

First Minister writes open letter to EU citizens in Scotland

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has written an open letter to EU citizens reaffirming that Scotland welcomes them and values their contribution to our society, culture and economy.

The letter reads: “Dear European Union citizens living in Scotland.” I wrote an open letter to you in 2016 following the EU referendum and again in April this year to assure you that amidst the uncertainty of Brexit, Scotland welcomes you.

“Amidst the continued uncertainty I would like to assure you my message has not changed: Scotland values you for the contribution you make to our society, our culture and our economy. Whether you have lived here for months or many years, Scotland is your home, you are welcome here, and we want you to stay.

“The UK Government’s EU Settlement Scheme is now in place and while I do not agree that you should need to go through an application process to secure rights that you should automatically have, I do want to ensure that you are able to stay in Scotland after Brexit.

“Many of you will already have applied to the EU Settlement Scheme. For those of you who have not yet applied, I would encourage you to do so as soon as possible. The UK Government has said that you will have until 31 July 2021 to apply, or until 31 December 2020 if no deal is reached.

“I absolutely appreciate the emotional impact of making such an application. I know that the process may be a source of anxiety to you and that you may be uncertain about what information is required.

“To support you through this time I launched the Scottish Government’s ‘Stay in Scotland’ campaign. It provides practical advice and assistance including information and guidance on the EU Settlement Scheme application process, as well as information on where you can find more support with your application.

“But it’s not just about supporting you to make an application to stay here; it’s also about making sure that you are aware of your rights. We cannot allow a situation to arise where people are denied access to services to which they are entitled to. You can find more information at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/eu-citizens-staying-in-scotland-package-of-support>

“We are also funding Citizens Advice Scotland to deliver an advice service for EU citizens and their families. This service is for anyone who would like to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme but who may need additional support. You can access the service through your local Citizens Advice Bureau or by calling the full-time freephone helpline on 0800 916 9847.

“And we successfully campaigned to ensure that the application process is free of charge, so you do not have to pay to secure your status.

“We are working with organisations such as 3Million and the Citizens Rights Project to provide support and advice for EU citizens, and to deliver a series of events for EU citizens across Scotland to raise awareness about what you need to do stay in Scotland.

“The Scottish Government will continue to call on the UK

Government to do more to recognise the rights of EU Citizens and to guarantee them in law.

“I am deeply proud that you chose to make Scotland your home and will do everything in my power to ensure you can stay.” “You will always be welcome here.”