



DEVON & SOMERSET TWINNING CIRCLE

HOME FROM HOME

SUMMER 2026

The next meeting of the Devon & Somerset Twinning Circle will be hosted by Braunton Twinning Association on **Saturday 4 July 2026** at St Brannocks (Church) Rooms.

The event will start at 12:00 noon, to allow time to socialise, before lunch is served around 12.30 p.m. After lunch and the Meeting (2pm) there will be a talk by James Benning a current Braunton Twinning member and former Estate Agent in Braunton. He will give us a guided and historical tour of Braunton through the Ages.

If you plan to only attend the meeting and not take lunch, it would be appreciated if you would advise Linda Norris to ensure there is sufficient seating.

How to book and pay for your lunch

The 2-course lunch costs £15 per person and includes tea or coffee.
The menu will be as follows:

First Course:

A full French themed Buffet to include: pate, salads, quiches (+ vegetarian), breads and cheeses.

Dessert:

Homemade Mousse au chocolat

Please contact us if you have any dietary queries and we will do our best to help you.

Please inform Linda Norris, if you want to take lunch telling her the number of places you require (stating if vegetarian) as soon as possible and please provide a contact email or mobile number in case of queries.

The email address is brauntontwinning75@gmail.com

Please pay for your lunch(es) by making a bank transfer to the Braunton Twinning account. Payment in full is required by Friday 19 June 2026.

Please include a **reference** as follows "DTC +number of tickets + part or all of surname" e.g. DTC2Jones

Bank Details: Braunton Twinning Organisation. Barclays A/c 53120406. Sort code: 20-68-15

Address and Parking:

St Brannocks (Church) Rooms, Church Street, Braunton. **EX33 2EP**. Head out of Braunton towards Ilfracombe on the main A361 and at Georgeham Cross the Rooms are on the right-hand side opposite the Fire Station/Police Station.

There is very limited on-street parking near the Rooms but a car park in front of the Rooms.

Braunton Twinning Association look forward to welcoming you.

The Twinning Circle AGM will be held in Clevedon on the 17th October**Future meetings**

April 2027 Dawlish

July 2027 tba

October 2027 Tiverton

This newsletter contains

- Member news
- Search for a Secretary
- Totnes/Vire Spring newsletter
- Rennes/Exeter 2026
- Rennes – Art residency
- Brampford Speke Tabletop sale
- An Uffculme Twinning Association Tribute to our retiring Chair
- Losing my Twinning and Karaoke Virginity in the same Weekend
- Chansons Cordiales
- Bank Account question and response
- Fundraising Concert in Exeter
- EES - Entry/Exit System
- ETIAS – European Travel Information and Authorisation System

Contributions to the newsletter

Articles are invited for anything relevant to twinning – how you undertake your fundraising, some historic stories and/or photographs from years gone by or just something you think will be entertaining or useful.

Remember you will be entered into the Monica Saunders Competition and could win £50 plus another £50 if judged the overall winner of the year.

Please keep the articles coming

Please send articles, reports, photographs by email to babenton52@gmail.com

TWINNING MEMBER'S NEWS

Bideford, Newton Abbot and Stokeinteignhead have returned to the fold.

Taunton-Lisieux have joined the Twinning Circle.

WANTED!

A Secretary for the Twinning Circle

This role is not too time consuming
(honest)

- Maintain the contact list for the Circle
- Liaise with groups hosting a meeting
- Prepare and issue agendas for the Committee and General meetings.
- Take the minutes at the meetings
- Respond to any queries from the website

Please let me know if you wish to take up
the mantle

babenton52@gmail.com



Newsletter Winter-Spring 25/26

Totnes & Vire – a living friendship in a digital age

A friendship with history

The twinning between Totnes and Vire was formally established in 1972, when a delegation from Totnes travelled to Normandy to sign the twinning charter. What began as a symbolic pledge has grown into more than fifty years of exchanges, visits and friendships between the two communities, sustained through changing times, political cycles and generations of local organisers.

