

The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Minister for Immigration
The Home Office
Direct Communications Unit
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

20th December 2022

By email to: ps.robertjenrick@homeoffice.gov.uk

Dear Minister,

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Minister for Immigration.

As leading trade associations representing the UK's logistics sector, we are writing collectively to seek your support to ensure that the upcoming review of the Shortage Occupation List (SOL), which was requested by your predecessor, recognises the significant labour shortages facing our industry.

We agree with the view of the previous minister, which was made clear in his letter to the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), on 24th August 2022, that sectors and businesses must work towards ending their reliance on migration.

The UK's logistics industry is working tirelessly to recruit and train a homegrown workforce. Initiatives such as Generation Logistics, which has received backing from the government, logistics businesses and trade associations, is an example of our industry coming together to help solve its skills and labour shortages.

However, the government must recognise that despite extensive efforts and collaboration, our industry, which is one of the fastest growing in the UK's economy, needs a short to medium-term labour boost to manage immediate and growing consumer demand.

COVID and the UK's exit from the EU resulted in thousands of logistics workers returning to their home nations and not coming back.

Since Q3 2019, the Labour Force Survey shows that the number of forklift truck drivers has fallen by nearly a fifth (19.3%), despite the significant uplift in demand for warehousing and logistics activities.

Over the same period, the number of HGV drivers in employment has fallen by 0.9%, or 2,675 drivers. Within this, the number of EU HGV drivers has increased by 6,700, partly compensating for a reduction of approximately 10,000 UK HGV drivers. However, even though the number qualifying domestically has increased, the number of HGV drivers in employment remains stubbornly at 2019 levels when there was an estimated chronic shortfall of 60,000 drivers.

In his letter to the MAC, the previous minister referred to the temporary visa measures which were made available to food supply chain workers last autumn, suggesting that there were not a significant number of applicants.

We want to make clear that this was not because the demand was not there – it was because the duration of the visa being offered to potential migrant workers was so short (a matter of weeks by the time the initiative was launched) that it was not feasible for them to disrupt and uproot their lives. The MAC's annual review of 2021 concurs with our view that temporary measures such as short-term visas are not a suitable solution to skills shortages.

Another significant labour shortage in the sector is mechanics. It is vital that mechanics remain on the SOL. Any impact to availability of mechanics would be detrimental to the sector.

We are keen to meet with you and your officials to discuss how we can work collectively to ensure logistics businesses can meet demand in the short to medium-term and to demonstrate our commitment for a longer-term solution which is not reliant on migration.

We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

