

Levels of migration

This week when we finally hear how many people came to UK over the last year we are warned the figure could be considerably higher than the 504,000 additional people when we saw the last annual figure. Some are saying it could rise as high as a million. Others think around 750,000, still well up on the previous high figure. In 2019 the Conservative Manifesto promised to take it down below a figure of under 250,000 which it was running at.

These figures are net. Numbers of people entering the UK has been running above 1 million, with leavers offsetting some arrivals. The incoming migrants are more likely to need subsidised housing, income top up and school places for children whilst those leaving are often older richer people with a home of their own.

I have long opposed the cheap labour model of inviting in many to do low paid jobs. What is cheap for the employer is dear for the taxpayer. Providing a home, school places, NHS capacity, utilities and public services is expensive. The City of Southampton has 250,000 people. If we invite in an extra 500,000 people we need to build two new Southamptons a year to house and service them. We are not building anything like that. No wonder we are so short of houses and no wonder they are so dear.

The EU used to say the set up costs for a migrant were 250,000 Euro to build a home and provide state services. It will be more now. If we took that low field figure of £250,000 that would mean the state spending £125 bn a year to provide capital for 500,000 low paid migrants. It makes the Treasury enthusiasm for more migrants to fill low paid jobs difficult to understand. The OBR model which likes more migrants to boost GDP needs to be recast to be more interested in GDP or national income per head. More low paid jobs do not help that. Migrants also need private sector shops, leisure facilities and the rest.

The Home Secretary wishes to reduce legal migration. The Chancellor should help her instead of thinking it is good for numbers. In his own terms it is bad, adding to pressure on deficits and state spending and helping fuel shortages which are inflationary. There are many sensible ways to cut legal migration starting with an increase in the pay you need to earn to take a job here with a permit.