The connection is reflected in the geography of both towns. In Vire there is a Place de Totnes, while in Totnes we have Vire Island — everyday reminders of a partnership maintained across generations.

Recent exchanges

In recent years the relationship has gained renewed momentum.

During an Advent visit to Vire in 2024, the Totnes group joined Christmas celebrations and sang carols at a festive concert. Totnes mayor Emily Price was invited to switch on the town's Christmas lights. Delegates also attended the naming of two roundabouts marking Vire's wartime history: Giratoire des Libérateurs Britanniques 1944, honouring the British forces who helped liberate the town during the Normandy campaign, and Giratoire de la Résistance, recognising the role of the French Resistance during the occupation.

A road was also named after former Totnes mayor Jim Parkes, recognising individuals who have helped sustain the relationship between the towns.



The exchange continued in November 2025 when a delegation from Vire visited Totnes during Remembrance events. The programme included a civic welcome at the Old Guildhall, an open forum on the meaning of town twinning, and a commemorative concert titled “One Shot”, written and produced by our Chair, Francesca Allan, and performed by members of the choir formed for last



year's Carols in Vire and a new band formed specially for the twinning event.

The concert combined wartime letters from soldiers in the trenches with songs from the period from both France and Britain. It is intended to perform “One Shot” in Vire in 2026.

The choir continues to grow since our first visit to Vire, and there are now plans for a new youth music project between the two towns to increase the cultural linkage.

Totnes has a superb facility for young people who want to learn how to play in bands in the converted 12th century Mill, known as the Jamming Station.

The visit also included a series of business and community integration meetings aimed at exploring practical links and future collaboration between organisations in both towns. We are organising a cycling visit to Vire in May and planning a cycle race in association with British Cycling in 2026 and Totnes Cycle Hub.

We are in negotiation for a twinning relationship between our local elementary school, St John's Bridgetown and St Joseph's Vire, following an exchange of Christmas drawings by the children.



During the November visit here was also wreath-laying at the St Mary's Cenotaph, and the visit concluded with a celebration dinner at the Totnes Boating Association overlooking Vire Island, bringing together visitors, host families and organisers.

Beyond ceremonies



Original by Fiona Green

While civic events remain important, the twinning is widening beyond formal receptions and occasional trips. Cultural and creative exchanges are increasingly part of the relationship. Local artist Fiona Green, aged 82, was selected to represent Totnes as part of a cultural exchange with Vire. Her paintings were exhibited across the town centre in Vire for two months, exploring themes of climate change, displacement and landscape. Influenced by her childhood in India, the Devon environment and the activist performance group Red Rebels, her work offered a contemporary artistic perspective within the long-standing partnership between the two towns.

Sport has also played a role. The Totnes–Vire cycling stage race, associated with the partnership since the early 1970s, remains a reminder that the twinning has at times embedded itself in everyday community life beyond committee rooms.

Why twinning still matters

Town twinning expanded across Europe after the Second World War as a way of rebuilding trust between communities that had recently been enemies. Instead of diplomacy taking

place only between governments, ordinary citizens were encouraged to meet, host one another and form lasting friendships across borders.

For Vire this history carries particular resonance. The town was heavily bombed by Allied forces during the Normandy campaign in June 1944, while it was occupied by German troops, and around 95% of the town was destroyed before it was eventually liberated. Much of the town seen today is the result of post-war reconstruction.

Seen in that context, a lasting friendship between a Normandy town and a Devon community represents something quietly powerful: reconciliation built through visits, music, shared meals and everyday human connection.

A practical invitation

The event on 7 March was a small example of how twinning continues to evolve. Digital links now make it possible for several towns to gather at the same moment while still meeting locally.



