*Dear <*[*find your MP constituency email address here*](https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP)*>,*

*As a business owner in <your constituency> I write to raise concerns related to the new points-based immigration system. We are a drylining contractor specialising in commercial and residential work established in YEAR.  We have grown to employ XXX and typically provide work to an additional XX workers on a subcontract basis.  We have always invested in training and currently have XX apprentices and XX trainees.  Currently X% of our workforce are EU Nationals.*

*The Drylining sector is worth around £2billion to the UK economy, employing around 60,000 skilled workers.  We build walls and ceilings - our work impacts every type of building built and re-furbished in the UK.  With large, phased projects, geographic spread and a culture late procurement in construction it would be impossible to operate without contingent support in the form of subcontract workers. This year has been particularly tough, but we have adapted and secured a healthy pipeline of work into 2021.  As we look to resource this work, the impact of the new points-based immigration system is creating a real concern on three levels.*

*Firstly, many skilled workers have left the UK due to COVID. Across the sector, around 40% of workers are from the EU and, according to data from the ONS, the number of EU Construction Workers in the UK has declined by 40% to the end of Q3 2020.  The relative weakness of the pound combined with the availability of work at competitive rates in or near their home country means that many will not return.   We believe that The Home Office have not adequately taken this into account when appraising the Shortage Occupation List.  Secondly the Home Office have relied on out-dated Standard Occupational Codes (2010 as opposed to 2020) with no granularity applied to the occupational areas included in “other” categories.   As a consequence, trades such as ceiling fixing and drylining have been classified wrongly as semi-skilled.  Finally the system fails to recognise workers employed through the Construction Industry Scheme (CIS) - the tax system recognises the need for a contingent workforce in construction, the immigration system does not.*

*Whilst we had been reassured that the Points Based System was designed to be flexible, reports from a recent meeting with the Home Office advise that no change is likely til 2022.  This is not sufficient.*

*We can rally as sector to increase our trainee and apprenticeship programmes (we have plans to take on X individuals over the next X months), but we need 18 months to train a skilled worker.  COVID has dented our ability to prepare and there is now, no way the sector can adapt to replace the workers that we are losing over the next 12 months (in the worst-case scenario, the annual recruitment rate for the sector would need to increase by 500%, before you factor in the training time).  This leaves us in the interim with the very likely scenario that rates will inflate, programmes and project starts will be delayed and it will become difficult to fulfil contracts.*

*The solution must be to look at phasing the changes in over a longer period, allowing applications for pre-settled status to run into next year.  We can then work with the MAC to understand the impact and how we can progressively evolve the process together, controlling flow of workers at the same time as improving the training infrastructure. The alternative is huge uncertainty and business failures damaging our ability to adapt and impacting the nations home building and infrastructure programmes and constraining the economic potential of construction.*

*I would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you in more detail.*