

**The Progressive Case for Taking  
Control of EU Immigration –  
and Avoiding Brexit in the Process**

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# CONTENTS

Introduction	Now is the Time for Getting Real about Immigration	2
Section 1	The Context	4
Section 2	Current Progressive Positioning	9
Section 3	Dilemmas to be Addressed	13
Section 4	Developing a More Progressive Politics around Immigration	17
Section 5	A Word on Population	20
Appendix 1	On Being a Progressive (by Jonathon Porritt)	23
Appendix 2	Acknowledgements	25
References		26

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## INTRODUCTION

### **NOW IS THE TIME FOR GETTING REAL ABOUT IMMIGRATION**

There's an extraordinary irony about the current debate on immigration here in the UK. Two years ago, the UK was almost alone in pushing for far-reaching reforms to the interpretation of the EU's notionally sacrosanct 'freedom of movement'. At the behest of the Tory Party's hard-line Brexiteers (channelling standard UKIP propaganda about the damage done by large-scale inward migration), David Cameron was humiliatingly despatched on a tour of EU capitals to secure some small-scale (but cumulatively significant) changes in what individual nation states can do to allay concerns about immigration. These were dismissed out of hand by our right-wing media, which would brook no further delay in an all-or-nothing Referendum on our continued membership of the UK.

In retrospect, we believe this will be seen as a monumental error on the part of EU leaders, as recognised by no less an authority than Nigel Farage earlier this year in one of his tirades to the Strasbourg Parliament: "All I can say is thank God we are leaving. You have learned nothing from Brexit. If you'd given David Cameron concessions, particularly on immigration, the Brexit vote, I must admit, would never, ever have happened."

**Two years on, there isn't a country in Europe where the debate about the scale of immigration isn't very live indeed. Yet astonishingly, immigration had almost no visibility at all in the 2017 General Election campaign, and (as yet) has played only a diminished, walk-on role in current Brexit negotiations, although some of the new thinking from Labour and the Lib Dems is very encouraging.**

It's as if people's rising anger and frustration about the migration debate being so badly handled since the election of Tony Blair back in 1997 had come to a head through the course of the 2016 Referendum campaign, delivering a devastating repudiation of mainstream political parties' policies on immigration, only to subside again once the message had been delivered.

Which was exactly the moment when, by contrast, other EU leaders realised – with a lot of additional pressure on them from the likes of Geert Wilders and Marine le Pen – that they'd better start getting serious about this before their indifference and procrastination created even more space for the populist right than it already had.

This new positioning across the EU was best summed up by Emmanuel Macron in his election campaign earlier in the year, arguing that asylum, refugee and migration policy "must be profoundly reformed". Since then, he's floated the idea elsewhere of a "Continental Partnership" between Britain and the EU that would allow for further restrictions on the freedom of movement whilst ensuring some kind of access to the single market.<sup>1</sup>

**It doesn't take a great deal of effort to unearth a wide range of similar views from politicians across the EU (see section 4.1) – and that was before the Bundestag election in Germany where the right-wing Alternative für Deutschland gained 12.6% of the vote, primarily on the basis of its anti-immigration policies. These mindset shifts (some very bold, others rather more nuanced) are potentially game-changing in terms of the Brexit debate. However, our hunch is that a lot of progressive politicians in the UK don't want to delve too deep into this unfolding and increasingly dynamic scene: far less contentious to stay marooned in a sea of 'freedom of movement' platitudes, however questionable they may now be. And the fact that the most eloquent voice here in the UK recommending a profound rethink on freedom of movement is that of Tony Blair just compounds the unease of many progressives.<sup>2</sup>**

The irony gets even richer. Detailed analysis of the 2017 General Election results show very large majorities of Labour, Lib Dem and Green voters favouring at least a 'soft' Brexit (for which continued membership of the single market/customs union is a reasonable proxy), and significant numbers who are already supporting the idea of a second Referendum, once the terms of our proposed exit are known.<sup>3</sup> One stage on from there, people are now beginning to talk about a full-on 'exit from Brexit' (the phrase used by the Lib Dems' new Leader, Vince Cable<sup>4 5</sup>), so it's clear which way things are moving.

However, the problem of the EU's continued official commitment to the freedom of movement (often ironically characterised by Brexiteers as 'sacrosanct') remains a major impediment to shifting the terms of the debate. Unless that barrier can be broken down, we may well be doomed to the kind of hard Brexit that is still the negotiating position of Theresa May's government.

Which, yet again, puts immigration at the heart of reversing what could well turn out to be a disastrous outcome for the UK and all its citizens. A shift of emphasis on both sides towards much smarter management of the movement of people would give the lie to all those who argue that there's no 'going back' on the 2016 Referendum result, and would reinforce the idea that it's not too late to reconsider. Such an approach now has gathering support amongst a UK electorate increasingly disturbed at the devastating consequences that the Tories' hard Brexit will impose on the UK economy and on young people in particular.

Which has led us to the following speculation. Imagine if Vince Cable, Keir Starmer (on behalf of Jeremy Corbyn) and Caroline Lucas shared this analysis, they'd surely be intent on seeking authentic agreement across the EU to properly acknowledge EU citizens' concerns about migration, by confirming existing measures and proposing new measures to help 'manage' migration much more effectively within the EU. Pragmatism rather than absolutism. As Vince Cable says: "I think you can interpret freedom of movement in a much more pragmatic way." Indeed, the makings of such an agreement are already there, including David Cameron's hard-won, pre-Referendum reforms. There was, for instance, support for the idea of an emergency brake on benefits paid to immigrants from elsewhere in the EU if that was seen to be causing serious problems to a Member State's welfare system, labour market or public services.

Perhaps most importantly, things are changing within the Labour Party, where support for such ideas is growing, bit by bit, led by Chuka Umunna, Stephen Kinnock, Stephen Doughty and many others. They point out that even today's freedom of movement is not an unconditional principle. EU citizens can be required to leave if they have no job or prospect of a job three months after arrival. Restrictions are explicitly allowed for reasons of "public policy, public security or public health".<sup>6</sup>

And add to that the ingenious proposal from the former Minister for Europe, Denis MacShane, for a "Fair Movement of Workers' Directive", ensuring EU workers from other countries cannot be exploited to undercut wages in the countries where they are seeking employment.<sup>7</sup>

The Labour Party, Lib Dems and Greens could then agree to work together to bring about such a transformation in the mechanics of internal EU migration, articulating ways which best meet our needs here in the UK. Lord Heseltine and the irrepressible Ken Clarke could be counted on to provide cover for the growing number of Conservatives who would be only too keen to find a way, even at this late stage, of preventing the kind of hard Brexit currently espoused by Theresa May.

This in turn would allow anti-Brexit politicians to develop a more sophisticated position than anything we've seen so far, having legitimately worked together to address by far the biggest concern of Brexit voters of the 2016 Referendum – namely, the imperative of being able to manage much more effectively ("take back control of") immigration from other EU countries.

What we're suggesting, in essence, is that all mainstream parties should commit to something along the lines of 'no new, large-scale, permanent immigration'. The word 'new' makes it clear that curbing future levels of immigration involves no changes for those already legally resident in a country. 'Permanent' has the caveat that foreign students are welcome to study here and workers temporarily to fill vacancies here, but only for a specified periods. We can no longer countenance the permanent propping up of whole sectors of our economy as a direct result of our failure to train people properly here in the UK. Crucially, we must rapidly train enough doctors, nurses and carers, for example, from our own population to prevent the shameful theft of such vital staff from the poorer countries which originally paid for their education.

It's clear that both Labour and the Lib Dems are inching tentatively to repositioning themselves in that kind of way. But what of the Green Party? As we'll see later in this paper, that's rather harder to call at the moment.

At the very least, we hope that this paper will persuade both members of the Green Party and a wider constituency of progressive voters, horrified by Brexit and the resurgence of the populist extreme right across Europe, that the best way of addressing this is to engage whole-heartedly in the immigration debate, rather than to keep on hoping that the majority will come round to accepting that the freedom of movement is an unalloyed good.

## **SECTION 1: THE CONTEXT**

First, we need to establish a context – what exactly is going on that has stirred such controversy around immigration globally and here in the UK?