On Saturday 7 March, Totnes took part in a live twinning event linking five European towns, hosted by the Municipality of Vire Normandie. The Totnes connected in real time with Vire (France), Baunatal (Germany), Săcele (Romania) and Santa Fe (Spain), creating a shared civic moment across five communities gathering simultaneously.

The event, titled *Full Screen on Our Twinings*, was themed around fraternity. Each town had a short slot to share something distinctive about its twinning connection, followed by brief addresses from the mayors. Vire Normandie's mayor, Nicole Desmottes, spoke from Normandy, while Totnes Mayor Tim Bennett spoke at the Bay Horse.



Rypen

The evening also featured live music from Devon acoustic folk trio Rypen — Griselda Sanderson, James Dumbelton and Louis Bingham — well known for playing traditional folk music around Totnes and Dartmoor. Frédéric Goldberg, president of the Vire twinning committee, was in Totnes for the occasion, underlining that this is intended as a genuinely shared gathering rather than simply a screen-based watch-along.

So, if you were curious about French culture, European connections, or simply wanted to see what modern twinning looks like in practice, you were warmly invited to join the Totnes gathering at the Bay Horse Inn. There were drinks, nibbles and a bit of international fraternity, discussion about the connection between Totnes and Vire, and ideas were shared for what the next chapter of the partnership might look like. For those who remembered earlier exchanges — school trips, hosting arrangements, choir tours and civic visits — this was an invitation to reconnect with that living history and help shape what comes next. At the same time, the organisers were keen to welcome new participants who may be curious about getting involved for the first time. A number of ideas are already being explored, including youth-led video documentary exchanges, language learner meet-ups, arts and music collaborations, and hobby or sports connections that could run alongside the traditional visits. New suggestions are also warmly welcomed, as the aim is to keep the twinning lively, inclusive and relevant for the next generation.

Those interested in supporting the twinning are encouraged to become members of the *Totnes–Vire Twinning Association*, helping sustain the exchanges, events and visits that keep the partnership active while supporting new opportunities for cultural, educational and community collaboration between the two towns. Annual membership

is £20 for individuals or £25 for families, covering the calendar year. Members receive updates about upcoming activities and priority access to events.

For more information or to get involved, please contact the Chair of the Totnes–Vire twinning committee via francescakatieallan@gmail.com.

To stay connected and hear about future events, visits, ideas and opportunities to get involved, you can also join the Totnes–Vire Twinning Association Facebook group: <https://m.facebook.com/groups/3297457720408437/?ref=share>

Tobias Robshaw and Francesca Allan March 2026



This year in Rennes - and Exeter!

2026 is an important year for twinning in Exeter – and in Rennes, France. It is the 70th anniversary of the twinning agreement that was first signed by the two cities in 1956. To celebrate this there are a range of activities that are being held in both locations.

The first, in February, of this year, involved the visit of two Exeter artists – Lynda Powney and Vanessa Cecil - to Rennes for a week. During their time there our artists were greeted with a civic reception, a tour of the City Hall, and a tour of Rennes on the theme of street art. Then followed four days of project workshops, together with other artists from Rennes. The workshops included children's groups, family events and work with Rennes amateur artists. All on the theme of life in Rennes and life in Exeter. The children were particularly delighted to receive merchandise from Exeter City FC that our artists took with them. This busy week concluded with a tour of the Maurepas Museum of Fine Arts. Our artists were exhausted but delighted with such a well-organised visit, and to have met such friendly and positive people – artists, officials, French twidders and so many children and families from the community around the Rue d'Exeter in Rennes.

Next on the agenda are links being made between school children in Rennes and their peers in Exeter. An English videographer, based in the French city, is organising a video 'pen-pals' project, whereby children in each city make short videos about life in their cities and the surrounding area, and exchange them. The videos will be fully sub-titled so there is no need for the youngsters to be bi-lingual! Children from The Maynard School, from St Sidwells CE Primary and from Thorverton are expected to be part of this.

