

24 January 2020

The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Home Secretary,

Fair and sustainable immigration is critical for growth across the UK. It is a top priority for businesses and the signatories of this letter. Together, we represent hundreds of thousands of firms of every size, sector and region, employing millions of people. We are writing to offer our help to make the new immigration system a success.

Recent announcements have increased optimism about how a system might work. A new two-year post-study work visa for international students, dropping the target to reduce net migration to the “tens of thousands” and signals that the £30,000 minimum salary test may change are welcome and have sent positive and important signals around the world that the UK is open for business.

Business understands that the immigration system must change in order to re-build public confidence. Insight from enterprise can help build a points-based model that provides greater control, whilst providing access to the labour and skills needed to support the economy. And this can go hand in hand with a continued determination to invest in training home grown talent.

There are four key priorities that will help to ensure the new system works on day one for all UK regions and nations:

- **A minimum salary threshold can work if it is set at a level that supports the economy and protects wages** – the right threshold can provide confidence that migrants are not accepting wages lower than those of UK workers. This is currently achieved in the non-EU immigration system by requiring a salary that is both higher than 25% of people in the same occupation and higher than 25% of jobs across all occupations of the relevant skill level. The Migration Advisory Committee already recommends lowering the skill level to ‘A-Level’ or equivalent to secure a work visa post-Brexit. Following this tried and tested formula would mean that a worker from overseas would have to earn both more than £20,100 and more than 25% of people doing the same job. This would protect wages and ensure that shortages in jobs such as technicians, carpenters, translators and care-home managers can be addressed.
- **Flexibility for skilled workers to enter the UK through a points-based system** – salary isn’t the only way to predict somebody’s contribution, so an ability to hire people with lower salaries based on their qualifications, work experience and other attributes is welcome. This must add flexibility for businesses to hire the labour and skills they need, rather than be an additional requirement. A new unsponsored points-based route for skilled workers is particularly important for smaller businesses and should also be added. Additionally, lowering the salary threshold for shortage occupations is a principle we warmly support.
- **A temporary visa route which supports all sectors of the economy** – extending this unsponsored route from one to two years will encourage migrant workers to integrate into local communities whilst also ensuring they are more productive, rather than businesses having to constantly start over by hiring new people. Making this route available to all sectors, with a cooling-off period reduced to six months, will help companies plug vital skills and labour gaps. In-country switching to the skilled worker visa, if the eligibility criteria is subsequently met, should also be allowed.
- **A radically reformed sponsorship process in place for the first day of operation** – the government’s ambition to radically simplify the current sponsorship system is both welcome and essential to reduce cost and complexity for firms hiring from overseas. Completing and testing these reforms before switching to the new system will help smaller companies avoid expensive legal advice. Minor adjustments to the existing non-EU visa route would be insufficient and act as a major barrier to accessing the skills needed to grow the economy.

The economy needs a simple, streamlined and affordable system that meets business’ needs of all sizes, sectors and across all UK regions and nations.

We look forward to working with the new government to inform the detailed design of a new immigration system in a way that commands public confidence and supports the UK’s global ambitions.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Everitt, Chief Executive Officer – **ADS Group**

Stephen Woodford, Chief Executive – **Advertising Association**

David Camp, Chief Executive – **Association of Labour Providers**

Emma McClarkin, Chief Executive – **British Beer and Pub Association (BBPA)**

Dr Adam Marshall, Director General – **British Chambers of Commerce (BCC)**

Dr Laura Cohen MBE, Chief Executive – **British Ceramic Confederation**

Tom Bowtell, Chief Executive Officer – **British Coatings Federation (BCF)**

Dr David Moore, Chief Executive Officer – **The British Constructional Steelwork Association (BCSA)**

Dave Dalton, Chief Executive – **British Glass (BG)**

Graeme Trudgill FCII, Executive Director – **British Insurance Brokers' Association (BIBA)**

Richard Ballantyne, Chief Executive – **British Ports Association**

Melanie Leech CBE, Chief Executive – **British Property Federation (BPF)**

Charles Jarrold, Chief Executive – **British Printing Industries Federation (BPIF)**

Michael Moore, Director General – **British Private Equity and Venture Capital Association (BVCA)**

Suzannah Nichol MBE, Chief Executive – **Build UK**

Anne Kiem OBE, Chief Executive – **Chartered Association of Business Schools (Chartered ABS)**

Peter Cheese, Chief Executive – **Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)**

Dame Carolyn Fairbairn, Director General – **Confederation of British Industry (CBI)**

Peter Caplehorn RIBA, Chief Executive – **Construction Products Association (CPA)**

Tony Craddock, Director General – **Emerging Payments Association**

Brian Berry FRSA, Chief Executive – **Federation of Master Builders (FMB)**

Mike Cherry, National Chairman – **Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)**

George A. Lee, Chief Executive – **Highways Term Maintenance Association (HTMA)**

Neil Jefferson, Managing Director – **Home Builders Federation (HBF)**

David Hare, Chief Executive – **Independent Healthcare Providers Network (IHPN)**

Jonathan Geldart, Director General – **Institute of Directors (IoD)**

Jasmine Whitbread, Chief Executive – **London First**

Stephen Phipson CBE, Chief Executive – **Make UK**

James Selka DL, Chief Executive Officer – **The Manufacturing Technologies Association (MTA)**

Chris Aylett, Chief Executive Officer – **Motorsport Industry Association (MIA)**

Deirdre Michie OBE, Chief Executive Officer – **OGUK**

Neil Carberry, Chief Executive Officer – **Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC)**

Karen Betts, Chief Executive Officer – **Scotch Whisky Association (SWA)**

Julian David, Chief Executive Officer – **techUK**

Bob Sanguinetti, Chief Executive – **UK Chamber of Shipping**

Anne Marie Graham, Chief Executive – **UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA)**

Nigel Lugg, Chairman – **UK Fashion & Textile Association (UKFT)**

Kate Nicholls, Chief Executive Officer – **UK Hospitality**

Dr Jo Twist OBE, Chief Executive Officer – **The Association for UK Interactive Entertainment (Ukie)**

Helen Fairfoul, Chief Executive – **Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA)**

Helen Brocklebank, Chief Executive Officer – **Walpole**