

Russel Borthwick
Chief Executive
Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce

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7 October 2025

Dear Mr Borthwick,

Thank you for your letter of 9 September to the Home Secretary about the recent changes to the Immigration Rules. I am replying as the newly appointed Minister for Migration & Citizenship.

On 12 May we published our Immigration White Paper, outlining our future approach to legal migration routes. We have now made Immigration Rules changes to bring the first of these reforms into effect. The 22 July changes include raising the skills threshold to RQF 6 and a routine uplift of salary going rates.

We will not be introducing a geographically-based visa scheme. We recognise the demographic and labour market challenges faced by certain areas, but we do not believe immigration is a solution to these challenges, especially when we are unable to compel people to stay in particular areas indefinitely.

Business stakeholders across the UK have expressed a wish for greater levels of immigration, despite record numbers of work visas issued in recent years. However, it is important that industry looks to the domestic workforce to fill vacancies. The Immigration White Paper set out our goal to link migration policy and visa controls to skills and labour market policies, so that immigration is not used as an alternative to training or tackling workforce problems in the UK. We are committed to working with the Devolved Governments and with businesses in all the UK nations, both to assess how the current system is working and to analyse the impact of the proposed changes on individual sectors.

The new Labour Market Evidence (LME) Group we have established to carry out that analysis will collaborate with the relevant skills bodies, and this will be an opportunity for them to feed in the representations of all affected stakeholders, including any labour market data specific to their sectors, so that the LME Group can take that into account as part of its work.

The LME Group has now held its first meeting to establish its objectives and ways of working, and over the coming months it will hold a number of further meetings covering different sectors of interest, and drawing on the best data available to make informed decisions about the state of employment in each sector and the role that different policies should play to support the labour market. The Devolved Governments and stakeholders in each nation will be invited to contribute to those discussions.

The LME Group will also work with the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), the Office for National Statistics and the Office for Budget Responsibility to overhaul future data gathering and identify the research needed in each sector to develop accurate measurements and forward-looking workforce plans. In particular, the MAC will consider the workforce strategy for each sector, focusing on issues such as:

- How far is it underpinned by a skills strategy.
- How far it is underpinned by a commitment to work with the Department for Work and Pensions on a domestic labour strategy.
- How is the sector managing the risk of exploitation of workers, particularly migrant workers in the sector.
- Whether the strategy is sufficiently ambitious.

On 2 July we asked the MAC to advise on future salary requirements for Skilled Worker visas.

The Government keeps all routes under regular review to ensure they are operating in the best interests of the UK when it comes to future recruitment.

We have also commissioned the MAC to assess occupations which are included on the Temporary Shortage List (TSL). Being on the TSL will allow for applications to be made in occupations which are below the new RQF level 6 threshold. Occupations will only be included where they are key to the industrial strategy or delivering critical infrastructure, where the MAC has advised it is justified, where there is a workforce strategy in place, and where employers seeking to recruit from abroad are committed to playing their part in increasing recruitment from the domestic workforce.

While the MAC's TSL commission will focus only on Industrial Strategy sectors and delivery of critical infrastructure, the wider LME work is not limited.

There is a great deal of further work to be done around the reforms set out in the Immigration White Paper, and the key bodies responsible for driving forward that work are just now getting themselves fully established to do so. However, I am confident that this work will continue in a collaborative way, with stakeholders from key sectors in Aberdeen and Grampian being fully consulted.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Tapp', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Tapp MP
Minister for Migration & Citizenship