

Douglas Ross comment on new points-based immigration system

We will build an open, outward-looking United Kingdom – a nation which draws on a global pool of talent and expertise, and values a person's skills more than what country they come from.

The new system announced today will make sure our economy attracts and retains the best talent from around the world, welcoming people to Scotland and the whole UK based on how they can help grow our country.

For our Universities and high-tech sectors, this will open the door to more skilled staff. We have also recently confirmed a new graduate route which will allow international students to stay in the UK for two years after they finish studying. It will make the UK's offer even more competitive and make it easier for international students to secure skilled jobs in the UK.

The new system will also reduce the salary threshold, which is again good news for Scotland. As an MP for a rural constituency I know there are challenges that communities in rural Scotland are facing, particularly the reliance on low-skilled and seasonal migrants. Although remote areas are not unique to us in Scotland.

To further support this sector, we are quadrupling the Seasonal Workers scheme for agriculture from 2,500 to 10,000 places which is important for our vital agricultural sector. Expanding this pilot will help us assess and inform future decisions of our immigration system.

But we also need to consider why people leave these areas which is more important than bolstering local communities with uncontrolled migration. The Scottish Government has significant devolved tools at its disposal to attract people to parts of Scotland and we encourage them to start delivering on this.

The Scottish Government have been campaigning for a different immigration system that goes against the recommendations of the independent and impartial Migration Advisory Committee. Applying different immigration rules to different parts of the UK would create additional burdens for business – and build borders within the UK.

Our points-based immigration system will deliver what businesses in Scotland have asked for and work in the interests of the whole of the United Kingdom.

What we need to do now is continue to work, with the Scottish Government, to ensure Scotland is an attractive destination for workers from around the world, so that we continue to build our economy.