### **1.1 The Basics**

The facts are simple and relatively uncontroversial.

As regards the international story, The United Nations report "Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2015 Revision," shows that the number of international migrants has grown faster, proportionately, than the world's population. As a result, the share of migrants in the global population reached 3.3 per cent in 2015 i.e. 244 million people, up from 2.8 per cent in 2000, a 41 per cent increase. This figure includes almost 20 million refugees.

Refugees and asylum seekers constituted around 7% of migration flows in 2012/2013. By the end of 2012, an estimated 15.4 million people were refugees, and another nearly 1 million (937,000) people were asylum seekers.

Despite the controversy over refugees, and often high levels of opposition to them in developed countries, the UN makes it clear in its 2015 Report that it's neighbouring countries that have shouldered almost all of the responsibility for coping with the impact of most of today's violent struggles. 89% of refugees and 99% of internally displaced people were hosted by around 15 developing countries, a pattern unchanged since 1991. However:

*"During the last decades, most OECD countries experienced an increase in international migration. Indeed, the number of immigrants received in OECD countries substantially increased in the last decades, from about 82 million in 1990 to 127 million in 2010. Immigrants are the main source of population growth in the OECD countries. They contribute more and more to*

*population growth, compared to natural increase (the excess of births over deaths), particularly in European countries.”*

‘Immigration, Unemployment and Growth in the Host Country’ Ekrame Dramane, Coulibaly, Christophe Rault, The Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA), July 2011<sup>8</sup>

There’s a lot of confusion about the terminology used here. The Refugee Council has provided the following clarifications<sup>9</sup>:

*“Refugee”*: A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it.

The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

In the UK, a person is officially a refugee when they have their claim for asylum accepted by the government.

*“Asylum seeker”*: A person who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum in another country but whose application has not yet been concluded.

*“Refused asylum seeker”*: A person whose asylum application has been unsuccessful and who has no other claim for protection awaiting a decision. Some refused asylum seekers voluntarily return home, others are forcibly returned and for some it is not safe or practical for them to return until conditions in their country change.

*“Economic migrant”*: Someone who has moved to another country to work. Refugees are not economic migrants.

**1.2** As regards the UK, the situation has changed dramatically over the last couple of decades.

In 2001, the UK population was estimated to be 59.1 million, with 4.9 million (8.3%) of foreign birth. By 2011, the population of the UK stood at 63.2 million, an increase of 4.1 million, with the foreign born population at 8 million (12.6%)<sup>10</sup>. By June 2016, the population of the UK had risen to around 65,648,000, showing an increase of 538,000 in one year (similar to the annual growth rate over the last 12 years).<sup>11</sup>

**An important statistic here is the percentage of live births in England and Wales being born to mothers from outside the UK. In 1990, it was 11.6%<sup>12</sup>; by 2015, that had risen to 27.5%, the highest level on record.<sup>13</sup> It is estimated that net migration (the difference between those arriving in and those leaving the country in any one year), plus births to foreign-born parents, has accounted for 85% of UK population growth since 2000.<sup>14</sup>**

In December last year, the Office for National Statistics reported that 650,000 people migrated to the UK in the year up to June 2016, and 315,000 left, making the total net migration figure 335,000. (That’s almost exactly the same figure as for the previous year – 336,000.) Of those leaving, 127,000 were estimated to be British, with the remaining 188,000 being returning migrants.

Between 2004 and 2016, there were around one million migrants from Eastern European countries coming to the UK. As indicated above, many end up returning to their home countries. Over 90% of international migrants to the UK go to England.

If net migration continues at around recent levels, then the UK population of 65.6 million is expected to rise by **over 8 million people** in 20 years (to 73.7 million), almost the equivalent of the population of Greater London (8.7 million).<sup>15</sup> The latest 'principal' population growth estimates only assume a long-term net migration figure of 165,000 a year. Yet despite migration figures dropping recently, the total net migration to the UK in the year ending March 2017 was 246,000.

However, even using the figure of 165,000, the latest ONS estimate of population growth for the next 25 years estimates that 77% of this increase would be from future migration and the children of those migrants. And population growth would not stop there.<sup>16 17</sup>

**1.3** By any standards, this is a big change in the lives of a lot of UK citizens: roughly half a million new residents arriving in the UK, every year, for the last ten years. So why would anyone imagine that this kind of 'demographic disruption' would not be of concern to many people here in the UK? Much of that growth happened during the time when Labour was in power, and many former Labour Ministers have acknowledged that they simply failed to understand either the short-term impacts of such changing circumstances, or the long-term implications.<sup>18</sup>

Most progressives have always seen this as a very manageable challenge, particularly in cosmopolitan London, which has benefited from decades of multiculturalism, arguing eloquently that the many benefits of immigration have always significantly outweighed the disbenefits. Many continue to this day to deny or ignore the impact of this demographic disruption on public opinion. That is not helpful, as the following insights will demonstrate:

*Immigration is generally unpopular. For half a century, opinion polls have consistently shown that the public in Britain favours a reduction in immigration. Despite uncertainties involved in measuring and interpreting public opinion, the evidence clearly shows high levels of opposition to immigration in the UK. In recent surveys, majorities of respondents think that there are too many migrants in the UK, that fewer migrants should be let in to the country, and that legal restrictions on immigration should be tighter.*

'UK Public Opinion toward Immigration: Overall Attitudes and Level of Concern', The Migration Observatory 28<sup>th</sup> November 2016<sup>19</sup>

*Immigration is ranked by people consistently among the top five issues facing the UK. As of June 2015, it was the issue picked most often by respondents (45%), followed by the NHS (40%) and the economy (26%). In the 2013 British Social Attitudes survey, large majorities endorsed reducing immigration: over 56% chose 'reduced a lot', while 77% chose either 'reduced a lot' or 'reduced a little'. Levels of concern about EU and non-EU immigration were roughly similar amongst citizens in the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. Whereas in Greece, Italy and France, most were concerned about immigration from non-European countries.*

'UK Public Opinion toward Immigration: Overall Attitudes and Level of Concern', the Migration Observatory 28<sup>th</sup> August 2015<sup>20</sup>

*...this concern with immigration is not just one for settled White communities. 68% of people agreed with the statement in our MORI poll that there were too many migrants in Britain – and 47% of the Asian, and 45% of the Black respondents felt that there was too much immigration into Britain.*

Select Committee on Communities and Local Government Committee Written Evidence 2007/8<sup>21</sup>

*According to the 2013 British Social Attitudes Survey, 82% of those with migrant heritage whose parents were born in Britain wanted immigration reduced; and so did 60% of first- and second-generation migrants*

'British Social Attitudes 2013: Attitudes to immigration'<sup>22</sup>

*A YouGov poll in 2015 showed that, overall, 75% of Britons thought immigration was too high, compared with 18% who thought it was about right and 2% too low; 85% of over-60s thought it was too high, compared with 56% of 18 to 24s. Among Britons classified as middle-class it was 69%; among those labelled working-class, 81%. In multicultural London, it was 66%; in Scotland, 69%.*

'YouGov/The Times Survey Results' 24th - 25th February 2015<sup>23</sup>

*Polls show that more than three quarters of British people want immigration reduced, while less than 5% want it increased.*

YouGov 8th March 2015<sup>24</sup>

*... a majority of people who think immigration is good, economically or culturally, for the UK still want to see it cut.*

'British Social Attitudes 2013: Attitudes to immigration' 7th January 2014<sup>25</sup>

Against that backdrop, it's hardly surprising that the 2016 Referendum campaign was so strongly influenced by a debate about immigration that became increasingly polarised, and often deliberately sensationalised by a right-wing media. As it happens, however, the attitudes of those wanting to stay in the European Union and those wanting to leave are nothing like as polarised as we are often led to believe. Indeed, the most comprehensive study of public attitudes to Brexit so far showed that over half (55%) of Remain supporters are in favour of the UK being able to limit EU immigration.<sup>26</sup>

**And there's a conundrum at work here. Some of the strongest opposition to immigration is in those parts of the UK where immigration is having the least impact – in Wales, for example, or Cornwall, or even in the North East. And some of those areas most impacted by immigration (particularly London) show relatively low levels of concern. The truth of it is that a fair share of the opposition to immigration is still based on less than rational fears, and we have to be aware of that when quoting polls and public opinion.**

#### **1.4 Denial**

This may be one of the principal reasons why the majority of progressives in the UK find it difficult to acknowledge, let alone to engage with these controversies around immigration. They are also reluctant to acknowledge that large numbers of people are angry because they 'were never asked' about what would be the right level of immigration for the UK, and remain insensitive to the fact that this demographic disruption has been significantly exacerbated by the economic reality of many people's lives in the UK, just as it has in many other countries.

