



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

May 2020

SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

Constituents have contacted me to register concern about reports that seasonal agricultural workers continue to arrive in the UK on charter flights from Eastern Europe despite the coronavirus lockdown.

Ministers and officials are working hard with industry to ensure farmers and growers have the support they need. They are encouraging as many British people as possible to take part in seasonal working opportunities across the country to help bring the harvest in, and I know that recruitment efforts by industry are well under way. This work has been supported by the Prince of Wales.

It is important to emphasise that the Government is not involved in chartering flights of European workers to the UK. These flights are paid for by farmers and recruitment companies.

I am very much of the view that in the light of the impact of the coronavirus we need to mobilise the British workforce to fill the gap and left by overseas workers, and make sure our excellent fruit and vegetables are on people's plates over the summer months. That would also help to ensure that the coronavirus is not brought into the UK by workers from countries where the transmission rate continues to be higher than ours – something the Government is anxious to avoid. Under the recently announced quarantine rules, seasonal agricultural workers from overseas will be permitted to start work immediately, but required to self-isolate on the farm where they are employed.

The Pick for Britain website (<https://pickforbritain.org.uk>) is an initiative which acts as a central hub to signpost people to the jobs available. It provides guidance and resources so growers, workers and industry can have a single place to go. The website also provides links to a wide range of recruitment campaigns organised by labour providers, as well as to the Government's 'Find A Job' website, giving access to a wide reach of potential applicants.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Conor Burns', with a horizontal line underneath.