

Doubts are raised over minister's call for 'social-duty' employment

Questions have been raised about the practicality of a ministerial call to employ young British workers rather than better-qualified immigrants, after it emerged that migrant workers were pivotal to the success of one leading Norfolk firm.

Conservative business minister Matthew Hancock said firms have a "social duty" to ensure young people in the communities where they are based are given the opportunity to get a job and get on in life.

He said employers should be prepared to invest in training British staff rather than simply looking for "pure profit".

"As the amount of jobs in the economy grows – we saw the good growth figures yesterday – everybody should be given the chance to get on in life and get one," he said. "During the last boom there was a lot of recruitment from abroad and, in fact, youth unemployment went up, even during the boom."

"This is about a change of culture.

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I'm arguing that it is companies' social responsibility, it is their social duty, to look at employing locally first.

"That may mean that they have to do more training. It may mean more training in hard skills, in specific skills. Or it may mean training in the wherewithal, the character you need in order to hold down a job.

"The responsibility of employers is to the community that they live in as well as to pure profit."

But Gordon Chetwood, site manufacturing director at confectionary maker Kinnerton in Fakenham, where about 40 of its staff are migrant workers, questioned whether the approach would work in reality.

"In principle he is right but you have that reality where you need to have people who are going to be hard-working," he said. "The reality is that

migrant workers have been crucial to our growth. We value the work ethic that the migrant workers have. There's not a lot of young home-grown recruits willing to work in a factory setting. We do get some come in but they just aren't prepared for that level of work.



■ Business minister Matthew Hancock wants firms to favour young workers in the local community.

"I see it particularly with younger staff – they stick it for a couple of days and then say they don't want to do it. It's part of a much bigger problem than migrant workers. It's about youngsters being willing to put in the hard graft."

The Conservatives are under pressure from Nigel Farage's UK

Independence Party, which has been pressing for tighter controls.

Mr Hancock insisted that firms which were prepared to invest in British staff would ultimately reap the benefits.

"Those who put the effort in have ended up with a more motivated employee who is more connected to their company. If you, as the company, put something in, then you get somebody with a great attachment to you in return," he said.

And he rejected comparisons to Gordon Brown's controversial "British jobs for British workers" campaign under the last Labour government. "That was about a job creation scheme and also making this a law and mandatory. This is about changing culture," he said.

"I see immigration and education reform and welfare reform as very much integrated to make sure that everybody in Britain has the chance to get on. That is what this is all about."

COUNTY TOTALS

In Norfolk, those who list Poland as their country of birth make up the majority of EU migrants, with 6,091 listed in the 2011 census. The next biggest groups are Germans (4,366) and Lithuanians (4,079). Portuguese also make up a sizeable proportion, with 3,418 of them living in the county. The largest non-EU groups are from the United States (4,070), India (3,121), South Africa (2,013) the Philippines (1,509) and mainland China (1,502).

■ For Suffolk, the figures are 3.18pc EU (23,162) and 4.90pc non-EU (35,682) out of a total population of 728,163. Here, Polish are again the biggest group (6,166), followed by Germans (3,862), Portuguese (1,828) and Lithuanian (1,452). The largest non-EU groups are from the United States (10,806), India (3,259), South Africa (2,048), the Philippines (1,433) and Bangladesh (1,044).

■ In Cambridgeshire, 5.9pc of the population are EU (37,083) and 7.77pc (48,250) non-EU out of a total population of 621,210. The largest EU groups are Polish (8,388), German (5,300), Lithuanian (3,186) and Italian (2,336). The largest non-EU groups are United States (7,673), India (4,608), mainland China (3,072), South Africa (2,699) and the Philippines (1,892).

Poles make up 0.94pc of the population

Polish workers make up the largest group of EU migrants in East Anglia, figures have revealed, *writes Michael Allen.*

According to the Migration Observatory at Oxford University, in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire there are 20,645 people who listed Poland as their country of birth in the 2011 census, composing 0.94pc of the total population.

