

—Restricted for Committee use only—

LABOUR SHORTAGES – VISIT NOTE

The Committee held an evidence session about [labour shortages](#) on 16 November 2021. Following this evidence session, the Committee decided to investigate this situation further and visited Perthshire on Monday 28 February 2022.

Members who attended:

- Pete Wishart MP (Chair)
- Mhairi Black MP
- Andrew Bowie MP
- Deidre Brock MP
- Wendy Chamberlain MP
- Douglas Ross MP

Members of the Committee were hosted by the Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) and were accompanied by Stan Green - Chairman of the Scotland Policy Development Group, Horticultural Trades Association, and Neil Cummings, Member Support Manager for Scotland, Horticultural Trades Association.

Locations visited

A &G Young

A&G Young is an ornamental grower and plant wholesaler.

The Committee received a tour from Garry Young, the business owner. The business started in 1980 and they continue to supply independent Garden Centres throughout Scotland and the North East and North West of England.



Conversations focused on topics including:

- The difficulty of the business in recruiting staff locally for seasonal work as there is limited local interest in filling the seasonal worker roles;

—Restricted for Committee use only—

- How the seasonal worker visa scheme is oversubscribed and the difficulties they were having getting people to work during the season from February to October;
- How processes cannot be fully automated, and need staff, due to the volumes they produce and the diversity of bedding plants;
- The recent changes with the seasonal workers pilot and the impact on wages;
- The lack of recognition of the skills that are necessary to work in horticulture;
- The changes in packaging of plants to be more environmentally conscious;
- Size and scope of the nursery, how it is maintained and the effects of rising energy and staff costs on the business; and
- Exporting products and how the peat reduction consultation and the effects of the proposals to ban the use of peat in horticulture in England and Wales by the end of this Parliament.

Glendoick Garden Centre

Glendoick Garden Centre is a specialist rhododendron grower, garden centre, coffee shop and farm store. Glendoick Garden Centre was one of the first in Scotland, founded in 1973.

The Committee met Heather Borderie, Operations Director, Glendoick Garden Centre.



Conversations focused on topics including:

- How the business has been affected by the availability of seasonal workers; and
- Exporting products and how the peat reduction consultation and the effects on their business of the proposals to ban the use of peat in horticulture in England and Wales by the end of this Parliament.

—Restricted for Committee use only—

Arbuckle's

Arbuckle's is a fresh fruit and vegetable grower. They grow soft fruit, veg, and cereals, and care for free range hens, and cattle.

The Committee met with Peter Arbuckle, Owner and his business partner Mike.



Conversations focused on topics including:

- The reliance on seasonal workers from overseas and the established team they have coming to the UK each season to work on the farm;
- The local workforce. Arbuckle's has tried to recruit from the local workforce, but candidates are not coming forward to fill the roles or when they do, they stay for a matter of weeks due to the physical nature of the work;
- Recent changes to the seasonal workers scheme and the lead in time for these changes; staff at Arbuckle's told the committee that it is difficult to work with changes this late in the season as workforce planning had necessarily been organised for the year;
- The costs of using the seasonal workers pilot;
- Providing funds to pay for work, including the opinion that higher wages will not affect local recruitment due to the nature of the work; and
- How with the changes to visa rules may mean the business might not survive the next five years.