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From the Prime Minister's Business Envoy

15 February 2019

Dear Mr Pennycook

Thank you for your letter of 5 December 2018 regarding the UK's Future Immigration System and Retail priorities.

Please be assured that the Government is committed to building a future immigration system which works in the UK's national interest for all sectors. The Government has always been clear that citizens from the EU and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) states make a hugely positive contribution to the UK and we want all those who wish to stay to be able to do so. The Withdrawal Agreement protects their rights, and the Government is already piloting the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) to enable them to quickly and simply secure their status under UK law. I want to be clear that there will be no application fee for the EUSS when it fully opens. Anyone who has applied already, or who applies and pays a fee during the test phases, will have their fee refunded. We have a strong commitment to resident EU citizens and do not want financial barriers to exist for any EU citizen or their family member who wishes to remain here.

As you may be aware, on 19 December 2018, the Government published a White Paper setting out its proposals for the UK's future skills-based immigration system after our exit from the EU. The White Paper proposes a new route for skilled workers. In line with the Migration Advisory Committee's (MAC) recommendations in their report into EEA migration on 18 September 2018, we will lower the current skills threshold to include Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) levels 3-5 (A level and above) to ensure that medium-skilled roles can be filled via this route. The Skilled Worker route will not be capped, giving business certainty and ensuring the economy is sufficiently supported. Getting the UK's future skills-based immigration system right is vital for the success and prosperity of the United Kingdom and for future generations.

As a transitional measure, the Government is also introducing a Temporary Workers route, which will allow employers to bring in migrant labour at all skill levels for short periods, subject to strict conditions. Through a Temporary Worker route, workers will be able to come to the UK for a period of up to 12 months. This will help those retail businesses which require short term or seasonal workers, for example in the lead up to Christmas or other areas of peak trading.

The Government will be undertaking an extensive engagement programme throughout 2019, with a wide range of stakeholders across the UK. The retail sector will be a key part of this and we look forward to engaging with you and other sectors during this period.

Thank you, once again, for writing.

Yours sincerely



WILLIAM VEREKER

Mr Richard Pennycook