

So both main parties now want lower migration

I helped persuade the Sunak government to take action to cut legal migration last year. This January they took some steps to do so.

Now I read Labour too want to bring it down. They decline to tell us how or by how much. Meanwhile they have announced policies for an amnesty for illegal migrants already here and have stated their wish to set up more legal routes for people to use. That sounds like more migrants. The Lib Dems are always identifying groups and individuals who should be welcomed that current law restricts.

Some, along with many pro left wing broadcasters now rightly point out that Conservatives have promised lower migration but ended up with much higher. This is a major mistake by recent governments. All the time we were in the EU the open borders of the Treaty swelled numbers in ways government could not control. In the last four years University expansion, the invasion of Ukraine response, the Chinese changes to Hong Kong and the pressures from business to fill more vacancies from abroad have conspired to create a large migration surge.

Those of us who advised against were ignored. Over the last year we have won the arguments against importing more people to take low paid jobs, and against expansion of the University world putting quantity before quality. I do think Conservative Ministers have learned this lesson. They have also been genuine in wanting to stop illegal migration, but undermined in the courts showing more legal changes are needed. I do not think Labour are convinced we need much lower migration. They just want to win an election.

Net zero changes needed

The U.K. needs to go further than adopting a more realistic rhetoric about getting to net zero. It needs to keep recent policy changes and add additional ones

1 Policies to keep

It needs to extract more U.K. oil and gas in place of more LNG and oil imports

It needs to keep the delay to the ban on sales of new diesel and petrol cars

It needs to keep the delay on penalising new gas boilers for home heating

These could all be changed back if we have a change of government.

2. It needs to ditch the following policies

The tax on car manufacturers selling too many petrol and diesel cars

The grants to farmers to stop growing food

The high extra taxes on Domestic oil and gas production which makes us more import dependent

Further investment in electricity inter-connectors to an energy short Europe

3. Things it needs to do to keep the lights on

Commission more gas fired power stations as back up for unreliable renewables

Speed up order process for new smaller sized nuclear power stations

Control migration more successfully to limit demand growth

[This election needs an honest conversation about net zero](#)

The ideas of Labour, Greens and Lib Dems offering us a future abundance of cheap renewable electricity is a dangerous deceit.

We lack the guard capacity to shift more to electrical operation and to handle more renewable generation from far off and unreliable wind turbines. It is an absurd lie that the U.K. can generate all its electricity from zero carbon sources by 2030. On a bad day wind and solar are under 10% and gas above 50%. We are becoming hopelessly import dependent.

Adding more onshore and offshore wind farms requires a breakthrough with some chosen methods of storage, with huge investment in batteries and or hydrogen to retain the surplus wind power when there is a lot of wind. What happens if there is a longish period with little wind, particularly on cold high pressure days in winter?

Many voters are appalled at the contradictions and nonsenses in some net zero thinking. Why not go for net zero immigration as every person has a carbon footprint? Why import LNG with greater CO₂ output than using our own gas down a pipe? How does closing a steel works in the U.K. to save carbon help if you import the steel from somewhere else that allows the carbon?

The net zero brigade does not know where all the huge sums will come from to close down all our gas power stations, build wind farms, treble or quadruple the grid and switch all industry over to renewable electricity, introduce

hydrogen at scale and cover land with battery farms.

It will require subsidy and taxpayer support as it has so far. Renewable power is only cheap if you ignore the costs of back up and skew tax and subsidy their way.

The election and migration

The Conservative government since 2019 has let in too many people, mainly by granting visas for legal entry. The Labour, SNP and Lib Dem opposition has vigorously opposed some measures to clamp down on illegal migrants, leaving our borders poorly policed against small boat people trafficking. Labour says they will control this better by setting up a unified Channel Border Force under a Commander which is exactly what the government has already done with limited success.

The main Opposition parties want an amnesty for all already here and want us to take more people coming by new safe routes with visa grant when they come. They have backed the U.K. government's grant of large numbers of visas to people from Hong Kong and Ukraine given the special circumstances there.

If the next government is serious about cutting the housing shortage, tackling high rents and long NHS waiting lists it has to start with a major reduction in total largely legal migration. No wonder we are short of homes and doctors when we are inviting in an extra 750,000 people a year with more than a million of new arrivals. Where the new arrivals are people without wealth and needing a low paid job the strains on public spending and core public services are obvious.

The Conservatives launched a new policy this year to cut migration by 300,000. That is a start which no other party is offering. It is not enough yet to tackle the large increase in demand for public services, homes and utility provision that recent numbers generate. The TUC should be on the side of far fewer visas to do low paid jobs here. We need to move to a higher productivity economy where machine power and computers take more of the strain.

MPs and money

Quite a lot of MP s get into trouble over money.

A few extreme individuals turn out to be thieves or fraudsters. Submitting

false invoices to be paid or cheating people or the state out of money is common theft and will end in tears.

Many others are brought into dispute by their use and abuse within the rules. There are some areas to watch for those of you concerned to see value for money from your representative.

Does the MP undertake a lot of travel directly charged to expenses? Does the MP undertake many paid for and sponsored trips abroad?

An MP can claim travel expenses between the constituency and Westminster on the basis that the MP works in two locations. A company usually reimburses a staff member for travel to another branch or office. MPs can also claim for necessary trips beyond their constituency for research and Parliamentary approved purposes. There are numerous MP groups who take sponsor money to pay for meals, events and travel. MPs can push the rules a bit far about claims. They can overdo the sponsored events. Some sponsored trips become notorious for the conduct of MPs on them.

Anything an MP does for the party has to be paid for out of party funds. Some MPs want to spend heavily on leaflets and events for political purposes. They need to raise money from donors and need to report that. Some donors can become a difficulty for the MP. Care needs to be taken to avoid conflicts of interest.

The public is very critical of expenses. Most of the expenses are legitimate costs that do not reward the MP. Each MP needs an office, office equipment, broadband, headed notepaper and staff. In most people's work this is supplied by the employer who just pays the bills. No one thinks they need to add office costs to an executive's salary when working out the pay package.

What is worth probing is the total cost as a measure of efficiency and value for money. I ran my MP office with just two staff who did a great job following up casework and responding promptly to constituents. I did all my own research and writing as I needed to know what I said and why I said it. Many MPs hire staff to write speeches, social media comments and press statements. That can lead to inconsistency and confusion if staff change or more than one might produce something. It also produced much higher office costs than I charged.