

Scottish Affairs Committee

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From the Chair, Pete Wishart MP

Stephanie Maurel
Chief Executive
Concordia

21 May 2019

Dear Stephanie,

Thank you for your recent appearance before the Committee on 23 April alongside Managing Director of Pro-Force Matthew Jarrett, to discuss the implementation of the Government's Seasonal Workers Pilot in Scotland.

Following your evidence about the difficulty workers were having in booking visa appointments at the UK visa offices in Ukraine & Moldova, I wrote to the Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes MP to request an update on what support the Home Office had made available to ensure farms received workers on time.

In response, the Home Office have said that 100% of visas related to the pilot have been processed within their 15-day target, with 622 visas issued in total. However, the letter acknowledges that there had been delays for some applicants in the time taken for passports to be returned to workers following the decision to award a visa, and UKVI are taking steps process applications earlier to prevent this happening again.

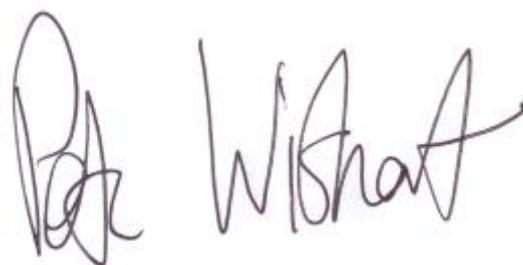
The letter also states that to help you and Pro-Force process applications early, there has been an increase in appointment availability in the Visa Application Centres in Moldova & Ukraine and the offer of additional "bespoke" support through an on demand mobile visa service, which you supposedly declined to use.

I know in your evidence last month you addressed the issues surrounding the extra cost workers had to pay to access these new appointment slots, but I was hoping you could provide the Committee with some information on your decision not to utilise the mobile visa service provided by the Home Office and if there are any additional measures the Government could introduce to help you process your workers in a timely fashion?

I will be sending an identical letter to Pro-Force as well.

I would be grateful for a response by Wednesday 29 May. Please find enclosed the letter we received from the Minister of State for Immigration Caroline Nokes MP.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized first name 'Pete' followed by the surname 'Wishart'.

Pete Wishart MP
Chair, Scottish Affairs Committee