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POPULATION OUT OF CONTROL: WHY PRESENT POLICIES CANNOT KEEP OUR POPULATION EVEN TO 70 MILLION

Summary

1 The government have assured the public that the population of the UK will not be allowed to reach 70 million and that their new Points Based System (PBS) will ensure that this is achieved.

Unfortunately, this cannot possibly be so.

2 The population of the UK today is 61 million. According to official projections, it will rise to 70 million by 2028. 70 per cent of this growth is thanks to immigration - now running at a net level of 237,000 a year. The official projection assumes that it will continue at 190,000 a year.

- **If the UK's population is not to hit 70 million later in the century, there must be a reduction in net migration of the order of 75 % from the present level to about 60,000 a year.** Even so there would be a population increase of nearly 10 million - almost all of it in England - **roughly equivalent to adding the population of Sweden to that of England.**
- **To hold the population to 65 million would require a reduction in net immigration to close to zero (or Balanced Migration) - that is to the levels of 1991-3. Even this would mean adding almost the population of Scotland to that of England**

3 This paper sets out the background to these figures, and why the Government's Point Based System will have nothing like the impact required. **The Government have claimed that immigration would have fallen by 12,000 last year if its new measures had been in place - whereas it needs to fall by nearly 190,000 if the population is not to hit 70 million by 2081.** Even eliminating all work permits would not, of itself, suffice.

Population Projections

4 There is bound to be a degree of uncertainty about population projections. A great deal depends on the assumptions chosen. The only assumptions we have used in this paper are those made by the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) - on fertility and mortality as well as extrapolations from their migration assumptions.

5 Immigrants now account for nearly 70 per cent of the population growth of the UK.[1]

6 The assumption about future immigration is therefore critical to population projections. Until the mid 1990's it was assumed that net immigration would come back to zero. That assumption has since been raised seven times to the present net migration level of 190,000 a year.

7 The latest official population projections which show the population of the UK reaching 71.1 million in 2031, 78.6 million in 2056 and 85.3 million in 2081[2] are based on this assumption. 70 million would be reached in 2028.[3] The contribution of immigration to this increase would be the equivalent of adding seven times the size of Birmingham to the population, mostly in England.[4]

8 Balanced Migration, where net migration is zero, would result in the population reaching 65 million by 2031 .

9 Net migration is the difference between immigration currently running at about 600,000 and emigration running at about 400,000 per year. Thus an increase in emigration would contribute to a reduction in population growth.

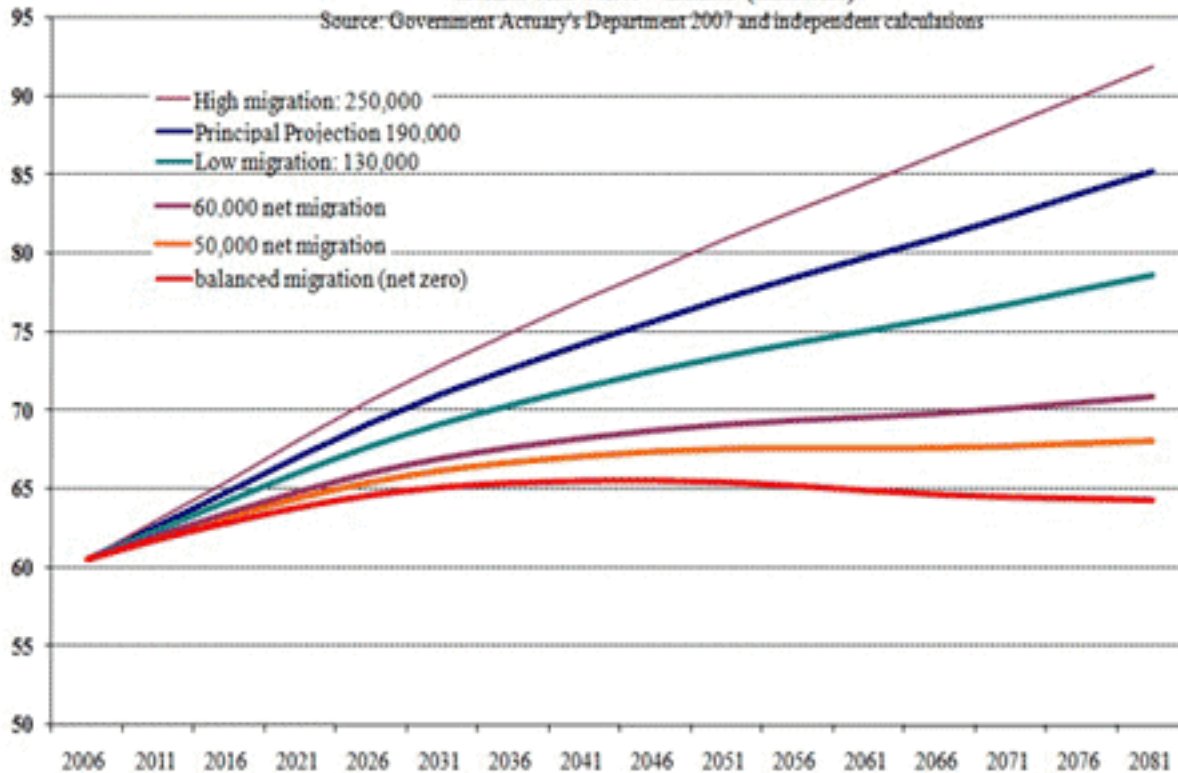
10 Unless there is a major increase in emigration, significant policy measures will have to be taken to reduce immigration so as to bring net migration down from the current level of 237,000 per year to something close to balance if the UK population is to be kept to 65 million. Even that means adding almost the population of Scotland to that of England, via natural growth.

