

The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

19th August 2021

Dear Home Secretary,

Ref: Youth Mobility Scheme – an opportunity to mitigate HGV driver shortage

As you are aware, UK road freight supply chains are experiencing a critical shortage of skilled staff (especially HGV drivers) which is impacting the ability to keep goods moving effectively across the economy. These now visible problems are getting worse as we open the economy and move into the seasonal peak.

One of the factors causing our driver shortage is the loss of EU drivers as many returned home during the pandemic and have not come back. Given the changes to immigration rules since January 2021, new EU HGV drivers are no longer able to work in the UK as they are excluded from the Shortage Occupation List. We have campaigned for changes to this list and still believe that skilled qualified lorry drivers should be included.

We also believe there is another helpful action that can be taken to mitigate our critical lorry driver shortage in the short to medium-term. That action would be for the UK Government to temporarily expand the Youth Mobility Scheme to permit young people (under 30) from the EU and EEA to work in the UK. Currently the scheme is closed to EU and EEA citizens.

The scheme was set up to give young people in selected countries the opportunity to experience life in the UK, enabling them to work and travel for up to two years. The scheme is reciprocal as it allows young people from the UK to work and travel within 8 other countries included in the current agreement.

We understand that Government is currently looking to open the scheme to new countries. Given this, and the critical labour shortages in parts of our economy, the RHA suggests that opening the scheme to EU and EEA citizens below the age of 30 without the immediate need for these countries to reciprocate at this time (reciprocal agreements could come later), is a reasonable and practical approach.

The RHA believes that opening the scheme to EU and EEA citizens (who have compatible qualifications in many areas such as professional lorry driving) will provide a useful and immediate contribution to mitigating the current labour shortage. It will provide businesses with a pool of qualified temporary labour that we are currently seeking. More widely, it would provide immediately usable access to young people, many with professional qualifications, on a temporary basis until

the skills shortage gap can be rectified by stepping up the training of UK workers. It is possible that between 2,000 and 4,000 qualified drivers could be attracted via this route.

Our current labour shortage is serious. It will take UK hauliers at least 18 months to train and qualify the number of drivers needed for our market. During this time, we need as many options as possible to prevent the continued worsening of disruption to supply chains. Although we recognise that opening the Youth Mobility Scheme to EU and EEA countries will not solve our issues, it would be a useful addition to the package of measures being pursued.

We also believe that opening the scheme in this way, is compatible with an outward facing Global Britain as we recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

Given that logistics is not the only sector to be experiencing skills shortages, opening the Youth Mobility Scheme would assist other businesses across the UK with their labour issues in a controlled a defined way. Ultimately, if reciprocal agreements are made, it will give young UK citizens the chance to develop skills useful for the UK as they live and work across other countries.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss options to access non-UK workers with you. Our aim is to help you to help us prevent the considerable disruption and ongoing deterioration of supply chains across the UK.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Burnett
Chief Executive

The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP, Secretary of State for Transport,
The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer,
The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster,
The Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Kevin Foster MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Future Borders and Immigration