This kind of large-scale migration has occurred at a time (between 2005 and 2015) when, on average, between 65-70% of households in 25 high-income economies experienced stagnant or falling real incomes. In the USA, for instance, the median real income for full-time male workers is now lower than it was four decades ago. The income of the bottom 90% of the population has stagnated for over 30 years.<sup>27</sup> This has led (in ways that should be wholly understandable to anyone of a progressive persuasion) to growing and now chronic insecurity on the part of tens of millions of people in such countries, and particularly in the UK and the USA.

Reducing immigration really isn't the principal answer to that chronic insecurity. Indeed, it's hard to say how much of that insecurity is caused by immigration. How much more secure would people feel if immigration was reduced to zero? Much of this insecurity is underpinned by socio-economic reality; in so many ways, so many people here in the UK really have been 'left behind'. As Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England, has pointed out, this 'flat-lining phenomenon', for so many people, makes the last decade 'the first lost decade since Karl Marx was scribbling in the British Library'.<sup>28</sup> The fact that the relatively recent high net levels of immigration have had a relatively limited and broadly positive impact



on the economy (as demonstrated by a number of reports from the Office for Budget Responsibility<sup>29</sup>) means different things to different people. What is much harder to dispute is that mass immigration has cut the earning power of the unskilled:

*“Mass immigration increases inequality. This is the unpalatable fact the liberal left in Britain refuses to accept. Markets are imperfect instruments. But it is not necessary to subscribe to free market economic theory to believe that large increases in supply tend to drive down the price. And the price of labour is the wage. New Labour allowed direct competition to enter the UK labour market on a scale unprecedented in our history. It is the relatively unskilled in the bottom half of the distribution who have lost out. The liberal elite do not suffer. Indeed, they benefit because many of the services they consume are provided at lower prices than would have been the case without mass immigration. It is sometimes argued that immigrants do jobs that native British workers are unwilling to take. Very well then, without mass immigration, employers would be obliged to raise the real wage rate to induce these people to take the jobs.”<sup>30</sup>*  
Paul Ormerod, ‘Open Borders or Fair Wages: the Left Needs to Make up its Mind’, The Guardian, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2015

That said, the solutions to the challenge of employers undercutting wages by using migrant labour lies fairly and squarely with the Government: enforce the minimum wage, crack down on exploitative employers, and move towards a proper Living Wage for all.

Moreover, we would both argue that there are many more important causes behind today’s rising inequality – not least the kind of neoliberal globalisation that has dominated our economies for the last 50 years, and which continues to erode all the social and environmental protections on which our quality of life depends. We now know, indisputably, that a rising tide does not lift all boats, which means we have to become far more sympathetic to those whose boats are now so hopelessly stuck in the toxic mud of that cruel ideology.

### **1.5 Fear of the Future**

And here’s the thing: all of that can only get a great deal worse in the future.

In addition to all the political upheavals and implications of climate change in the regions adjoining Europe there has to be factored in the all too rarely considered implications of population growth. Of the additional 2.4 billion people projected to be added to the global population between 2015 and 2050, 1.3 billion will be added in Africa.<sup>31</sup>

The Middle East had a population of 218 million in 2013. The region’s population is projected to grow to 292 million in 2025, ie an increase of around 74 million. The implication for Europe’s migration policies of these demographic trends will be challenging, to say the least.<sup>32</sup>

Given this, we all have to be far more thoughtful about where the EU’s freedom of movement principle may take us in the future. EU provisions (which include the 2013 Dublin Regulation that requires someone arriving in the EU to request asylum in the first country they reach) have placed huge and unfair burdens on countries such as Italy and Greece, with long sea borders that are hard to police. This encouraged a blind eye to be turned when new arrivals in Europe chose to continue their journey to other EU countries.

Indeed, the international context has changed to such a degree that the EU’s entire approach to immigration is now at risk. Easier travel, information about foreign laws and living standards, access to mobile phones and mobile money, has turned human trafficking of one kind or another into a huge and profitable industry. What’s more, the criteria for asylum, as interpreted by current human rights law,

make it theoretically possible for whole ethnic, religious or other groups to qualify – including almost anyone whose country is at war. Or whose country may, in future, be wracked by forced migration as a consequence of climate change.<sup>33</sup>

The irony here for the Green Party couldn't be more telling. Members of the Green Party know, as a matter of increasingly painful inevitability, that the lives of tens/hundreds of millions of people (particularly in Africa and the Middle East) will be devastated by the effects of climate change. We know that many of those people will have no choice but to leave their homes and communities if they are to have any prospect of survival, let alone a better life. And we know that many of them will seek to come to Europe, as the place that offers the best possible refuge in an all-encompassing storm that is not of their own making.

We know that. Yet many in the Green Party continue to advocate for open borders, some in the hope that it will atone for Europe's colonial past, and some out of straightforward humanitarian concerns. This will surely result in a massive public backlash.

One snapshot of the potential scale of mass migration without border controls was provided by a global Gallup poll of half a million people in 154 countries (representing more than 98% of the world's adult population) that took place between 2010 to 2012. This underscored how potentially well-founded public concerns in richer countries are about uncontrolled mass migration. It showed that around 630 million of the world's adults would like to leave their country and move somewhere else permanently, with 42 million expressing a preference for the UK, a destination second only to the United States.<sup>34</sup> And that's even before the impact of accelerating climate change.

To give that a more specific focus, Stephen King drew out an interesting contrast in the Sunday Telegraph back in May 2017:

“Consider the contrasting demographics of Nigeria and Italy. In 1950, Nigeria's population was about 38 million; Italy's 47 million. In 2015, Nigeria's had shot up to 182 million, while Italy's stood at 60 million. By 2100, the UN predicts that declining infant mortality and other trends will swell Nigeria's population to more than 700 million, while Italy's will have dropped back to 50 million 'thanks to a persistently low birth rate'. Similar trends across Africa suggest the continent's share of the world population, now at 16%, is likely to rise to 40% by the end of the century. And the chances are that many of these people will want to seek a new life in Europe.”

## **SECTION 2: CURRENT PROGRESSIVE POSITIONING**

**2.1** Whilst acknowledging that the macro-economic impacts of large-scale immigration have been largely positive, in the round, it's instructive to reflect on the different responses to that 'state of play' from our political parties.

The Conservatives and UKIP have 'internalised' both the scale of that demographic disruption and the deep consequential concerns that it has aroused. They choose to ignore or understate the benefits of immigration, and, with the unremitting support of our poisonous right-wing media, have used it to deepen levels of intolerance and xenophobia that have not been so visible in our public life for a very long time.

Labour, the Lib Dems and the Greens, in the meantime, have mostly chosen to stick to the same script, extolling the benefits of large-scale immigration, whilst choosing to downplay the disbenefits, even as the gap between them and public opinion continues to get wider. Worse yet, they have sometimes set

out to imply that any deviation from ‘the script’ (on the part of individuals in any of those three parties) encourages hidden racist or xenophobic tendencies, and are therefore (by definition) ‘unprogressive’.

**The consequences of this stark divide are now crystal clear. The Right has succeeded in using anxiety about large-scale immigration to spearhead every other aspect of its hateful, illiberal politics, whilst those on the progressive Left find it harder and harder to engage compassionately with what is now a deeply alienated section of the voting public.**

This was tellingly captured in one of Jeremy Corbyn’s rare contributions to the 2016 Referendum campaign, when he let it be known that he was in favour of ‘open borders’ not just within the EU, but across the entire world. In one offhand soundbite, he further alienated countless Labour voters who already felt ignored and patronised as they struggled with wholly legitimate concerns about economic security and future job prospects. He has since acknowledged that this was a long-term aspiration, but for many such a statement reinforces a sense that their concerns are of little importance.

