



**Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
Committee**

Juliette Hatchman
Chief Executive
South Western Fish Producer Organisation Ltd
By email

11 February 2026

Dear Juliette

In December, I wrote to the Home Office regarding the wider implications of planned changes to Skilled Worker visas on several labour-dependent sectors. The Department's recent response sets out its position on the use of migrant labour in the fishing industry and the future of immigration routes previously used by the sector.

The Home Office states that the Government's approach links migration, skills and labour-market policy with the aim of reducing reliance on international recruitment and encouraging industries to address underlying causes of workforce shortages. The Department notes that it does not intend to grant sector-specific exceptions and emphasises the need for the industry to develop a sustainable workforce strategy.

The Home Office does acknowledge the particular challenges faced by the fishing sector, including remote working locations, pay, and difficult working conditions, but argues that the industry has made limited use of previously available Skilled Worker provisions. In addition, the Department expresses concerns about the use of migrant labour, both legal and illegal, in the sector, noting instances of exploitation and illegal working. It states that a more flexible visa route cannot be considered while such risks persist.

Finally, the Department notes that individuals already in the UK on visas with general work rights, including dependants and Youth Mobility Scheme participants, may undertake work in the fishing industry where employers are able to recruit them. The full Home Office response can be read [here](#).

The Committee remains concerned about the practical impact these changes may have on labour availability within the industry and on the sustainability of fishing operations, particularly in areas heavily reliant on migrant labour. We are therefore writing to seek your assessment of the situation.

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Could you let us know what impacts, if any, you expect from the removal of sector-specific visa options for fishing vessel workers? Does the absence of such routes pose a risk to the sustainability of fishing activity? Have you had sufficient time to plan and transition to new arrangements? Do you agree with the Government's assessment that a more flexible visa route could lead to more instances of instances of exploitation? Finally, are existing visa routes with general work rights suitable for the labour needs of your industry?

I would be grateful to receive your responses to these questions by Monday 23 February.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Alistair Carmichael." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Alistair" is followed by a space and then "Carmichael." The word "Carmichael" has a long, horizontal stroke extending from the end of the word.

Alistair Carmichael MP
Chair, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee