

A new migration policy

Many people in the UK would like to see a better balance between supply and demand for homes. Houses are dear in many parts of the country, rents are high and people struggle to get on the housing ladder as owners.

Many people would also like congestion on the roads reduced so they could get their children to school and themselves to work and back more easily each day.

Many want our air to be cleaner, and for the UK to make a bigger contribution to reducing pollution.

We all want our power and water supplies to be good enough for all conditions, at a time when our capacity in both is quite constrained.

A new migration policy in line with the governments own aims and targets would make a contribution to all of these aspirations. If we welcomed in fewer economic migrants each year, limiting the numbers eligible to take lower paid jobs and benefits, we would make the task of tackling housing shortages, congestion, air quality from transport exhausts and power generation, and utility provision that much easier.

The government's aims and targets allow plenty of scope for people with skills, investors, those coming into senior roles in companies, academics and others to come to our country and to contribute as they do now, and they will be most welcome. It does not require any new border arrangements or controls on tourists, visitors, people wishing to support themselves here from their own savings and assets.

A new migration policy requires two things. It needs the government to extend the work permit system from the rest of the world to the whole world as we leave the EU, creating fairness between people from Europe and from anywhere else. It then can set limits to the numbers admitted for lower paid work, and can give sector and regional specific permits out where there is a clear need that cannot be fulfilled from our present population.

It also needs the government to set sensible rules over eligibility to benefits, requiring people coming here to wait before gaining eligibility until they have been taxpayers and settled residents for a reasonable period of time.

I look forward to the government publishing a paper on just how it will run these matters after March 2019.