**2.2** This ‘open borders’ position has strong support across the progressive spectrum. A new ‘Alliance for Free Movement’ was launched in February this year, demonstrating yet again that many people still apparently believe that the free movement of people provides a bulwark against unacceptable neo-liberalism, instead of seeing it for what it really is – a crucial tool used by unaccountable neo-liberalism to keep wages low and workers cowed.

*“The free movement of people can build our collective power and creativity in the face of attempts by the super-rich to turn the world into a gigantic marketplace, in which we are all isolated individuals competing against one another.”<sup>35</sup>*

**It’s impossible to overstate just how historically bizarre this all looks. It may well be too late for the UK to seize hold of the new climate of opinion across the EU (with more and more people arguing that EU rules for implementing free movement principles need to be reformed, as laid out in section 4.1), but the truth of it is that pressure from populist parties to change the status quo has irreversibly altered the direction of travel. How can it possibly serve the progressive cause to set itself so resolutely against that game-changing historical shift?**

The position of the Green Party is nuanced. There is complete agreement that people’s needs around the world must be met ideally where people live (‘without recourse to migration’), but that this is hard to do given prevailing economic realities, making mass migration inevitable. Furthermore, the Green Party agrees that ‘the management of’ migration is necessary, which effectively rules out any ‘open-borders’ position until things change dramatically for the better: “Some controls on immigration will be needed for the foreseeable future”.<sup>36</sup>

But that’s where the contradictions start to kick in: “Richer countries do not have the right to use migration controls to protect their privileges from others. We will therefore progressively reduce immigration controls.”<sup>37</sup>

**In other words, the will of the millions of people in the UK who feel (and often are) ‘left behind’, who in no way count themselves as beneficiaries of an inherently unjust global economic system, and who want politicians to take back control by actively managing and progressively reducing such high levels of immigration, alongside other critical measures, must apparently be set aside so that we can make the privileges of our still relatively wealthy country accessible to all-comers.**

This is, of course, irrational even in today’s political context. Thinking ahead to what awaits us (and all other relatively wealthy countries) in the not too distant future, as a consequence of accelerating climate change, makes such a position wholly untenable. In Section 4, we attempt to address this

conundrum by outlining the kind of ‘progressive internationalism’ we will need to anticipate and preempt a crisis of this kind.

**2.3** Global inequality and a collective imperial legacy are often cited as the reason why rich countries have a continuing moral and legal responsibility, forever into the future, to take in economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. It’s part of the process of redressing the burden of our imperial past. And that implies that the push factors behind migration today (war, inequality, and environmental threats) have to be resolved first, before we even begin to think about limiting the options for those escaping such destructive trends.

**The irony here is telling. Many of the organisations in the vanguard of the fight against the worst excesses of today’s neo-liberal globalisation are the ones that are most outspoken in favour of open borders. The fact that it is the self-same, self-serving elites that benefit most from an open borders, pro-globalisation position, goes unremarked.**

Why is this? Open borders for capital, goods, services and people is a precondition for neo-liberalism to thrive in the EU, regardless of its impacts on individual nation states, on communities hollowed out by the loss of jobs and on thriving local economies, and on the countless individuals ‘left behind’ by this devil-take-the-hindmost form of capitalism. Yet people across Europe are still told that ‘freedom of movement of people’ is the sine qua non of progressive politics today.

But a more pragmatic dimension is increasingly apparent here, as now recognised by the Labour Party. Progressive Parties cannot achieve their goals unless they can call on the broad and deep support of millions of people in the UK whose values are still all about fairness, about progress (as in better lives for their communities as well as for their own families and children), and about that delicate balance between entitlements and obligations – but who are increasingly concerned about high levels of immigration. Cut it which way you will, the majority of those people believe that the current position is demonstrably unfair, is insensitive to their understanding of what makes for cohesive, tolerant communities, and may also dilute their entitlements (particularly in terms of education, housing and social services) at a time when many things are becoming less and less secure.

This has nothing to do with explicit or even latent racism or xenophobia. The demand that UK politicians should strive to secure levels of immigration that existing UK citizens are comfortable with, and that appropriate constraints on both the scale and the pace of migration should be put in place to ensure that this is what happens, seems relatively modest, and remarkably rational, in such an uncertain and insecure world. The fact that so many on the Right are opposed to large-scale immigration does not mean that we should automatically defend it. What it does mean is that we should spell out, unambiguously, all the progressive reasons for opposing large-scale permanent immigration, including our absolute commitment to protecting the rights of existing and future immigrants. As Green campaigner Rupert Read says:

*“There must be absolutely no compromise whatsoever on the humanity and rights of immigrants, and on our responsibility to welcome and help integrate those who are here. But we ought to accept the power of the reasoning that shows that a high level of immigration leads to significant problems here, abroad, and in the future. And if we do not rein in immigration, that means we are not taking a host of critical issues seriously, such as being on the side of working-class UK citizens, defending equality, building a sense of society and community, and defending future generations, who depend on us to halt the pressure of our ever-growing ecological footprint.”<sup>38</sup>*

If progressive politics is ever to make real headway here in the UK, the politically active must never again overlook those sections of society that have lost out so profoundly from the present neoliberal

order. This was the fatal error of the anti-Brexiteers during the Referendum campaign in the UK in 2016, and of the Democrats in the US during the Presidential Election. For many, these campaigning failures are best summed up by a satirist from the 2016 Edinburgh Festival who remarked that those who voted 'remain' dreamed of working in Europe, and those who voted 'leave' dreamed of working in Britain.

Green movements across Europe have as yet found it difficult to take account of the seismic shocks of the last 18 months. In a penetrating article in the Guardian, on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2017, one of the UK's most prominent and provocative Green voices, Paul Kingsnorth, urged fellow Greens to get their heads around the analysis of the social scientist Jonathan Haidt:

*"The current explosion of nationalism in the West, Haidt says, is due to globalism having overplayed its hand. Different attitudes to the issue of mass immigration – the spark that lit the fire on both sides of the Atlantic – demonstrated how this had happened. While globalists saw migration as a right, nationalists saw it as a privilege. To a globalist, border wars and immigration laws are tantamount to racism or human rights abuse. To a nationalist, they are evidence of a community asserting its values and choosing to whom to grant citizenship. Psychologically, Haidt suggests, what happened in 2016 was that many nationalist-inclined voters in the West felt that their community was now under existential threat – not only from large-scale migration, but from Islamist terrorist attacks and the globalist elite's dismissive attitude to their concerns about both."<sup>39</sup>*

It's hard to disagree with that sort of analysis, providing some kind of rationale for the power of new populists such as Marine Le Pen, Donald Trump and Alternative für Deutschland in Germany. As Kingsnorth argues, these people not only understand the destructive energy of global capitalism as well as those on the Left do, but they also understand what the Left refuses to see: that the heart of the West's current wound is cultural as well as economic. What is driving today's turmoil are threats to identity, culture and meaning. Large-scale migration, eroding borders, shifting national and ethnic identities, globalist attacks on Western culture – all that is solid would appear to be melting into the air for a larger and larger number of people.

