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Dear Ms Cooper,

### **An immigration system made for Scotland**

We were encouraged to read that Labour is taking forward plans for a regionally adaptable immigration system that would allow for Scotland to address significant skills shortfalls and acute demographic challenges.

As you may be aware, Scotland suffered from a negative natural change in our population last year, with the number of deaths outnumbering births. Combined with an increasing mean age profile of our population, the available workforce is getting smaller and, in turn, our economy is being held back.

Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce is the largest business chamber in Scotland and one of the most active on this policy issue within the United Kingdom. Collectively our 1,200 members employ more than 100,000 people, representing around half the workforce of the North East of Scotland, which is the home of Britain's energy sector and the powerhouse of Scotland's economy.

In conjunction with Edinburgh and Glasgow Chambers of Commerce we published a major report last year — [Scotland's Urban AGE 2022](#) — which concluded that immigration policy should be devolved to ensure that our cities and regions can be smarter when it comes to attracting the workforce they need to prosper.

We regret that much of the debate on this issue in recent years has focused not upon what businesses need, but upon what communities in the South East of England are most concerned about.

A more flexible system, tailored to the nations and regions of the UK where there is specific demand, is something we would support and we would welcome engagement with Labour to develop these proposals further.

We recently responded to the Migration Advisory Committee's call for evidence on the Shortage Occupation List (SOL). One example we provided to them, which has emerged from recent discussions with our members, is the case of offshore wind workers which neatly encapsulates the lack of joined up thinking on immigration more widely.

As you may be aware, a specific immigration rules exemption applied to offshore wind workers until 30th April this year. This has now been removed and Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick has been emphatic that the current UK Government has no intention of reinstating it. This has created, overnight, a major obstacle to recruitment and retention of precisely the sort of workers who we require right now to transition at pace away from oil and gas towards offshore renewable energy. It is one example, among many, of current immigration policy working against Scotland's interests.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you, perhaps alongside Scottish Labour colleagues, to discuss these matters in greater depth. Ideally we could convene a number of our members here in the North East of Scotland, to share first-hand the skills and workforce challenges they face in their own sectors and how better designed immigration system could address these.

Yours sincerely,



Russell Borthwick  
Chief Executive