11 Meanwhile, a Parliamentary answer has revealed that net immigration must be held at about 50,000 a year if the population of the UK is to be kept below 70 million later in the century.[5]

	Assumed net immigration	Population projections			
		2006	2031	2056	2081
High Migration [6]	250,000	61	73	83	92
Principal Projection	190,000	61	71	79	85
Low Migration	130,000	61	69	74	79
Reduced migration[7]	100,000	61	69	73	77
Lower migration [8]	50,000	61	66	68	68
Balanced Migration [9]	Nil	61	65	65	64

Note: estimates for assumed migration of 100,000 and 50,000 are provisional. Final figures will be somewhat higher.

UK population projected to 2081, GAD Principal Projection, High and Low migration variants and other variants (millions).



The effect of the Points Based System

12 The Government speak of their tough new Australian-style points based system. However, it is in fact quite different from the Australian system which starts with a limit on immigration, decided in the light of political and economic circumstances, and then selects immigrants by means of its points based system. Indeed, both the Immigration Minister and the Home Secretary have dismissed any suggestion that there should be a cap on numbers. So the British Government's policy does not effectively address the crucial question of the impact of immigration on our population.

13 Phil Woolas, the Immigration Minister, pledged in The Times on 18th October 2008 that "the Government isn't going to allow the population to go up to 70 million". Speaking on the BBC Politics Show on 19 October 2008 he repeated his promise to curb population growth, saying "We are already introducing the Points Based System so I can give reassurances to people that that sort of figure (70 million) is not on the horizon". In the same interview the Minister said "Had we introduced the Points Based System (PBS) a year ago there would be 12 per cent less migratory workers in the country than there are now".

14 He presumably meant that the inflow in the previous year would be 12 per cent lower, rather than the whole stock of migratory workers of whom there are several million. In the year to September 2008, 96,000 overseas workers were granted visas to enter the UK.[10] 12 per cent of this figure is

about 11,500. Clearly the PBS will make very little progress towards reducing net migration by the amount required to keep our population below 70 million.

15 The Home Secretary has also said "I have made it completely clear that assumptions about population levels increasing to 70 million fail to take account of the points based system that we are introducing.had that system been in place last year, it would have resulted in lower numbers of people coming through those routes into this country. So it is completely consistent that our points based system places a strong control over three fifths of those who come into this country....".

16 Leaving aside students who normally return to their home countries at the conclusion of their studies, the PBS applies primarily to work permits for non EU nationals. About 90,000 such permits are issued every year (including to those already here), which amounts to about 130,000 including dependants. Thus, even if the PBS thresholds were raised so as to cause all applicants to fail, this would not be enough to reduce immigration to 50,000 a year.

Conclusion

17 Last year the PBS would have only stopped 11,500 migrants out of 237,000 arriving in the UK. It is quite clear that the Points Based System in its present form will not, of itself, be remotely enough to keep the population of the UK below 70 million. This is not surprising since it does not place overall limits on immigration, and was never intended to do so. It remains to be seen whether the Government will take serious measures, including a much tougher version of the points based system, to limit the impact of immigration on our population. There is no evidence of this so far.

2 January, 2009

NOTES

- [1] House of Lords Report HL Paper 82-I "The Economic Impact of Immigration". Paragraph 16.
- [2] Ibid Table 3, page 13.
- [3] Hansard, column 504 W of 5 Nov 2008
- [4] Migrationwatch estimate.
- [5] Hansard column 643W of 16 Dec 2008
- [6] Government Actuaries Department (GAD 2007), 2006-based projection database.
- [7] This was in fact the average from 1995 -1999. Migrationwatch estimate of impact on population
- [8] The average from 1985 1989. Migrationwatch estimate.
- [9] Hansard 5 Nov 2008; Column 504 W
- [10] Hansard, column 672w 27 October 2008