However, it's never going to be easy trying to reclaim the notion of nationalism as a critical element in tomorrow's progressive politics. But that shouldn't prevent us from understanding what lies behind many of the 'shocks' to today's political orthodoxies:

*"What Haidt calls nationalism is really a new name for a much older impulse: the need to belong. Specifically, the need to belong to a place in which you can feel at home. What might a benevolent Green nationalism sound like? You want to protect and nurture your homeland – well, then, you'll want to nurture its forests and its streams too. What could be more patriotic? This is not the kind of nationalism of which Trump would approve, but that's the point. Why should those who want to protect a besieged natural world allow billionaire property developers to represent them as the elitists? Why not fight back – on what they think is their territory?"<sup>39</sup>*

**What has to be recognised by politically active progressives in rich countries is that if they continue to downplay concerns about immigration as ignorant, ill-informed about the benefits of immigration, or even racist and xenophobic, then the future will, without doubt, belong to the right, and even to the extreme right. The likes of Nigel Farage, Marine Le Pen and the AfD party in Germany have focussed ruthlessly on how to benefit from public concern about immigration, and media powerbrokers in all these countries have become only too adept at whipping up such sentiments.**

## SECTION 3: DILEMMAS TO BE ADDRESSED

### 3.1 Stealing the brightest and the best

There was a lot of concern in the UK in 2013 that the extension of freedom of movement rights to Romania and Bulgaria in 2014 would result in the arrival of masses of “beggars and benefits cheats”. That didn’t happen. Indeed, the reality is very different: it’s the Romanian health service that is experiencing the real migration crisis, as their newly-trained doctors leave for UK and other rich countries. The number of doctors in Romanian hospitals has fallen by virtually a third from 21,400 to 14,400 since 2011.<sup>40</sup>

This is typical of our inability to see what the real problems are here. Britain is the world’s second largest importer of health workers after the US. While 5% of Italy’s and 10% of Germany’s doctors were born overseas, the figure for the UK is 26%. This despite the fact that in 2010, along with all other members of the World Health Organisation, the UK signed the ‘Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel’, which ‘encourages countries to improve their health workforce planning and respond to their future needs without relying unduly on the training efforts of other countries, particularly low-income countries suffering from acute shortages’.<sup>41</sup> You might wonder why we bothered signing up to such a Code: 11% of all staff in the NHS and in community health services are foreign nationals, and this increases to 14% of professionally qualified clinical staff, and to 26% of doctors.

Incredibly, since 2000, at least 11,000 doctors in the Philippines have retrained as nurses and gone abroad, earning four or five times as much as they would as a doctor back home.<sup>42</sup> The country provided the highest number of non-British qualified nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff, with 8,094 out of a total of 309,529 for whom data was available. The Philippines also provides the third highest number of NHS staff overall, with 12,744. While the figures help illustrate the extent of the contribution of migrants, they do not paint the whole picture, as many will have taken British nationality since arriving.<sup>43</sup>

In terms of nurses, more than one third of NHS trusts went overseas to recruit nurses in the last year, with even more drawing up plans to do so now. While many NHS trusts targeted countries in Europe, several travelled thousands of miles to the Philippines, Australia, the US and India in search of staff. A main driver of this process is the shortages following the axing by NHS Trusts of thousands of nursing posts, in an attempt to find £15bn of ‘efficiency savings’ by 2015, leading to redundancies and the freezing of posts, so that staff who retired were not replaced.

As the Royal College of Nursing continues to point out, today’s ‘1% cap on pay rises’, preceded as it has been by various pay freezes for years before that, have left nurses at least £3,000 a year worse off than they were in 2010 – meaning that for many, it pays more to stack supermarket shelves than it does to stay in nursing.

There are now more than 40,000 vacancies for nursing positions in the NHS. However, unbelievably, the number of training places has been reduced, with 2,500 fewer places this year compared with three years ago. A Government report warned that on current trends there could be a shortage of almost 50,000 nurses within three years.<sup>44</sup>

*“... the vast sums being spent recruiting nurses from abroad were symptomatic of short term, boom and bust workforce planning which is endemic in the NHS ... It is frankly perplexing that on the one hand nursing posts are being cut and training places being reduced, while on the other desperate managers are raiding overseas workforces.”<sup>45</sup>*

Dr Peter Carter, Royal College of Nursing General Secretary

Rich countries (and the skilled migrants they attract) do indeed benefit from this permanent brain drain from poorer societies. It allows them to prop up any sectors of their economy with domestic labour shortages, and so avoid the necessity of investing properly to train more of their own, and to pay them properly. But the negative impact in those countries from whom these highly-qualified personnel are recruited is extremely significant. In truth, stealing the brightest and the best from poor countries is the polar opposite of good, responsible internationalism.

Before leaving this topic, in terms of that balance between rich and poor countries, we have to take into account the critical importance of remittances.

One of the major advantages to the relatives of immigrants from developing countries to rich world countries are the remittance flows they send back, estimated at around \$400 billion in 2012. If one includes remittances back to high-income countries, as well as to poor countries, that 2012 figure rises to an estimated \$534 billion.<sup>46</sup> It is also thought possible that twice this amount was transferred informally. These financial transfers are growing in significance, and in many countries they are larger than either development assistance or foreign direct investment.

This is undoubtedly a hugely important factor – especially for the individuals and families that are the direct beneficiaries. But this has to be balanced against the impact of poorer countries losing some of their most highly-qualified people, and the taxes that they would have paid, and experiencing a profound deterioration in their social services as a result.

### **3.2 A bigger ecological footprint**

Migration's boost to population levels in richer countries inevitably results in a larger 'global ecological footprint' than would otherwise be the case without such levels of immigration. Put very simply, an individual's ecological footprint is a measure of that individual's impact on the Earth's ecosystems.<sup>47</sup> WWF defines it as 'the impact of human activities measured in terms of the area of biologically productive land and water required to produce the goods consumed and to assimilate the wastes generated. More simply, it is the amount of the environment necessary to produce the goods and services necessary to support a particular lifestyle'.<sup>48</sup>

This is complex territory, entailing the morally vexatious weighing up of individual benefit (for migrants moving from poorer countries to richer countries) and societal disbenefit from the aggregated impact of what this means in terms of total resource use. The work of the Global Footprint Network, the Stockholm Environment Institute and the UK Government's Committee on Climate Change indicates that if everyone lived as the average Briton does, we would need three planets' resources to sustain us, and ten times the capacity of the planet to absorb greenhouse gas emissions at that level.<sup>49</sup>

That ecological footprint is literal as well as metaphorical, in terms of impact on the natural world. Chris Packham, a Patron of Population Matters, spelled that out uncompromisingly in a recent article in the Times:

*"Our natural world is in competition with the unnatural world we create – and it is losing badly. This destructive competition will continue as long as human numbers are growing. In the UK, we already have the choice of how many children we have. If we want them to enjoy the natural world, we have to recognise that the more of them we have, the more difficult it will be for them to do that. We all need breathing room: animals, plants, human beings. We shouldn't have to compete for it, and we don't have to."<sup>50</sup>*

This raises much bigger issues of population growth rather than immigration per se. But the simple truth is that since we are currently doing very little to reduce our average footprint here in the UK, it means, inevitably, that the higher our population rises, largely as a consequence of immigration, the harder that challenge becomes.

*“A higher population will also affect attempts to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases from the UK, making it more difficult for the country to meet its absolute reduction targets to tackle climate change. The UK targets are to cut emissions by 80% from 1990 levels by 2050, and 34% to 42% from 1990 levels by 2020.*

*In 2008, per capita emissions were 10.3 tonnes of CO<sub>2e</sub> a year. If our population remained stable, emissions would have to be cut to 7.3 to 8.3 tonnes a head by 2020 to achieve the 34% to 42% target. But if the population grows as projected, emissions will need to be reduced to 6.7 to 7.7 tonnes per person. The 2050 per capita budget reduces from 2.5 tonnes to 2 tonnes when we take account of UK population growth.”<sup>51</sup>*

*‘Growing Pains: Population and Sustainability in the UK’, Forum for the Future, 2010<sup>52</sup>*

### **3.3 Impact on infrastructure**

If net migration continues at around recent levels, as already explained, then the UK’s population is expected to rise by over 8 million people in 20 years, almost the equivalent of the population of Greater London (8.7 million). 77% of this increase would be from future migration and the children of those migrants. Future population growth would not stop there. Official long-term projections are for a UK population of 85 million in 2116 – 30% more than the UK’s population today. Controlling migration is central to halting this growth, as it has a far larger effect on future population levels than either fertility or increases in life expectancy.<sup>53 54</sup>

**It’s important to be completely logical about this. The UK is already struggling to maintain critical infrastructure, to meet housing demand, and to invest sufficiently in education, healthcare and social services. These increasingly significant deficits are not caused by high levels of immigration: they’re caused by wretchedly inadequate economic and fiscal policy, going back at least a couple of decades.**

But continuing population growth clearly exacerbates those deficits. The UK’s Total Fertility Rate has not been above 2.1 children per mother since 1972, but ‘population momentum’ (the increase in the numbers of births when babies born at the peak of population growth reach reproductive age), plus net immigration, has led to a population increase of nearly 10 million people since 1972.

