



Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

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President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

A Fair Deal for Everyone: Prosperity and Dignity in Migration (Immigration and Identity Policy Paper) F16 at Federal Conference September 2018 – Final Version

Federal Policy Committee

Mover: Rt Hon Sir Ed Davey MP (Spokesperson on Home Affairs).

Summation: Thais Portilho (Vice Chair, Policy Working Group).

Conference celebrates the positive impact migration has had on the United Kingdom – its culture, economy and standing in the world, throughout history.

Conference rejects the Government's hostile language and policies towards migrants that have demonised them and have wrongly portrayed them as responsible for problems caused by the failure of successive Governments like the housing crisis, low wages and the lack of social cohesion in too many communities.

Conference believes that:

- I. Liberal Democrats should continue to champion migration policies that put our national interest first, treat migrants and seekers of asylum with dignity and courtesy and expose the flawed arguments of people seeking to exploit concerns that people do have about immigration.
- II. Our goal should be a positive, liberal consensus on immigration, partly by rebuilding people's trust in the system, and that this requires us to listen and engage with those who do link pressures on public services and housing to immigration and to reject the argument that merely labels such people as racist.

Conference further believes that Conservative immigration policies have failed even in their own terms and have broken the Home Office and the UK's immigration system by:

- A. Pursuing their ill-conceived target of reducing net migration to the "tens of thousands", which has simultaneously eroded public faith in the UK's immigration system and damaged the country by preventing people with valuable skills, like doctors and nurses, coming to work here.
- B. Making a "hostile environment" for migrants, resulting in severe hardship for many people and targeting people who have every right to be in the UK, including British citizens.
- C. Developing a visa system that is bureaucratic, costly to administer and expensive for employers, universities and applicants to use.
- D. Increasing hostility in their rhetoric on immigration that has polluted public dialogue and made it harder for communities to integrate.

Conference regrets the result of the European referendum and reaffirms the Liberal Democrats' commitment to give the British people the final say on the Brexit deal, with the option of remaining in the EU and preserving the freedom of movement of goods, people,

services and capital.

Conference endorses policy paper 131, *A Fair Deal for Everyone: Prosperity and Dignity in Migration*, as a statement of Liberal Democrat policy to meet these challenges.

Conference particularly calls for:

- i) The abolition of the net migration target and the hostile environment policy.
- ii) A root and branch reform of the Home Office, including the transfer of policy-making on work permits and student visas to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department of Education respectively.
- iii) A new right to work for seekers of sanctuary while their case is being considered, in order both to treat them more humanely and save the taxpayer tens of millions.
- iv) A new policy of 'detention as last resort' for irregular migrants, with more community detention and the closure of 8 immigration detention centres, to treat people more humanely and save an estimated £100 million a year.
- v) Major investment into a new more effective approach to tackling illegal immigration, including a focus on organised crime gangs and human traffickers, through a new intelligence-led unit using data on overstayers from exit checks at the border, and a significant strengthening of the UK Border Force.

Conference further calls for the following measures:

1. To promote social cohesion:
 - a) Establish a national strategy in England to promote the teaching of English as a second language (ESOL) and develop a migrants' languages strategy to reap economic benefits from the diasporas living in the UK.
 - b) Make funds available to local authorities to reward community groups who develop innovative and successful ways of promoting social cohesion, including in rural areas.
 - c) Support projects in schools that educate students about the history of migration into the UK.
2. To make family migration more humane and efficient:
 - a) For spouse and legal partner settlements, replace the crude and arbitrary income threshold with the pre-2012 rules and the 'no recourse to public funds' test.
 - b) For dependent adult relatives, amend rules to make them less restrictive for elderly parents living with their British children.
 - c) For registering a child, reduce the fee so it only covers the cost of administration, with a fee waiver for those who prove they cannot afford any fee.
3. To support people coming to the UK to work:
 - a) Replace caps on work-related visas with a Department of Business-led policy of identifying sectors with serious skill shortages for the economy and public sector.
 - b) Replace the Tier-based system with a merit-based system and a temporary workers scheme, along the lines of Canada's system, to provide a more flexible and higher quality work permit system.

- c) Establish a 'Training up Britain' programme – a mentorship scheme to enable British workers to develop their skills under the guidance of highly skilled migrants.
4. To make student migration work for the UK's economy and education sector:
- a) Make the Department of Education the lead department, with a policy objective of encouraging foreign academics, researchers and students to come to the UK, reporting the number of people coming to the UK to study separately.
 - b) Introduce a new Student and College Compliance and Liaison Team in the DfE, aimed at reducing bureaucracy and costs for the sector, and to improve compliance with the rules.
 - c) Enable graduates to stay and work in the UK for two years after their course.
5. To improve Britain's record on assisting people seeking sanctuary:
- a) Establish a dedicated unit for asylum applications to improve speed and quality of decision-making that will work with local authorities on dispersal and settlement issues.
 - b) Provide free basic English lessons to any seeker of sanctuary and scrap the 16 hours-per-week rule with respect to financial support for asylum-seekers and refugees unable to work due to insufficient English.
 - c) Review and reform all aspects of current asylum rules and operations that offend basic fairness and justice, with an initial focus on how the rules affect Christian converts, LGBT+ applicants and child-led family reunification applications.
6. To tackle illegal immigration:
- a) Invest in the Border Force and Immigration Enforcement agencies, ensuring that they have appropriate training and information-systems in place to enable a compassionate and intelligence-led approach.
 - b) Introduce a 28-day limit on detention, but plan that under our new system, even this is much longer than the one to two days many people would normally be detained for.
 - c) Introduce a UK equivalent of the US DREAM Act, by which individuals can apply for conditional resident status in the UK.
7. To improve the machinery of government:
- a) Take political influence out of decision-making on applications for visas and sanctuary and move towards a caseworker-model of support for applicants.
 - b) Provide training for staff and ensure that all civil servants working in this role are Executive Officer grade by 2022.
 - c) Hold an annual parliamentary debate on migration at which the Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration and ministers from BEIS, DfE, DfID and the Home Office report on migration.