

Agreed Position November 2025

The loss of free movement of people from the EU has been an issue for the whole of the UK and an area of concern for businesses since the 2016 referendum. This has been exacerbated by UK Government policies aimed at reducing migration, such as restrictions around graduate visas. In Scotland however, the loss of access to this significant labour resource is felt more acutely due to our lower population levels and our ageing population. As the Capital City Chamber, and given the impact on sectors critical to Edinburgh’s economy specifically, we believe that bold and rapid action is needed, including the creation of a series of migratory levers specific to Scotland. This would not be part of any wider constitutional consideration, but a means to address a critical issue facing our member businesses and our city economy.

Context

The question of Scottish-specific migratory policy as one of a package of possible solutions to our labour shortages is one which is fraught with political and constitutional connotations. We believe that its possible use as a tool to resolve our labour shortage issues is therefore not being explored fully and effectively. We have a decreasing and ageing population in Scotland – we simply do not have enough people to do all of the jobs we require. We must consider an array of bold alternative solutions if we are to find an effective way to address this fundamental problem, alongside an expanded Shortage Occupation List (SOL) and increased Visa and points based routes.

Rationale

- Scotland’s ageing population is shrinking our ‘homegrown’ talent pool.
- Scotland also generally offers lower salary levels than other parts of the UK with which we are competing for talent e.g. London.
- Current rules around minimum salary thresholds etc. don’t work for Edinburgh’s critical sectors such as tourism, hospitality and festivals.
- The UK Govt. are currently seeking to curb migration through a range of measures.

Key Policy Maker and Stakeholder Position

- UK Govt. – the UK Govt. has stated that they do not see the need for a separate immigration policy, and are instead seeking to curb migration
- Scot Govt. – SG have called for three tailored migration routes: a Scottish Graduate Visa, a Rural Visa Pilot, and a Scottish Visa
- SCC – exploring whether to call for a devolved migratory policy

Data: Evidence Required - and who from

- Consensus from our members/SCC on this position - SCC
- Data on the impact of this as a devolved policy and a consideration of any unintended consequences – Scottish Govt.

Chamber Asks

- Various visa schemes have been proposed by the Scottish Govt., including a place-based ‘Scottish Visa’, and a Scottish Graduate Visa – these should be seriously considered by the UK Govt.
- We need to depoliticise the debate around immigration, and look at immigration policy through an economic lens, based on business needs around talent and skills.

Data: Evidence Gathered

Scottish economic bulletin March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February 2025: 22.6% of businesses reported worker shortages
Migration Policy Scotland - October 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both Aberdeen and Edinburgh have a share of non-UK born four times higher than is the case outside of our major cities – so we are disproportionately reliant on non-UK born individuals.
ONS 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 2025-75, Scotland’s working age population is projected to fall by 14.7%, compared with a 0.5% increase in the working population of the UK
Migration Observatory - August 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current immigration system already has a geographic bias – between 2016-2020 44% of skilled workers with certificates of sponsorship went to London