Beyond that, given that such a significant part of population growth is accounted for by immigration, rather than by any ‘natural increase’, these pressures will build and build, as the direct and inevitable consequence of the sheer growth in the numbers of people using the nation’s infrastructure, needing proper housing, and relying on high quality education, healthcare and social services.

**That is not the fault of individual immigrants – far from it. But net immigration (of around 335,000 a year over the last two years) obviously contributes to these problems.**

Housing provides the clearest example of this. The Local Government Association calculates that we need half a million new homes to avoid ‘an emerging nightmare’. More than three million adults aged between 20 and 34 are now living with their parents; house prices are rising faster than average earnings, and there are at least 1.7 million households on the waiting lists for affordable homes across England. The number of people renting has doubled, and the average first-time buyer is now aged 35. This housing deficit is already causing untold social and economic damage, and there are no long-term solutions in sight.



This has all sorts of implications. Despite the Prime Minister's repeated assertions that "My Government is very clear that the Green Belt must be protected", 425,000 new homes are currently planned for Green Belt land, as of March 2017, according to figures from the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England.<sup>55</sup> That figure is up from 273,000 in March 2016. Little of this new housing on Green Belt land will address the crisis in affordable housing. (Astonishingly, the CPRE remains completely silent on the principal reason why the Green Belt is now under growing threat. Population growth is as taboo an area of discussion for CPRE as it is for every other mainstream environmental / conservation organisation in the UK.)

The demand for housing will also increase the pressure to build on flood plains and areas vulnerable to flood risk. Currently, around 5.2 million properties in England (the equivalent to one in six properties) are already at risk of flooding. With climate change and further development pressures, flood risk in England is going to increase in the future, with potentially the most significant change to be experienced in the second half of this century.<sup>56</sup>

Again, for purposes of ensuring complete clarity, none of this is the fault of individual immigrants – far from it. But net immigration obviously contributes to these problems. To deny this can only be attributed to wishful thinking or wilful dishonesty.

### 3.4 Food security

The UK's self-sufficiency in food (our ability to feed ourselves) peaked in the 1980s, and has been in decline since then, falling from 78% to 60% in the last 30 years.<sup>57</sup> Pressure on land is already intense: 69% of the UK's land is already used for agriculture, there is demand for more housing (and forest), and as an increasing population demands a varied diet, the UK is likely to need to import more food in the coming decades.<sup>58</sup>

At present, therefore, the UK can only feed around 60% of its present population of 65 million, without taking into account the more than 8 million extra people projected in the next 20 years. During that time, the UK's food vulnerability could worsen for a number of reasons. The global availability of the food supplies that the UK at present imports could be dramatically reduced, due to rapidly rising global demand, particularly from Asia. Worse yet, the threat to UK food security could be even more serious, should increased global demand combine with other potential problems such as climate change. Even the NFU seems, somewhat belatedly, to have woken up to the potentially dire consequences of a hard Brexit, not just in terms of the loss of EU markets, but because of the current dependence of UK food and farming on around half a million foreign workers, in both harvesting and processing. The eventual answer here must be better pay, conditions and training for domestic agricultural workers, supplemented where necessary by short-term permits for foreign workers.

There's no shortage of dire warnings about the implications of these trends. The World Bank reinforced the seriousness of such threats to global food security in its response to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on declining crop yields in the face of changing weather patterns.<sup>59</sup> A recent report from the UK government's official climate change advisers warned that droughts could devastate food production in England by the 2020s.<sup>60</sup>

Some of the answers to this are already well-rehearsed. Many were summed up in a report from the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) 'to produce more food from less land and to eat differently, specifically to eat more plant-based foods, less meat and dairy, and to waste dramatically less'.<sup>61</sup> Should Brexit occur, meaning that we will be out of the Common Agricultural Policy, Ministers might revisit the idea of setting a target for food self-sufficiency, returning perhaps to that figure of around 80% over the course of the next decade. Or is Anna Soubry's dystopian alternative going to be closer to the truth of it?: "These Brexiteers promised a land of milk and honey – the reality is gruel and chlorinated chicken."<sup>62</sup>

But to all this must surely be added the need to halt as rapidly as possible the UK's population growth, particularly by reducing present levels of net migration.

### 3.5 Universal Basic Income

For the last 40 years, the Green Party has been advocating for the introduction of a Basic Income, paid as of right to all its citizens. People across the political spectrum are now jumping on this bandwagon, but it was the Green Party that did the heavy lifting here throughout that time. Heightened concern about the wholesale loss of jobs through automation, robotisation and Artificial Intelligence is forcing people to think again about how best to protect people's basic entitlements, and simultaneously unleash individuals' creativity and community energy in ways that the formal economy may no longer be able to provide.

Providing a Universal Basic Income for all people in the UK over the age of 16, or even for a significant proportion of people, represents a very significant change in the way the country's resources would need to be used. It would mean massive changes in the way social care and other budgets are deployed.

**One thing is therefore absolutely sure: support for very high levels of continuing permanent net migration, and support for the Universal Basic Income, are mutually and irrevocably incompatible. It seems perfectly obvious that proposals for a Basic Income are only going to be publicly accepted if there are strict controls on immigration. Without that, there would be outrage at the idea of people moving to the UK in order to benefit from the Citizen's Income, and the case for one of the most significant policies in any progressive political portfolio would be lost.**

## SECTION 4: DEVELOPING A MORE PROGRESSIVE POLITICS AROUND IMMIGRATION

### 4.1 A Changing Scene?

Some of the consequences referred to above (as in the inevitable impact on electoral prospects for progressive politicians) are playing out in real time; others will have a much longer-term impact. But the reluctance to think strategically about these consequences remains as deep-seated and as fixed as ever in today's progressive parties.

This is now a challenge for the whole of Europe. Although we hear relatively little about this in the UK press, many European countries are now beginning to address exactly the same challenge: finding appropriate policy responses to the will of majorities in their countries to lessen the flow of immigrants settling permanently in those countries.

The previous Dutch Deputy Prime Minister, Lodewijk Asscher, has stated that "support for free movement is crumbling when people see that it turns out to be so unfair", and that Britain leaving the EU "gives a unique opportunity to do this in a very different way".

Former Danish Prime Minister, Helle Thorning-Schmidt, and former Finnish Prime Minister, Alexander Stubb, have called for debates on the application of the free movement principle. The EU Commission's Vice-President, Jyrki Katainen, has talked of getting to grips with the "unwanted consequences" of freedom of movement.<sup>63</sup>

The former Social Democrat Austrian Chancellor, Christian Kern, has called for the EU to reconsider freedom of movement rules, and in particular to consider discrimination in favour indigenous job-seekers. He has proposed a system whereby “only if there is no suitable unemployed person in the country can [a job] be given to new arrivals without restriction”.<sup>64</sup> (Austria is just one of many EU countries that has reintroduced border controls (despite the Schengen Agreement) after more than one million refugees and migrants arrived in Europe in 2015.)

Nor is the European Commission deaf to these voices. It has recently tightened up its rules on access to social security, saying that Member States may decide not to grant social benefits to mobile citizens who are economically inactive, meaning those who are not working or actively looking for a job, and do not have the legal right of residence in that territory.

Even in Germany, there’s a profound re-think going on, with the German Bundestag in the process of introducing significant restrictions on all benefits for non-German EU citizens.<sup>65</sup> In June this year, Germany’s Commissioner for Immigration announced that only a quarter to a third of the 1.3 million people coming into the country since 2015 would successfully enter the labour market over the next five years, and “for many others, we will need up to ten years”. This will put considerable strain even on an economy as strong as that of Germany’s.<sup>66</sup>

As we now know, these factors loomed large in Germany’s election for the Bundestag in September. AfD, the populist, anti-immigration right-wing party, won 12.6% of the vote, securing 94 seats in the Bundestag. Whatever the final composition of the coalition that Mrs Merkel will need to put together, the presence of so many AfD politicians will have a marked and damaging impact on German politics as a whole. Mrs Merkel has acknowledged that it was her decision to allow up to a million refugees to enter Germany in 2015<sup>67</sup> that contributed most to the success of the AfD.