In Rennes our colleagues are also busy preparing a photographic exhibition, showing places and buildings which illustrate the similarities and differences between that city and its sister in Devon. There will be about 60 photographs in the exhibition, which will be on show in Rennes in May and June. We hope we may be able to bring the exhibition to Exeter later in the year – if we can find a venue and arrange the transport.

At the end of May a party of twinning circle members will be visiting Rennes, staying with our French hosts and taking part in the activities our Breton twinning colleagues will be arranging. This will of course include viewing the photographic exhibition, and the objects produced as part of the workshops around Rue d'Exeter. We are embracing common themes this year, such as how both cities have met the issues of rapidly increasing populations and housing provision, changes in transport focused on meeting the threats of global warming (cycle routes, long distance pathways, public transportation and so on) and combating the challenges of flooding. During our visit there will be a ceremony in Rennes City Hall to welcome the Exonians and to formally renew the friendship between the cities. It is expected that the British Ambassador to France may attend as the Embassy has supported some of the anniversary projects in Rennes.

In September our hosts in Rennes will be visiting Exeter, and we hope to be able to provide an interesting programme of activities for them (and our other Exeter Twinning Circle members) which will live up to the French celebrations of this significant anniversary.

Exeter was Rennes' first 'sister city' but since 1956 the Breton capital has gone on to form similar relationships with cities in the USA, China, Japan, Algeria, Ireland, Belgium, Germany, Romania, Kazakhstan, Mali, Poland and others. To celebrate this 70th anniversary of twinning, Rennes is planning a very special event in November. The Rennes Opera Company will be staging a special performance of Offenbach's 'Robinson Crusoe. Which will be filmed, and simultaneously screened in as many sister cities as possible around the world. We have a tentative agreement with Exeter University's Campus Cinema Society to screen this for us – in the evening of November 6th, so book the date now!

What a year for twinning, for Anglo-French and for Exeter-Rennes relationships this is turning out to be! New members of the Exeter twinning Circle are always welcome. We hold other social activities as well as those mentioned in this piece. Find us on Facebook, at our website - <https://exetertwinningcircle.org.uk> – or contact our Membership Secretary at membership@exetertwinningcircle.org.uk for more details.

70 Years
R **ENNES**
EXETER

Art residency, Rennes February 2026



To mark the 70th anniversary of Exeter-Rennes twinning, and as part of the Breton city's year-long project to host artists from their twin towns, we, Lynda Powney and Vanessa Cecil, were fortunate to be offered an artists' residency to work with local people of Rennes in February.

We spent a week in the handsome city, arriving in sun at the end of the stormy period that had dogged both Devon and Brittany (but still with an unnervingly bouncy ferry crossing). Our brief was to bring a little of Exeter, in the form of its streets, buildings, flora, fauna and culture, to art workshops with residents of Rue d'Exeter, Maurepas district. These would form the basis for local artists to develop the work through further workshops with the residents to produce a street plaque.

Since 2014 Maurepas has been transformed by an ongoing urban renewal project. It is spacious, leafy and, in February, alight with daffodils. The area is provided with new housing, shops, community centres, cultural programmes, and a monorail Metro line connecting with the city centre in minutes. Moreover, the Musée de beaux-arts last year opened an exhibition space integrated into a housing block (curved and known as "La Banane") where an annual exhibition will be co-created with the residents. We visited with the participants of one of our workshops, local artists and twinning members.

With the immense assistance of representatives of the Service International et Europe and local twinners, who helped organise and translate, we ran workshops in different venues with adults, children, and family groups. These included making prints based on Exeter's buildings with participants who, despite being new to the technique, produced some impressive images; making little booklets based on Exeter Football Club; and making string prints/collages/drawings inspired by Exeter's natural life, with families whose members ranged from a 4 year-old to grandparents. Everyone appeared to enjoy themselves; we certainly did.

