

The Prefect Storm Tourism and Hospitality Recruitment Crisis

In mid-May, with an exhale of bated breath, coupled to a greater air of confidence, the industry embraced Step 3 of the Governments Road Map and looked positively ahead to the 'once in a sector' staycation opportunity that lay ahead of us. Although mindful that challenges and restrictions remained, there was a sense of normality, and routine returned to businesses.

At that stage, no one foresaw the extent of the problem and the prefect storm that was brewing relating to recruitment and resourcing. Increasingly, as businesses began to open up, the extreme challenges in staffing became evident. Now at the end of June, this has escalated to a significant staffing crisis across the country.

DMO's and Local Authorities are grappling with the issue at local level and lobbying to draw attention to a situation that could seriously undermine what should be a recovery period for the industry. According to the recent research conducted by The Tourism Alliance, the scale of the staff recruitment challenge across the country is increasing. At the start of June over 46 per cent of businesses had fewer staff than they did pre-Covid, with only 18 per cent reported that they had all the staff they need. These percentages continue to rise, and the recruitment gap widens.

Businesses have been incredibly proactive in the steps businesses taken to mitigate the challenge, but this problem is exacerbated by a wide range of factors including changes to post Brexit immigration policy, businesses all recruiting at once; the impact of Covid on employee choices; a super-aging population and infrastructure challenges such as a lack of affordable housing and transport connectivity.

Immigration legislation now limits the available workforce, recruiting EU workers is no longer an option. As part of the national effort, vigorous campaigning is needed for hospitality workers to be afforded the same recognition as agricultural laborers, whose designation as skilled removes multiple barriers from the new 'Australian-style points-based system.

Action Required - - Write to your MP

With the objective of raising this urgent issue quickly up the government agenda, the sector has launched a national letter-writing effort. By contacting local MPs on this issue the aim is to ensure the sectors voice is heard and that it collectively illustrates the urgent need for change.

The MP letter requests Those involved in the industry are urged to include the following as a matter of urgency in letters to their MPs :

- 1. Introduction the same approach to that of Defra, which would afford exemptions from the immigration rules for the hospitality sector facing worsening worker shortages. The industry will work with you to look at how this can be achieved. There are several options including 6-month or two-year working visas and potentially a cap on the numbers entering the UK on either visa. *Similar schemes were once offered to South Africans and***

Australians providing fantastic opportunities for them to enter the UK, work and contribute to local economies.

- 2. Add the role of Chef to the shortage list of workers. Despite what many think, working in hospitality is a skilled profession and no more so than as a chef. Whether it is as a commis or head chef we had a national shortage prior to the changes to the immigration policy and this has been escalated further because of the pandemic.**
- 3. Government fund/support an urgent recruitment drive, highlighting the career opportunities the sector offers and dispelling some of the negative myths that can be associated with an industry such as low pay.**

Without significant and collective effort to overcome this issue, tourism cannot fulfil its full huge potential this year. The situation will continue to impact businesses and their ability to recover from the last 18 months. Many businesses the Government has helped to survive will only go on to fail, as they do not have the capacity to service the demand. In turn, the industry will fail to meet customer expectations and lose the opportunity the staycation boom offers in create repeat custom and thus aiding economic recovery.

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