

ADDRESS

DATE

Dear [insert name] MP

I am writing as a constituent and as a [farmer/contractor] to express serious concern about the potential removal of the long-standing immigration concession that allows skilled overseas sheep shearers to come to the UK during the shearing season.

This concession is essential to safeguard animal welfare. Shearing is a highly skilled, physically demanding and time critical seasonal task, and the UK simply does not have enough trained domestic shearers to complete the work within the narrow weather dependent window each year.

### **Why this concession matters**

#### **Animal welfare:**

Shearing is vital to prevent flystrike, heat stress and other serious health issues. Delays caused by labour shortages put sheep at immediate risk.

#### **Lack of domestic workforce:**

Despite investment and training efforts, the UK cannot currently supply enough professional shearers. Shearing takes years of learning and experience to become skilled to shear at the necessary rates for commercial shearing. It also requires training and the ability necessary to handle live sheep without causing unnecessary stress or cause welfare issues. It is not a role that can be filled from the general unemployed workforce. Overseas shearers—particularly from New Zealand and Australia—provide the expertise and efficiency needed to carry out shearing efficiently.

#### **Time critical nature of the work:**

Shearing cannot be delayed or spread across the year. Farmers and contractors rely on timely shearing to keep their businesses functioning.

We have 15 million sheep in the UK to shear. This requires a team of commercial shearers who have the necessary skill to swiftly work through the national flock, handling live sheep with calm, caring skill, and removing the wool without injury to the sheep. This requires a level of efficiency to get sheep shorn with sufficient gap after lambing but ahead of the summer heat. Wet weather can cause significant delays to that process.

Overseas shearers make a substantial contribution, with some able to shear more than 20,000 sheep during their stay. We estimate the overseas shearers will shear approx. 1.5million sheep each year. Many of the shearers who travel are able to shear approx. 200-400 sheep/day. These are exceptional rates, with many 'average' good shearers expecting to complete perhaps 100-150 sheep/day. The overseas shearers are therefore essential to ensure that the operation can be carried out swiftly, within the necessary timescale and to high standards of animal welfare.

#### **Low immigration risk:**

Overseas shearers have been coming to the UK for decades to support our workforce. The concession was introduced fourteen years ago when our immigration system no longer allowed

shearers to enter the UK after changes to the points-based system. Shearers do not generally have academic qualifications, but they are highly skilled and proficient. The concession is limited to a small number of individuals for a limited period who come only for the short shearing season and then return home.

**A proven, practical system**

This concession has operated responsibly and effectively for years. Removing it would create immediate and widespread challenges for farmers, contractors and the welfare of millions of sheep.

This is a route to unnecessary animal welfare risk without resolving an immigration problem. I therefore urge you to raise this issue with the Home Office Minister, Mike Tapp MP, and support the retention of this vital concession within the UK immigration framework.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would appreciate any update you can provide on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

[Your Name]