The Rennes twinning members were extraordinarily hospitable and guaranteed that our stay was filled with social and cultural experiences – a galette lunch, a tour of street art, meeting local artists, the museum visit, aperitifs. We are grateful. In addition, we appreciate the support of Exeter Football Club, who provided children's backpacks, and Devon Wildlife Trust who provided magazines and stickers.

We are in touch with the Rennes artists involved in the project and are seeing how it is developing through the follow-up workshops.



EVERYONE WELCOME!

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See you there!

An Uffculme Twinning Association Tribute to our retiring Chair

Uffculme Twinning Association, like many other Twinning associations across Devon and Somerset, is fast approaching its 50th anniversary. At the Devon & Somerset meeting, in our own Village Hall on 25th April, we took time to give our thanks to an amazing ambassador of all things Twinning.

As a committee, we thought it an apt moment with so many committed and passionate Twinners present in the room for the lunch and meeting, to recognise the tremendous dedication and unfaltering commitment of one of our own members.

In April the nation recognised the centenary of Queen Elizabeth II's birth, and this is particularly fitting as the person who we celebrated was crowned 'La Reine d'Uffculme', Queen of Uffculme several years ago by our French friends in Caumont-sur-Aure (Normandy) – a title that has remained!

Yvette Cottrell recently stepped down from her role as Chair of our group, though she remains an active member of our committee. When quizzed on when she started as Chair, even she couldn't remember, it has been so long – in a great way!

Uffculme Twinning Association has been running for 49 years, and Yvette is one of the longest serving members. Her family too have been an integral part of the Twinning over the years and indeed Eunie, Yvette's mum is still a serving committee member. Yvette agreed to become a Committee member early on and somewhere between 20-23 years ago, we believe, she became Chair of the group.

Like all voluntary groups, we have seen good and harder times, but somehow Uffculme Twinning has remained strong –, where sadly some twinning groups have not survived. It is without doubt that our survival has been due in no small part to having a volunteer like Yvette at the helm. Over the past 25 years there have been austerity cuts, a global financial crisis, Brexit, Covid, a new King, endless Prime Ministers, streaming services such as Netflix, smartphones and AI... and much more. Whilst the world around us changed, continuity remained at the core of our Twinning group, thanks to Yvette.

Those present all joined us to thank Yvette for her endless enthusiasm, dedication and passion for all things Twinning in Uffculme, Caumont and beyond. Following a collection from our generous members, we were able to present Yvette with National Theatre Vouchers and a beautiful flower arrangement.

May she look back on her time as our Chair with fond memories and much pride. Thank You Yvette.

Uffculme Twinning Association

Losing my Twinning and Karaoke Virginity in the same Weekend

Just over a year ago Claire and Bruce asked me if I had thought about joining the Bampton Twinning Group. I liked the idea of expanding my horizons, so I thought why not. I was matched with Svitlana, who lived in Villers-Bocage, our town twin in Normandy. Unfortunately, she was unable to come across to Devon last year but this year I joined the Twinners on their bi-annual trip to France. All of the trip was immaculately organised by our very own “travel agent” Bruce - it was lovely having someone else do all the hard work.



On the Thursday evening, we took our coach down to Plymouth from where we took an overnight ferry to Roscoff, I strongly recommend taking a cabin although I am pretty sure that I'm the only person who slept soundly for a full 8 hours. From here there was a 3-hour coach trip before a stop at Haute Bretagne Jardins Botanique which were stunning. The plants were about 3 weeks ahead of Devon in the flowering cycle and the Acers and Azaleas in particular were a burst of colour. I loved the Japanese style areas with their mini pagodas and rake gravel. This stop was a late change as apparently the city of Rennes was “closed” as are most places in France on the May 1st public holiday, I am pleased it was closed because I love gardens.

From here it was about another hour and a half to reach the Hall at Villers-Bocage where there was a quick reception before we were whisked off to the homes of our individual families. I had been corresponding with Svitlana, my host, for about a year and she and her dear friend Guy had prepared a lovely meal. First a Kir Royale though, with nibbles!

