

Walsh slams UK for one year delay to 10-year China visa

International Airlines Group (IAG) CEO Willie Walsh has criticised the UK Government for allowing another year's delay in introducing a 10-year visa for Chinese visitors, that he says would clearly drive both business and employment.

This plan was originally announced back in October 2015 during the much-publicised Chinese state visit to the UK and Walsh says it is a missed opportunity.

He said: The UK export market to China was worth nearly £13bn (\$16bn) in 2015. China is the worlds second largest economy and we need to do all we can to encourage these trade links. Making it easier for Chinese businesses and tourists to come to Britain is key to that.

Its a missed opportunity that the trial launched a year ago has still not begun. The US already has a standard 10-year visa, which costs around £100 (\$124) while Britains costs £800 (\$995). The Government needs to match its rhetoric on China with action.



IAG CEO, Willie Walsh.



THE UK IS LOSING OUT BADLY

The statement issued by IAG points out that in 2015, the top European destinations for Chinese visitors were France (733,328) and Italy (524,929) while 491,000 came to the UK.

According to the Governments figures each Chinese visitor to the UK in 2015 spent £2,174 (\$2,705) on average – more than twice the outlay of Americans.

Walsh added: Its not surprising the UK is significantly behind France and Italy in terms of Chinese visitors. They are generous spenders, so this hits our retail and hotel sectors hard. Streamlined processes and lower charges must be put in place to make the current visa system fit for

International Airlines Group (IAG) CEO Willie Walsh is not alone in his criticism of the UK Governments foot dragging when it comes to attracting Chinese visitors with 10-year visas.

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purpose.

“The Government needs to get its act together to make Britain attractive to the Chinese or we will continue to lose out on the economic benefits that they can bring to the UK. This is even more critical at a time when we need to ensure we can trade effectively post Brexit.

TRBUSINESS