

News story: UK farmers given support for seasonal labour with new pilot scheme

A two-year pilot to support UK farmers by allowing non-EU migrant workers to work on farms, then return after six months, has been announced by the Home Secretary and Environment Secretary.

Welcoming the announcement, Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

We have listened to the views of farmers in Scotland and across the UK. Many of Scotland's farms, in particular our soft fruit growers, rely on seasonal workers. This pilot is a welcome first step in ensuring that Scottish farmers can continue to access the workers they need to grow and harvest their produce.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

British farmers are vital to the UK's economy – and the Government will look to support them in any way we can.

This pilot will ensure farmers have access to the seasonal labour they need to remain productive and profitable during busy times of the year.

I am committed to having an immigration system that reduces migration to sustainable levels, supports all industry and ensures we welcome those who benefit Britain.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

We have listened to the powerful arguments from farmers about the need for seasonal labour to keep the horticulture industry productive and profitable.

From lettuce in East Anglia to strawberries in Scotland, we want to make sure that farmers can continue to grow, sell and export more great British food.

This two year pilot will ease the workforce pressures faced by farmers during busy times of the year. We will review the pilot's results as we look at how best to support the longer-term needs of industry outside the EU.

Soft fruit production in the UK has grown dramatically, by 130% in the last 20 years. Fruit is grown particularly in the South East (Kent), Midlands (Hereford, Worcestershire and Shropshire) and in Scotland (Perthshire), while field vegetables are grown widely across the UK.

In 2016 Scottish fruit and vegetables had an output value of £265.9m. In June 2016 Scotland had 22,000 hectares of land used for horticulture – 18,200 for vegetables, 1900 for fruit and 950 for flower and nursery stock.

The Seasonal Workers pilot will be run by two scheme operators, who will oversee the placement of the workers. The arrangements for selecting the scheme operators will be announced in due course.

To be eligible for the pilot workers must be aged at least 18 years old on the date of application and be from outside of the European Union.

The pilot will commence in the spring of 2019, will run until the end of December 2020 and will be monitored closely by the Home Office and Defra.

Statement to Parliament: Update on UK Government effort to restore the Northern Ireland Executive

Northern Ireland needs devolved Government.

It needs all the functioning political institutions of the Belfast Agreement and its successors.

As significant decisions are taken at this critical time, Northern Ireland's voice must be heard.

With new powers coming back from Brussels and flowing to Stormont, Northern Ireland needs an Executive in place to use those powers to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.

As relationships evolve, a functioning North-South Ministerial Council is vital to ensure Northern Ireland makes the most of its unique position within the UK and in relation to Ireland.

And there are other critical strategic decisions which need to be taken for

Northern Ireland – on, for example, investment, reform of public services and future budgets.

Critical cross-cutting programmes – addressing social deprivation, tackling paramilitarism – are stalling following 19 months without devolved government.

As this impasse continues, public services are suffering. Businesses are suffering. The people of Northern Ireland are suffering. Local decision-making is urgently needed to address this.

The only sustainable way forward lies in stable, fully functioning and inclusive devolved government.

So, with determination and realism, we must set a clear goal of restoring the devolved power-sharing Executive and Assembly.

In the absence of an Executive, I have kept my duty to set a date for a fresh election under review.

I have not believed and do not now believe that holding an election during this time of significant change and political uncertainty would be helpful or would increase the prospects of restoring the Executive.

But I am aware of the current legislative position.

In order to ensure certainty and clarity on this issue, I intend, therefore, to introduce primary legislation in October to provide for a limited and prescribed period in which there will be no legal requirement to set a date for a further election, and importantly, during which time an Executive may be formed at any point without the requirement for further legislation. This will provide a further opportunity to re-establish political dialogue with the aim of restoring the Executive as soon as possible.

While Assembly Members continue to perform valuable constituency functions, it is clear that during any such interim period they will not be performing the full range of their legislative functions. So, in parallel, I will take the steps necessary to reduce Assembly members' salaries in line with the recommendations made by Trevor Reaney. The reduction will take effect in two stages, commencing in November – it would not reduce the allowance for staff as I do not think that MLAs' staff should suffer because of the politicians' failure to form an Executive.

I wish to commend the key role that the Northern Ireland Civil Service has played during the period in which there has been no Executive in ensuring the continuity of public services in Northern Ireland.

Following the recent decision of the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal in the Buick case, I recognise that there is a need to provide reassurance and clarity to both the NICS and the people of Northern Ireland on the mechanisms for the continued delivery of public services.

So, the legislation I intend to introduce after the conference recess will

also include provisions to give greater clarity and certainty to enable NI departments to continue to take decisions in Northern Ireland in the public interest and to ensure the continued delivery of public services.

I intend to consult parties in Northern Ireland over how this might best be done.

I will also bring forward legislation which will also enable key public appointments to be made in Northern Ireland, as I set out in my written statement on 18 July.

At the same time I am conscious that this is no substitute for the return of elected ministers taking decisions in the Executive accountable to the Assembly.

I also intend, therefore, to use the next few weeks to engage in further discussions with the parties and the Irish Government in accordance with the three stranded approach with the intention of establishing a basis for moving into more formal political dialogue that leads to a restoration of the institutions.

These discussions will also seek the views from the parties on when and how external facilitation could play a constructive role in the next round of talks. No agreement can ever be imposed from outside Northern Ireland.

It must be reached by those closest to the issues, those who have been elected to represent the people of Northern Ireland.

I believe that the people of Northern Ireland want to see a restoration of their political institutions and that is what this Government is committed to achieving.

This statement represents a clear way forward and a plan for Northern Ireland and I commend it to the House.

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[jailed after Solicitor General's referral](#)

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Craig Scarpellini, now 26, was walking through Christchurch when he came across his victim, who was drunk, and offered him cannabis if he came to Scarpellini's flat. When they reached the block of flats, another man emerged with his face covered, and the victim attempted to run. Scarpellini punched him to the side of the head, and the pair proceeded to continue punching until he fell unconscious.

When the victim came to, he discovered that his phone and wallet were missing. He suffered minor injuries to most of his body, as well as experiencing nausea and pain in his temple. His left thumb was fractured. When questioned, Scarpellini claimed to have acted in self-defence after the victim had gone 'beserk'.

Scarpellini's original hearing was at Bournemouth Crown Court in July, where his sentencing was deferred until November 2018.

Today, after the Solicitor General's referral, the Court of Appeal sentenced him to 4 years immediate custody.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General said:

"Scarpellini launched an unprovoked attack against his victim, and I am pleased that the Court of Appeal has today agreed that the risk he poses to the public warrants immediate custody."

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