Sviti had prepared a traditional Ukranian starter, a melange of vegetables finely cut, and subtly pickled, accompanying smoked salmon. Guy had prepared the main meal of chicken in a cream, cheese and white wine sauce with potato puree. This was of course followed by the cheese course and finally an ice cream sundae.

Naturally there were copious amounts of wine to accompany this - this would be a theme throughout the long weekend!



Our first full day in France started with a trip to the local city of Caen where we had a guided tour which included the chateau and old town and concluded at one of the 2 abbeys. Then it was on to lunch at a local restaurant. A very long affair, the best part of 3 hours, I had forgotten how long the French spend enjoying their food - take it as read that there was a lot of alcohol....

That evening was the main celebration meal: canapés, starter, sorbet, main meal, cheese and a sweet (although I bailed on the last 2 having already had a 3 course meal at lunchtime and breakfast). Oh and of course yet more alcohol. Then, the evening's main event the Karaoke.....

I am a terrible singer (my kids will affirm)! However, buoyed with a sense of camaraderie and alcohol (see earlier) I decided that I would lose my Karaoke virginity. I chatted to my new, but already firm friend, about finding a song that had both English and French lyrics; it would also be helpful if we both knew the melody. It was very brave of her to agree to do this with me, as she had also never done Karaoke, but she agreed and we decided on "Michelle" by the Beatles (despite the fact that it was released in the year we were born) and she came up with the idea that we would also do solo parts for some of the lines - in hindsight this may have been so that the audience would understand that she could actually sing and that the flat notes and general noise were solely down to me. We were called up second and went for it with gusto. I felt that our choice demonstrated entente cordiale. And Svitlana and I now have an "our song".



Other couples stepped up after us and there were a few larger group efforts (which included us) singing Karaoke classics such as YMCA, Dancing Queen and my personal favourite, "These boots are made for Walking" by Nancy Sinatra, which was so much fun that an encore was required. Naturally there were also some French classics which we attempted to join in with - I'm not sure of the titles but one certainly seemed to involve birds laughing, rainbows and bees in the chorus? It was a fun evening



The following day our hosts took us to Mont St Michel. We could see it rising up from out of the sea from about 20km inland as we approached. There were a lot of steps but it was worth it for the view although I rather like this view from the bridge linking it to the mainland when the tide isn't fully out.

We arrived back at Svitlana's late afternoon where Guy had prepared us a wonderful spaghetti bolognese made with three different meats. We had time for a quick shower and change and then it was back out again for another group evening. More food and more drink including sampling Calvados 44 which is made up of: a litre of calvados containing 1 orange with 44 incisions, 44 sugar cubes and 44 coffee beans stored for at least 44 days.

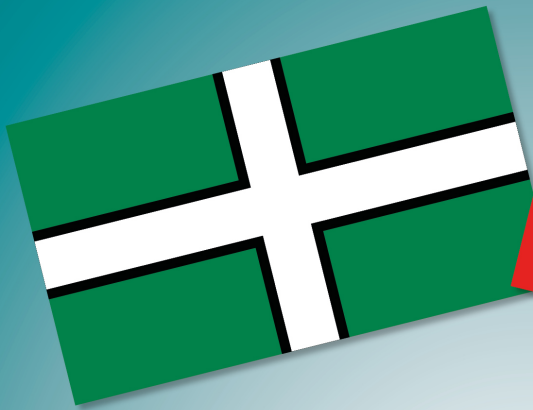
We left the following day with a vast quantity of wine that had been pre-ordered from our hosts and headed towards the Hypermarket at Cherbourg where we could buy our own wine. I decided against this - I was happy with the 2 bottles of top quality calvados that my hosts had helped me choose back in the heartland of the calvados and the 2 bottles of wine from Svitlana and Guy.

