

New immigration rules provide boost for Scottish fishing industry

News story

The Scottish fishing industry has received a major boost as new immigration rules make it easier to recruit skilled deckhands from abroad.



The Home Office has accepted the Migration Advisory Committee recommendation that deckhands on large fishing vessels, with three or more years of experience using their skills, should be included in the list of occupations eligible for Skilled Worker visas.

The decision was welcomed by UK Government Minister for Scotland David Duguid who said:

This is good news for the Scottish industry, particularly the demersal – or white fish – fleet, and represents the fruits of close co-operation between Government and industry.

We have listened to concerns that crewing problems have been particularly acute here with some boats unable to fish within 12 miles of the shore because of visa restrictions on their vital deckhands. The new arrangements should quickly ease these difficulties.

Mike Park, Chief Executive of the Scottish White Fish Producers' Association, said:

This is something we have been campaigning about for over four years and the industry will find it very useful and supportive. It is of particular significance for vessels operating in the remoter parts of the west of Scotland and helps those vessels who faced problems when forced to operate outside the 12-mile limit, and helps too with landing crew for essential rest periods.

The change means that although deckhands are not being added to the UK's Shortage Occupation List (SOL) – which specifies which jobs have insufficient resident workers – they will become eligible for Skilled Worker visas which should make recruitment from abroad easier.

To qualify, their sponsoring employer must be offering a salary of at least £25,600, in line with other non-shortage occupations. If the deckhand is a 'new entrant' (mainly those under the age of 26), a lower salary threshold of £20,480 will apply. In all cases, their pay must also be at least £10.10 per hour. The changes take effect from 6 April.

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