that with you in due course.

For further information on the Hackathons or to be involved in future discussions, please contact the Border Vision team mailbox BorderVIsion@homeoffice.gov.uk.