The next largest groups are people from Germany (13,528), which is mostly linked to the children of British forces personnel born there returning to this country, and Lithuania (8,717).

The total number of EU migrants in East Anglia stands at 90,829 or 4.12pc of the population.

Agata Glowa, 34, quit her job and came to Norwich from Poland seven years ago and opened her shop, The Polish Shop A&M, on Hall Road about four years ago.

"For me [coming here] was a kind of adventure," she said. "I never had any idea of how long I was going to stay here. Probably initially I thought a few months but things just happened and I had a job, I had friends and my boyfriend decided to stay here as well.

"I know that a lot of people are coming here for money and they are apart from their families and it's not something all of them like having to do. They are thinking about going back home. But they would be happy for some time and then they would have to pay the bills."

Ms Glowa said she has experienced few problems integrating into Norwich.

"If I like somebody and he likes me, that's fine," she said. "It doesn't really matter where the person comes from. I really like Norwich. I



■ Agata Glowa inside The Polish Store A&M in Norwich.

Picture: STEVE ADAMS

know a lot of people here so it feels like my home, my place."

And she stressed the hard-working nature of Polish migrants and their benefit to the region's economy. "Employers notice that if Polish people have got a job they won't just give up," she said. "We save money just in case, because in our country we learn that you need to have a back-up plan."

Dr Carlos Vargos-Silva, senior researcher at the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, said Polish migrants were different from other previous groups of migrants.

"They go to places where there is

work available," he said. "Polish migrants tend to be high-skilled and educated, but they tend to do low-skilled work. They tend to be particularly concentrated in the agriculture sector.

"There's no work in Poland, so they're willing to come here and do a job that in relative terms is below their educational level."

According to the Migration Observatory, 61pc of people in the east want to see immigration "reduced a lot" and 21pc want to see it "reduced a little", while 16pc think it should "remain the same".

Only 2pc want to see any increase in immigration.

Lafarge poised to win Norfolk roads contract

West Midlands-based Lafarge Tarmac is poised to win the new £480m contract for maintenance and construction work on Norfolk's 6,000 miles of county roads.

The firm is in pole position to secure the 12-year contract with Norfolk County Council which the authority hopes will save taxpayers up to £4.4m a year or £53m if the contract runs for its full term.

If approved the firm will take over from May Gurney, now part of the Kier Group, which was previously ruled out of the race to carry on the contract.

The council's ruling cabinet is seeking to provisional award the contract to Lafarge Tarmac when it meets on Monday.

One issue which appears to have swayed the authority was a commitment to improve the quality of repairs to Norfolk's roads through using "more durable materials and modern techniques".

The contract includes the maintenance of all Norfolk's roads such as permanent pothole repairs and patching, surfacing and surface dressing, white lining, rural grass cutting, and highway construction projects of up to £10m.

David Harrison, cabinet member for environment, transport, development and waste, said: "This contract, if approved, will make a tangible difference to Norfolk's road users who will see improvement across the board."

Amazon hurt by higher costs

Online retailer Amazon has announced a surprise reversal in profits after another period of booming sales failed to offset a surge in costs.

The internet giant recorded a loss of \$7m (£4.5m) for the second quarter of the year, following profits of \$7m for the same period last year.

It comes days after the company announced it was scrapping its free "super-saver" deliveries to the UK on some products worth less than £10. Overall sales at the US-based company were up 22pc to \$15.7bn (£10.2bn), fuelled by a 30pc growth in revenues in North America to \$9.5bn (£6.2bn).

Production firm bought by ITV

The film production company behind Shaun Of The Dead, Hot Fuzz and The World's End has been snapped up by ITV for £12.5m.

Actors Simon Pegg and Nick Frost are among shareholders who will gain from the sale of Big Talk.

The company, also responsible for Channel 4 comedy series Friday Night Dinner as well as the BBC's Rev and Him & Her, had been 25pc owned by the BBC's Worldwide arm.