So why would people and politicians in the UK not be supportive of an emerging Europe-wide reinterpretation of the principle of freedom of movement? It does now seem that this is exactly what’s happening. The Lib Dems have already moved significantly in this direction. Former UK Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, recently stated: “There are plenty of politicians across the European Union who are now volubly saying that they think there needs to be a change to freedom of movement. So there is scope for a Europe-wide approach to this which I think would satisfy some of the government’s needs.”<sup>68</sup>

Vince Cable, now Leader of the Lib Dems, has gone further in stating that: “There is no great argument of liberal principle for free EU movement; the economics is debatable, and the politics is conclusively hostile ... I have serious doubts that the EU’s freedom of movement is tenable or even desirable,”<sup>69</sup>

This pan-European trend for demanding more controls on the free movement of people will become ever more evident as Brexit negotiations proceed. The implications of that are huge. Since so-called ‘uncontrolled migration’ was one of the strongest reasons cited by people voting to leave the EU, then this change of heart across the rest of Europe, plus the growing awareness of the adverse economic and social implications of crashing out of the EU, could lead to resurgent calls for the UK to reverse Brexit in the light of these changing realities. In view of all that, should not all progressive pro-Europeans be forensically focused on supporting rapid changes in the interpretation of the EU’s freedom of movement principle?

## 4.2 Beyond the EU

At the same time, it’s equally important to think through the implications of adopting a stricter approach to immigration. First and foremost, we have to redouble the commitments that we make to improve people’s economic and social prospects **in their own countries**. And the crucial thing is to tackle

the root cause of why people feel they have no choice but to leave family, friends and communities in the first place.

*“The indigenous populations of host countries have a right to control entry, taking into account not only their own interests but also a sense of charity to others. But in exercising charity, their chief concern should be the vast group of poor people left behind in countries of origin, rather than the relatively tiny group of fortunate people who get dramatic increases in their income through being permitted to migrate.”*

Paul Collier, ‘Exodus: Immigration and Multiculturalism in the 21st Century’, Allen Lane, London 2013 p270

Beyond the horror of war and conflict, much of this is to do with poverty and people’s immediate economic prospects, or with their sense of security and personal freedom in autocratic, oppressive political circumstances. But much of this also goes back to ruthlessly imposed notions of international competitiveness, which pit nations against each other in beggar-thy-neighbour economic warfare in the global economy.

Against that kind of backdrop, it becomes possible to redefine the kind of progressive internationalism that we will need for the future. We expect that export-led growth will need to be progressively reduced as the emphasis shifts to protecting and rebuilding local economies; trade deals that prioritise corporate profit over the wellbeing of the majority must be wound down. All foreign policy, all trade agreements, and all aid and development transfers will need to be focussed on minimising those factors that persuade people that their chances are better off outside their country than inside. Arms sales will need to be dramatically curtailed, as will the influence of tax havens used by selfish and corrupt elites. Aid and development policies must prioritise employment opportunities for young men and women. Education for girls and access for all women to reproductive healthcare and fertility management must take centre stage in order to help reduce population growth. The UN Sustainable Development Goals would become more politically relevant, as would policies to urgently curb global warming to lessen the inevitability of ending up with more and more climate refugees.

In terms of doing more to discourage people from leaving their countries as migrants, the EU is already moving in this direction. In 2015, the Africa Trust Fund was announced, pledging billions of Euros to African countries in return for their agreeing to the deportation of unwanted migrants from EU countries. Brussels has already contributed €2.6bn, but most member countries (apart from Italy) have been slow to meet their commitments. The UK, for instance, has paid in just €0.6bn of its promised €3bn. Beyond that, there are plans for a so-called ‘G5 Force’ to combat both human trafficking across the Sahel and up into Libya. The 5,000-strong Force, costing around £300m a year, would specifically seek to reduce regional insecurity, one of the biggest drivers of migration. But so far, only a small percentage of the required sum has been pledged.

This, of course, is par for the course whenever Western politicians make their fine-sounding promises to help people in poorer countries – even on climate change. A critical element of the Paris Agreement entails setting up a Green Climate Fund, through which \$100bn from developed countries would be channelled to help the rest of the world to mitigate and adapt to climate change before 2020. So far, only \$10bn has actually been pledged, \$3bn of which is the US portion that President Trump is very unlikely to increase. It’s hard to see even a small fraction of that \$100bn annual payment actually coming through.

Initiatives of this kind are crucial in helping define what a new progressive internationalism would look like in the future, lending real substance to the notion of ‘taking back control’ in terms of foreign policy and aid.

Here in the UK, the idea of ‘taking back control’ shouldn’t be construed too negatively. Being in control is not just about having the right to determine an upper limit on the numbers of migrants, but having the consequential freedom to warmly welcome new migrants into our communities and to ensure they become active, gainfully employed citizens of the UK.

By the same token, it must therefore be made crystal clear during the debate about optimum levels of migration, that immigrants already in the host country should be under no pressure whatsoever to leave. Indeed, both authors are supportive of immediately guaranteeing (and properly protecting) the rights of all EU citizens currently working in the UK on current terms. Also critical must be the concept of not interfering with legal marriages, civil partnerships or the reuniting of family members with those who were resident before the introduction of such new policies. Just treatment for asylum seekers must also be strongly defended.

Every effort should be made to encourage integration in a way that promotes more harmonious communities. Indeed, such practical measures will, we believe, be made a great deal easier if the future is seen to be one where communities will not have to experience future high levels of permanent inward migration to which many will be strongly opposed. Such a clear-cut reduction in the number of economic migrants could also mean that the public becomes more amenable to a larger number of refugees being provided with a safe haven.

This is exactly the position now being pursued by the new progressive coalition government in New Zealand, made up of Labour, the Green Party and NZ First. In effect, it’s a direct response to widespread concern in New Zealand about high levels of immigration, balanced by a commitment to strengthen New Zealand’s obligation to refugees and asylum seekers. A proposal from the Green Party to create a special category for ‘climate refugees’ is now being reviewed.

## **SECTION 5: A WORD ON POPULATION**

Unbelievably, it remains the case that most environmentalists in the UK are still extremely reluctant to address the issue of continuing population growth, either on a global basis or here in the UK.

In a world where overall population growth projections are rising, and where global migration is also on the increase, it is a complete dereliction of environmentalists’ duty to protect the planet to continue to ignore population growth and not to campaign for its reduction. Without this decrease, all solutions to other aspects of ecological and social concern are made far more difficult to deal with. This refusal to engage becomes harder and harder to explain.

In 2013, myself and Robin Maynard (now the Chief Executive of Population Matters) approached the UK’s main conservation and environment organisations (as part of an independent project supported by Population Matters) in an effort to get them to engage more actively with the impacts of population growth in the UK and globally.

In 2014, we summarised the findings of that inquiry as follows: “Which environmental NGOs are willing to say anything about population? The simple answer is: ‘Not many, and not much’ - and even those who are, only when pressed and with extreme caution. They have a very deep fear that addressing population issues will distract people from what they continue to see as the real issue: over-consumption in the rich world, rather than overpopulation in the poor world. This is stupid. It really is possible to pursue two big issues at the same time.”<sup>70 71</sup>

One of the most forthright advocates of the need to tackle population growth has been David Attenborough. And one of his key insights was in answer to a question always asked of those advocating

an end to population growth – that of overcoming the problems of an ageing population. As the average age of population rises in the face of declining population growth, it is often argued that we'll need more young people to look after the old. Hence we should encourage either larger families or more immigration. Or both. Attenborough's riposte was simple:

*"The notion of ever more old people needing ever more young people, who will in turn grow old and need even more young people, and so on ad infinitum, is an obvious ecological Ponzi scheme."*<sup>72</sup>

As we saw in Section 1, the demographic link between population and immigration is really not in dispute. At the beginning of 2012, the population of Europe was estimated at 503.7 million, an increase of more than 100 million since 1960. In 2011, around 68% of Europe's population growth came from net migration, which continues to be the main determinant of population growth as it has been since 1992. Given the ageing population in Europe, future population decline or growth will depend primarily on the contribution made by migration.<sup>73</sup>

Historically, the number of children born to immigrant families over time tends to match the norms of the society they are living in – and usually over one generation. Given the rapidity of growth in immigration to the UK, ensuring that this trend is maintained will require a sensitive debate about what factors and attitudes influence family size, and what conditions could help people choose to have fewer rather than more children. This will range from effective family planning to ensuring the rights of all women to manage their own fertility.