It was another very smooth, and much shorter, trip back on the ferry and we reached Bampton not long after midnight. Once there there was a quick pitstop at someone's house where we offloaded the Twinners' boxes of wine. It was clearly a well-practised routine with a human chain passing the boxes from the coach into the house. I've never felt more like a Devon pirate smuggling booze.

Once back I reflected on my time away. I had made a really good new friend in Svitlana, my French was a lot better than I thought it was, it had been fun, I was knackered and I now definitely needed a period of abstinence to detox my liver! One thing I would recommend is to connect with your host before visiting them - Svitlana and I had corresponded quite a bit by email ahead of the visit so I felt I knew her slightly first which is a lot more comfortable if you are a single woman staying at someone else's house.

And would I recommend Karaoke - of course! There are some provisos though: share the experience with someone else, chose a song whose register fits yours, throw yourself into it whole-heartedly and don't worry too much about what other people may think. And, most importantly, lubricate those vocal cords with sufficient alcohol.

Sue Shaw



Chansons *Cordiales*



Musical Director
Emma Palmer



Musical Director
Marie Kirchner

Saturday 20th June 7.30pm
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A QUESTION HAS BEEN RAISED BY ALAN LOMAX REGARDING TWINNING BANK ACCOUNTS

“I am the Treasurer of The Trebuerden and Newton and Noss Twinning Association. We have been banking with Lloyds since our inception in 2010 and now they have started charging £4.50 per month admin fee. I have tried several banks, but they will only give free banking to registered charities. Do you know of any bank that offers free banking to twinning associations. Is it possible for you to ask the question of the Circle members?”

Our treasurer, Claire Benton, offers the following advice

Q Are there any banks that do not charge for having a bank account for Twinning groups?

A Nat West

Q What is the best way to apply for this account?

A Online

Q Which account(s) do you recommend to open?

A Business (Groups) & Reserve

Q Is it safe to have only one signature to do online banking?

A It is much easier to do online banking with only one signature.

However, I would suggest at least 1 other person has access to online banking in order to check the information.

Q Do you get a debit card with this account?

A Yes, you can apply for a debit card.

Q How do I pay cash and cheques into this account?

A Cash can be deposited either at the bank or through the post office with a paying-in slip. If you use mobile banking, cheques can be deposited by scanning the front and back of the cheque which I find is the easiest way. If using the post office, then a deposit envelope is required with a deposit slip.

Please note cheques and cash cannot be deposited at the post office on the same paying in slip.

Q Do you have any other tips with using the account?

A Interest is paid on the Reserve Account, so I keep the bulk of the funds in this account as transfers to the current account are instant.

I have access to 3 groups who use Nat West and find their mobile app very easy to use and can access the bank accounts instantly and safely.

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citizens
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EES

Entry/Exit System

Starting October 12, 2025, the European Union implemented the Entry/Exit System (EES), a digital border management initiative that will significantly impact UK travellers. This system aims to replace traditional passport stamping with biometric data collection, including fingerprints and facial scans, to enhance border security and streamline entry and exit processes. As non-EU nationals, UK passport holders are subject to these new requirements when travelling to the Schengen Area.

Understanding the EES: What is it & Why Does it Matter?

The EES is a digital system designed to record the entry and exit of non-EU nationals at Schengen Area borders. It will automatically track the 90/180-day rule, which limits short stays to 90 days within any 180-day period. This system aims to improve border security, reduce fraud, and ensure compliance with visa-free travel regulations.

For UK passport holders, this means that every time they enter or exit the Schengen Area, their biometric data will be collected and stored in a central database. This data will be used to verify their identity and monitor their travel history, ensuring they do not overstay their permitted duration.

How Does the EES Affect UK Passport Holders?

1. Biometric Data Collection

Upon first entry into the Schengen Area after October 12, 2025, UK travellers will be required to provide biometric data at designated kiosks or border control points. This includes:

- Scanning of fingerprints
- Facial recognition scans
- Passport data entry

Children under 12 are exempt from fingerprinting but will still undergo facial recognition scans. This process is expected to add a few minutes to the usual border crossing time.

