

Service update – CICA festive opening hours

News story

An update on CICA's telephone helpline opening hours over the festive period.



Our telephone helpline will be closed between 3pm on Thursday 24 December until 10am Tuesday 29 December and from 3pm on Thursday 31 December until 10am Tuesday 5 January.

Our telephone helpline will be open during the following hours:

- Tuesday 29 December – 10am until 3pm
- Wednesday 30 December – 10am until 3pm
- Thursday 31 December – 10am until 3pm

We will return to our opening hours of 10am to 3pm, Monday to Friday from 5 January 2021.

You can continue to use our [online application service](#) throughout this time.

Published 22 December 2020

Mid Wales Growth Deal Reaches Key Milestone

Press release

The UK Government and other partners sign Heads of Terms for the Mid Wales

Growth Deal.



Simon Hart and David TC Davies signed the Heads of Terms with other partners

The Mid Wales Growth Deal reached a significant milestone this week (Tuesday, 22 December) with the signing of the Heads of Terms by the UK Government, Welsh Government and the region's local authorities.

The signing demonstrates a commitment by both governments and the local authorities to work together to deliver a deal to support the economy of the region.

It also commits both the UK and Welsh Governments to back the growth deal with a £55m investment each, totalling £110 Million.

The region can now progress to the next stage which includes bringing forward more detailed proposals in the form of a Portfolio Business Case which will be developed from eight priority areas for intervention, including digital connectivity, applied research and innovation, energy, skills and employment, business support, transport, agriculture, including food and drink and a strengthened tourism identity.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

The UK Government is working to bring greater investment and growth to communities across Wales and today's signing represents real progress in achieving those aims.

The Mid Wales Growth Deal is a significant opportunity to transform the region. We will build back better from the pandemic and bring opportunities and jobs to our communities which is why we have already committed £55m to this exciting portfolio of investment.

We will continue to work with our partners to develop the growth deal and ensure it delivers for the people and businesses of Mid Wales.

Up to 30,000 workers to help reap 2021 harvest

The Seasonal Workers Pilot, originally launched in 2019, has been extended and expanded for an additional year with 30,000 visas available for those wanting to come and work on UK farms for a period of up to six months. The workers will play a vital role in helping horticulture growers pick and package their produce in 2021, whilst reducing their reliance on migrant labour as we exit the EU.

The expansion of the scheme follows a long period of close working with the National Farmers Unions and the Association of Labour Providers, across all parts of the UK and in particular recognition of the need for additional seasonal labour in Scotland to support local rural economies and the renowned soft fruit growers.

In addition, the government alongside industry will build on this year's Pick for Britain campaign and actively promote the recruitment and retention of domestic seasonal workers in 2021. This year Pick for Britain helped to raise the profile of roles in the sector, encouraging UK based workers take on seasonal jobs during the busy harvest months to help keep the nation fed.

Alongside the Seasonal Workers Pilot, Defra will also lead a review into automation in horticulture, to begin in early 2021. The review will report on ways to increase automation in the sector and meet the government's aim of reducing the need for migrant seasonal labour.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

We will always back our farmers and growers, who work hard all year round to provide us with a secure supply of fruit and vegetables.

The measures announced today will provide vital labour, both domestic and from abroad, to our farmers and growers to help gather the 2021 harvest to feed the nation. Our review into automation will pave the way for a pioneering and efficient future for our fruit and vegetable growers.

Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

The expansion of the Seasonal Workers Pilot is great news for Scottish farmers and our world-class produce. The UK Government has listened to Scottish farmers and our rural communities.

From next year, up to 30,000 visas will be granted for workers to

come to the UK for a period of up to six months to pick and package fruit and vegetables on our farms. This will give certainty to the country's fruit and vegetable growers, and help ensure our critical food security.

NFU Scotland President, Andrew McCornick said:

NFU Scotland welcomes today's announcement that there will be a Seasonal Worker Scheme allowing 30,000 workers from outside the UK to undertake vital seasonal agricultural work.