Continued global population growth is inevitable for the next few decades, but whether it continues in the longer term will be determined by the policy goals of nation states and the international community, as well as the resources allocated to ensure these policies are implemented successfully. The longer the delay in adequately focussing on the need to reduce population growth, the more momentum is built into the system for a continued increase in human numbers.

**So let us end with one more round of inconvenient statistics. In 2016, world population was estimated to be 7.4 billion.<sup>74</sup> It continues to grow, although more slowly than in the recent past, by approximately 83 million people per year. According to the 2017 United Nations World Population Prospects Report, world population is projected to increase by more than one billion people within the next 15 years, reaching 8.6 billion people in 2030, increasing further to 9.8 billion in 2050, and to as much as 11.2 billion by 2100.<sup>75</sup>**

This 2100 figure represents a projected increase of nearly 300 million as compared with its 2012 report, which had a medium projection of 10.9 billion by 2100.<sup>76</sup> This in turn was an increase of 800 million over the projections just two years before, in 2010, that the world population at the end of the century would stand at 10.1 billion.<sup>77</sup>

**Let us spell that out: in the last six years, the UN world population projections for 2100 have increased by over a billion people, from 10.1 to 11.2 billion.**

The refusal of many people in the green movement (and in the Green Party in particular) to understand the consequences of this demographic reality is staggering. Many have been seduced by the wholly erroneous conclusions of authors like Fred Pearce and academics like Hans Rosling that human numbers would stabilise well before 2100 as a consequence of reductions in average fertility in most countries, conveniently ignoring the reality of what's actually happening in Africa and the Middle East.

Indirectly but inevitably, this ignorance must surely have contributed to the disastrous cutback that is currently going on as regards funding for family planning. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

recently issued a warning about the inadequate resourcing of women's rights to family planning. This has been made worse recently; the UNFPA had been expecting about \$482m (£335m) from member states in 2016 for its core budget, which funds operational costs. However, huge cuts by some of the agency's largest donors means that it will now receive around \$340m (£237m). If cuts continue, says the agency, the shortfall could increase to more than \$500m (£348m) over the next four years.<sup>78</sup>

At least 200 million women want to use safe and effective family planning methods, but are unable to do so because they lack access to information and services or the support of their husbands and communities. More than 50 million of the 190 million women who become pregnant each year end up having abortions. Many of these are clandestine and performed under unsafe conditions.<sup>79</sup>

The need for voluntary family planning is still growing, and it's estimated that the 'unmet need' will grow by 40 per cent during the next 15 years. But even though it is an economically sound investment, family planning has been losing ground as an international development priority. Funding is decreasing, and the gap between the need and available resources is growing.<sup>80</sup>

Unmet need, unwanted pregnancies, unchallenged male domination, unsafe abortions and involuntary migration – this is what the refusal to confront population growth looks like as far as hundreds of millions of women are concerned. What this has to do with progressive politics remains a complete mystery to both of us.

## APPENDIX 1

### ON BEING A PROGRESSIVE (by Jonathon Porritt)

“Anyone who cares about progressive politics has to get real about immigration.”

That’s a quote from Colin Hines, a very good friend of mine. Colin’s work has been ignored and overlooked for far too long by far too many. In January, he published his latest e-book, ‘Progressive Protectionism: Taking Back Control’, and I think Colin would be the first to agree that it has not, as yet, turned out to be a publishing sensation!

His book addresses the four basic ‘freedoms’ on which so much of the EU’s philosophy and policy is based: Freedom of movement for capital, for goods, for services, and for people. As it happens, I don’t share Colin’s fundamental hostility to the movement of goods and services, but on both capital and people, we are pretty much in the same place.

This publication focusses on the freedom of movement for EU citizens. With his permission, roughly half of the raw material for it has been taken from Colin’s e-book, but I have re-ordered it, re-purposed it, and then added a lot of my own stuff. But I do urge you to have a look at Colin’s full protectionist argument in all its unvarnished (and much more provocative!) glory:

<http://progressiveprotectionism.com/wordpress/>

I know that this publication is going to hack off a lot of people – friends, work colleagues, Green Party activists, progressive ‘fellow travellers’, and so on. I can’t really help that; it’s part of my own still painful political recalibration after the shocks of 2016, just as ‘Progressive Protectionism’ has been for Colin. It’s not, after all, as if our world hasn’t been totally disrupted.

As someone who cares passionately about progressive politics, I write here for people who will also be comfortable thinking of themselves as progressives. So being an advocate for ideas which may have rather disconcerting resonances with politicians that are far from progressive does not come naturally, let me have a crack at nailing what I mean by ‘progressive’.

I spend most of my waking hours working for a world in which we’ve avoided the very real threat of runaway climate change, and in which we’ve eliminated the grotesque disparities in wealth, opportunity and entitlements that currently scar the lives of billions of people.

As a former teacher, I’m passionately committed to establishing the basis of this better world (in terms of values, norms and lifestyles) as early in each child’s life as is humanly possible, including making it possible for every child to find part of the meaning and purpose in their lives through their relationship with the natural world.

I despair of those who conceive of ‘progress’ solely in terms of economic growth and increased consumption, and continue to fight for a world in which good health, community, friends and family, and the chance to use one’s skills and potential in useful work, matter a great deal more than today’s get-rich-quick, beggar-thy-neighbour individualism.

As we head into a world that is going to be increasingly disrupted by climate shocks, resource shortages and collapsing eco-systems, it’s clear that security in the future will be all about resilience, food, energy and social cohesion, rather than about ludicrously wasteful defence budgets and abhorrent arms sales – and I hope to see the elimination of both nuclear weapons and nuclear power before I die.



It's something of an article of faith for me that most people, most of the time, are predisposed to doing the right thing and to helping others as well as themselves – assuming only that we establish the right kind of nurturing, tolerant and genuinely equitable society in which each and every individual can prosper, and in which the rights and entitlements of young people and future generations are held to matter as much as our own short-term interests.

Specifically on the issue of immigration, I will be laying out my position in this pamphlet – one which I believe is completely consistent with all the above.

I uncompromisingly believe immigration has been, and, if adequately managed, can continue to be, almost wholly beneficial for this country, both economically and culturally. A clear majority of people in the UK recognise the vital contribution that workers from the EU have made to our economy. In 2014, a study by University College, London, found that entrants to the UK from the ten nations that joined the EU in 2004 had contributed nearly £5bn more in taxation by 2011 than they had cost as beneficiaries of public services.<sup>81</sup>

And like the majority of people in this country, I despise racist and xenophobic bigots, despair of our often cruel treatment of refugees, celebrate positive cultural and religious diversity, and believe that the lives of all can be enriched by opportunities to live with and learn from people who are different by virtue of race, religion and lifestyle. I taught for ten years in a West London comprehensive where we turned these ideals into inspirational practice.

So even as we move to a position where we set out to reduce the numbers of people hoping to live permanently in the UK (which I believe is now absolutely necessary), we must campaign ever more strenuously to protect the rights and freedoms of all those who've come to our country over the last few decades, and to crack down ever more determinedly on prejudice, hate crime and racist behaviour, wherever it comes from. We must also vigorously challenge some of the irresponsible, even obscene misrepresentations of immigration that have done so much to distort the debate here in the UK.

**Paradoxically, I believe we can do all this much more effectively, building tolerant, socially cohesive communities, the more rapidly we move to manage and control new immigration into the country.**

In conclusion, for me, the basics of progressive politics are not complicated. And no-one can really claim to be 'progressive' unless they are doing whatever they can in their own lives to help make that better world a reality, and to take on all those hateful voices who are currently taking us in exactly the opposite direction.

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