2. Phased Rollout.

(Ed. THIS WAS THE PLAN!!!)

The EES will be implemented in phases:

- **October 12, 2025:** Initial rollout at selected border points.
- **December 2025:** Biometric data collection becomes mandatory at all border points.
- **April 10, 2026:** Full implementation across all Schengen Area borders.

During this transition period, some travellers may still experience traditional passport stamping alongside biometric data collection.

3. Impact on Travel Plans

UK travellers should anticipate longer wait times at border crossings, especially during peak travel periods. It's advisable to arrive earlier than usual to accommodate the new procedures. Additionally, travellers should ensure their passports are valid for at least six months beyond their intended stay in the Schengen Area, as some countries may enforce this requirement more strictly under the new system.

Preparing for the EES: What UK Travellers Need to Do

To ensure a smooth travel experience under the new EES, UK passport holders should:

- **Verify Passport Validity:** Ensure your passport is valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from the Schengen Area.
- **Familiarise Yourself with the 90/180-Day Rule:** Understand the Schengen visa-free travel limitations to avoid overstaying.
- **Arrive Early at Border Crossings:** Allow extra time for biometric data collection and potential delays.
- **Stay Informed:** Keep up to date with UK travel updates regarding the EES and any changes to travel requirements.

Future Considerations: ETIAS and Beyond

Looking ahead, UK travellers should also be aware of the upcoming European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS), set to launch in late 2026. ETIAS will require travellers to obtain prior authorisation before entering the Schengen Area, similar to the U.S. ESTA system. This will add another layer of security and travel regulation for non-EU nationals.

The introduction of the EES represents a significant shift in how UK passport holders will interact with Schengen Area borders. While the transition may cause some initial inconvenience, the system aims to enhance security and streamline travel processes in the long term. By staying informed and prepared, UK travellers can navigate these changes smoothly and continue to enjoy seamless travel within the Schengen Area.

ETIAS

European Travel Information and Authorisation System

The system will check the security credentials and charge a fee to travellers visiting EU member countries for business, tourism, medical or transit purposes.

ETIAS is not a visa and is more accurately referred to as a visa-waiver. The ETIAS, like the ESTA, is a travel authorisation for travellers not requiring a visa to visit Europe. Under the ETIAS, these visitors will undergo additional security checks prior to being permitted to enter the EU.

By completing a simple ETIAS application online, travellers provide personal and travel details through an official application form. This information is checked against security databases before travel, helping authorities identify potential risks in advance.

Beginning the last quarter of 2026, UK passport holders will need an ETIAS travel authorization to enter any of the 30 European countries that require it, including Norway and Switzerland. The requirement applies to short stays of up to 90 days within a 180-day period, provided that travellers present a valid travel document.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR ETIAS

You can apply for ETIAS by completing an online form through the [official ETIAS website](#) or mobile app, using a valid travel document and a payment card. The application costs EUR 20, although exemptions apply to certain travellers, such as those under 18 or over 70 years old.

Most applications are processed within minutes, but in some cases, additional documents or an interview may be required, which could extend the timeline up to 30 days. Once granted, your ETIAS approval is valid for up to three years or until your passport expires, whichever comes first.

WHAT DOCUMENTS AND DETAILS ARE NEEDED TO APPLY

When applying for an ETIAS travel authorization, you will need to provide details from a valid travel document, such as a passport that is not older than 10 years and valid for at least three months beyond your intended departure.

The application requires personal details, including your:

- Name
- Date and place of birth
- Nationality
- Home address
- Parents' first names
- Contact information
- Education
- Occupation
- Information about your travel plans.

You must also disclose any criminal convictions, past travel to war zones, or return decisions issued against you, and declare that your information is truthful

It is important that the applicant's own email address is used in the application, as all communication regarding the ETIAS will be sent there.