



**Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
Committee**

Phil Stoker
Chair
National Sheep Association
By email

11 February 2026

Dear Phil

In December, I wrote to the Home Office expressing concern that no seasonal concession is planned for non-visa nationals to work as sheep shearers in the UK. I highlighted the importance of such concessions in ensuring sufficient labour during the shearing season and in maintaining reciprocal arrangements for British shearers working overseas outside the UK season. I asked the Department to consider reinstating the concession for 2026.

The Home Office has now replied, stating that the concession granted for 2025 was a "time-limited extension that would close down after the 2025 season". They further note that there has been sufficient time "to plan and transition to new arrangements" and that individuals on visa routes providing general work rights may undertake sheep shearing if they hold the relevant skills. The full Home Office response can be read [here](#).

The Committee remains concerned that, without these seasonal concessions, the UK may not have sufficient skilled labour during the shearing season and that the loss of reciprocal arrangements could undermine the livelihoods and skills of British shearers. We are therefore writing to seek your views on the situation.

Could you let us know what impacts, if any, you expect from the Home Office's decision not to renew the seasonal concession for non-visa nationals working as sheep shearers? Does the absence of this concession pose a risk to the sustainability of the industry? Have you had sufficient time to plan and transition to alternative arrangements? Finally, are existing visa routes that permit general work rights suitable for sheep shearers?

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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 style, with the first name "Alistair" and the surname "Carmichael" clearly legible. A horizontal line is drawn under the end of the surname.

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