# Scottish Engineering chief warns Starmer’s immigration plans risk deepening skills crisis



Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer's recent remarks regarding immigration have ignited a critical dialogue, especially among industry leaders such as Paul Sheerin, chief executive of Scottish Engineering. During a notable speech, Starmer claimed the UK risks becoming an “island of strangers” due to high immigration levels, asserting the need to “finally take back control of our borders” by significantly cutting immigration. This rhetoric, reminiscent of past government failures, reflects a troubling trend that threatens not only the economy but the very fabric of our society.

In a response that came quick on the heels of Starmer’s speech, Sheerin voiced his alarm at the implications of Labour’s proposed immigration policies on the Scottish economy and specifically the engineering sector. He warned that the government's hostile tone might repel skilled workers at a time when the UK desperately needs to compete for global talent. The perception of the UK as an unwelcoming destination could jeopardize our ability to attract essential expertise, further stinging an economy already grappling with significant challenges.

Turning to the specifics of Labour’s immigration reform, Sheerin pointed out that raising qualification barriers from Higher-equivalent to degree-level would overlook the critical need for skilled trades. This oversight is especially alarming given the current shortages in vital roles such as welders, fabricators, and electricians. “We face a significant shortfall in skilled trades and crafts,” he noted, indicating that this regulatory framework could exacerbate an urgent issue instead of resolving it.

Moreover, Sheerin expressed strong disapproval of the reduction in the graduate visa scheme, which will now limit the right to work from two years to just 18 months. Such a reduction strikes at the very heart of our educational and workforce strategies, making the UK a less appealing choice for prospective international employees and adding unnecessary pressure on sectors already struggling to fill positions.

Sheerin highlighted the crucial role that immigration plays in spurring growth in engineering and manufacturing sectors. He contended that while there is a purported desire to invest in retraining UK workers, the government's vague assertions about how to achieve this remain not just frustrating, but concerning. Gaining competence in engineering roles typically spans four to six years—a timeline that clearly illustrates a lack of strategic foresight within the current administration’s plans.

Starmer's assertions regarding the perceived overreliance on foreign labour unfairly shift responsibility away from the government's failings in fostering a robust domestic workforce. “Sectors like engineering, where visas have rocketed while apprenticeships have plummeted,” he stated, raising critical questions about fairness for British citizens in need of meaningful employment.

In his quarterly review, Sheerin urged for renewed focus on economic growth, warning that without it, Labour’s social and economic objectives are dangerously at risk. His vocalisation of the ongoing skills shortage crisis is particularly salient, as it is compounded by the aftereffects of Brexit. Starmer’s government appears ill-equipped to handle these challenges, allowing a significant number of workers to slip through the cracks.

Reflecting on Brexit’s impact, Sheerin noted that a substantial number of his members have faced disruptions due to the exodus of EU nationals. This situation underlines the urgent requirement for a cohesive strategy that not only targets the attraction of talent but also ensures the cultivation of homegrown skills through effective training and apprenticeship programmes. As the UK navigates a complicated post-Brexit landscape, it has become evident that current approaches fall woefully short of what is needed.

As debates over immigration policy continue, the engineering sector finds itself at a crucial juncture, grappling with the necessity of attracting highly skilled workers while contending with an administration that seems more interested in ideological posturing than in fostering economic resilience and social prosperity.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25203884.scottish-engineering-boss-paul-sheerin-warns-immigration/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data