



Isle of Man Government



Department of Trade & Industry

NEWS RELEASE

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DTI clarifies work permit system

The changing labour market continues to inform the administration of the work permit system operated by the Department of Trade & Industry. The increasing availability of Isle of Man workers in some sectors and with certain skills is placing greater emphasis on the Control of Employment Act which exists to ensure that where there are suitable and available Isle of Man workers, they are given preference ahead of the need to bring additional labour to the Island.

In recent months the Department has publicised that increased scrutiny will be required in certain sectors and for certain skills as records from the unemployment register indicate significant numbers of Isle of Man workers without work and seeking employment in the relevant sectors and with the relevant skills. The Department is keen to remind everyone that it is applications for workers coming to the Island for the first time that are under increased scrutiny; renewals are continuing to be considered in the normal manner, namely renewals will be granted except where there is evidence of criminality.

DTI Minister, David Cretney MHK commented:

"I am aware that there will be many people currently holding Work permits who are feeling concerned should their permits be due for renewal. I want to make it quite clear that we are not targeting renewal applications, but rather those representing new migrant labour coming to the Island. Renewal permits will continue to be processed as in previous years, with consideration being given to the commitment and contribution made to the local economy by these workers and the likelihood that they have established themselves and their families on the Island."

The Department of Trade & Industry is continually monitoring the labour market to ensure that the work permit system works in the best interests of the people of the Isle of Man, ensuring that suitable and available Isle of Man workers are given every opportunity to gain employment, whilst recognising that operating in such a diverse economy there will still be the need to import labour for roles requiring specialist skills and experience that are not available locally.

Minister Cretney continued:

"It is also important to recognise that there will be those people who currently hold work permits, who will need to change jobs, perhaps owing to redundancy from their current employment. Again, I wish to make it clear that we do not intend to target this group unfairly, as I recognise the commitment and contribution they will have made to the Island. Whilst they will still require permits for their new employment, they will be afforded the same consideration as renewal applications."

I recognise that we are in uncertain economic times at present and that is why I am pledging to monitor the situation closely, ensuring that the system works in the best interest of the people and the economy. I hope that I have reassured those currently working on the Island and also that it adds encouragement to those who may be currently unemployed to actively seek employment. The total number unemployed fell in March by 33 and during March there were 646 vacancies advertised in our Job Centre, which is extremely encouraging and demonstrates that there are still opportunities for many to secure work."

- Ends -

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Notes:

Decisions on the granting of work permits is the responsibility of the Minister of Trade & Industry who sets policy and delegates powers to the work permit Committee, a panel who have extensive experience of the local employment market and wider personnel practices. The Department collates information regarding the current labour market, using resources at the JobCentre, DHSS and Treasury Economic Affairs, which is passed in regular reports to the work permit Committee, to assist in the decision making process.

The Control of Employment Act provides that work permits are required for those non Isle of Man workers seeking employment from states within the European Economic Area (EEA). To be granted a permit, the employer (or the applicant if self-employed) must demonstrate that there are no suitable and available Manx workers for the vacancy. For individuals from outside the EEA, the DTI has powers to grant and enforce UK overseas work permits.

The Department has enforcement responsibility for the Control of Employment Act and other employment legislation, with inspectors ensuring that employers are meeting their obligations in areas such as minimum wage and employment contracts as well as work permits. The inspectorate resources were increased last year following the Minister's decision to place greater emphasis on the enforcement functions of the Department.