The significant upscale of the Seasonal Worker Scheme from 10,000 to 30,000 permits has been hard won. Following close and supportive dialogue with government and MPs, NFU Scotland welcomes this increase on the understanding that the EU Settlement Scheme will allow workers who have undertaken work on Scottish horticulture farms prior to 2021 to return. And following the major, industry-led effort to recruit domestic workers during the 2020 pandemic, growers will continue to utilise all tools to encourage as much recruitment from within the UK as possible in 2021.

We look forward to working with government to establish the terms and operation of the scheme in terms of cost for employers and which operators will be licensed to operate.

Chief Secretary to the Treasury Steve Barclay MP said:

Farmers and growers play a crucial role throughout the year in providing fresh British quality produce for the public. We are determined to support our farming sector as we leave the EU, and to reduce the food miles of food in our shops as part of our wider commitment to the environment.

Extending this pilot for another year and expanding its size show that we are continuing to listen and respond constructively to our farming sector as they prepare for next year's crop.

The Seasonal Workers Pilot opened in 2019 and was designed to test the effectiveness of our immigration system at supporting UK growers during peak production periods, whilst maintaining robust immigration control, and ensuring the welfare of participating migrant workers. It also provides a valuable source of labour for the UK's fruit and vegetable growers helping to make sure that all that we grow in this country gets onto our supermarket shelves.

The UK Government has a long history of helping farmers and growers get the seasonal workers they need. Since the end of WW2, similar schemes for Seasonal Agricultural Workers have welcomed migrant workers into the UK –

this latest iteration shows the government's continued commitment to supporting the sector.

[Up to 30,000 workers to help reap 2021 harvest](#)

The number of workers permitted to travel to the UK to pick and package fruit and vegetables will be increased for next year's harvest, the government has announced today (22 December).

The Seasonal Workers Pilot, [originally launched in 2019](#), has been extended and expanded for an additional year with 30,000 visas available for those wanting to come and work on UK farms for a period of up to six months. The workers will play a vital role in helping horticulture growers pick and package their produce in 2021, whilst reducing their reliance on migrant labour as we exit the EU.

The expansion of the scheme follows a long period of close working with the National Farmers Unions and the Association of Labour Providers, across all parts of the UK and in particular recognition of the need for additional seasonal labour in Scotland to support local rural economies and the renowned soft fruit growers.

In addition, the government alongside industry will build on this year's Pick for Britain campaign and actively promote the recruitment and retention of domestic seasonal workers in 2021. This year Pick for Britain helped to raise the profile of roles in the sector, encouraging UK based workers to take on seasonal jobs during the busy harvest months to help keep the nation fed.

Alongside the Seasonal Workers Pilot, Defra will also lead a review into automation in horticulture, to begin in early 2021. The review will report on ways to increase automation in the sector and meet the government's aim of reducing the need for migrant seasonal labour.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

We will always back our farmers and growers, who work hard all year round to provide us with a secure supply of fruit and vegetables.

The measures announced today will provide vital labour, both domestic and from abroad, to our farmers and growers to help gather the 2021 harvest to feed the nation. Our review into automation will pave the way for a pioneering and efficient future for our fruit and vegetable growers.

NFU Vice President Tom Bradshaw said:

This is welcome and positive news, not just for Britain's growers but also for shoppers who want to enjoy home-grown fresh produce.

By expanding the Seasonal Workers Pilot, the Government is sending a clear message that it is important for Britain to be able to produce its own fruit and veg, which has huge potential for growth. This scheme will allow growers to employ seasonal workers at key times to pick a wide variety of fresh produce on British farms.

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Extending this pilot for another year and expanding its size show that we are continuing to listen and respond constructively to our farming sector as they prepare for next year's crop.

Today's announcement comes just weeks after the government shared its [blueprint for the agricultural transition period](#), which set out how farmers will be supported to adapt to the future farming policy over a period of seven years.

From next year, farmers will be able to harness the power of on-farm technology and innovation through the Farming Investment Fund, which will open for applications next year. This fund will offer farmers grants for equipment, technology and infrastructure, supporting them to invest in their businesses and boost their productivity.

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supporting the sector.

PM letter to the The House of Lords Appointments Commission: 21 December

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