

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION

TEL: 020 7591 3200

Email: j-hayler@esauk.org

05 June 2020

The Right Hon Priti Patel MP
Secretary of State
Home Department
via email only

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to express our concerns about the impact of the forthcoming immigration rule changes on the recycling and waste industry. Our sector employs over 100,000 workers across all parts of the UK, recovering valuable materials and energy from household and business waste. The industry has a turnover of around £12 billion and contributes over £5 billion directly to UK GDP.

The recent covid crisis has demonstrated the critical role that we play in protecting public health and the environment. To do this, we rely heavily on front-line operatives in collection crews and sorting plants for recycling, of which almost 90% of the latter currently come from Europe¹.

Retention rates for UK nationals in these challenging roles tend to be very low, creating a reliance on EU migrants to maintain operations. In this context, it is vital for the continued smooth operation of waste services that the recycling and waste industry is included on the shortage occupation lists. Without this change, there is a strong risk of significant increases in costs to councils, which rely on these sorting plants to process the majority of their household recycling.

The Migration Advisory Committee recommendation to lower the salary threshold is welcome, but will not go far enough to mitigate the potential damage caused to our ability to recruit front-line staff going forward.

We would welcome an opportunity to meet you and your officials to set out our concerns in more detail.

We are copying this letter to the Secretary of State for the Environment and to the Interim Chair of the Migration Advisory Committee. We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely



Michael Topham, CEO, Biffa plc



Jacob Hayler, Executive Director, ESA



Nathan Bowles, Chairman, Smart Solutions Recruitment



John Scanlon, CEO, Suez UK Recycling & Recovery



Phil Piddington, Managing Director, Viridor

¹ Smart Solutions Ltd survey of 2,500 recycling plant workers, 2020