



## General election special – how will you vote?

How will you vote on June 8<sup>th</sup>? More important, how will you decide? At Malvern Welcomes we think that building a compassionate and strong community is the overpowering objective and we believe that how we welcome and support asylum seekers and refugees is a good way to go about it. So we thought we should find out from the 5 candidates for your vote in West Worcestershire what they had to say about this important issue. We don't think it's everything but it's certainly important and four at least answered some of the questions; Harriet Baldwin (**Conservative**), Natalie McVey, (**Green**), Samantha Charles (**Labour**) and Edward McMillan-Scott, (**LibDem**). This is what they said; if the party isn't listed under specific question, they chose not to respond to it or have answered it through a different question. We did not get a response from UKIP.

### 1. Unaccompanied Children

#### **Will your party seek to bring more Dubs children to UK - How many and When?**

The **Green** Party has been continually pressing for our Government to respond by bringing as many unaccompanied children as possible from the now closed Calais camps - as soon as it can be arranged.

Figures have not yet been released by the **Labour** Party but we will seek to bring more Dubs children to UK as soon as possible; we pledge to ensure the Dubs agreement is enforced.

**LibDems** will reopen the Dubs Unaccompanied Child Refugee Scheme, ensuring Britain meets its responsibilities by taking in 3000 unaccompanied refugee children. LibDems would offer these children indefinite leave to remain, meaning they will not be deported once they turn 18.

### 2. Refugee and Asylum Policy

#### **What will be your Party's position on Immigration Control?**

**Conservatives** will ensure Britain remains a place of sanctuary for refugees and asylum seekers. The existing system is geared towards people who are young and fit and with the resources to get to Britain, rather than those most in need of our help.

Wherever possible, the Government will offer asylum and refuge to people in parts of the world affected by conflict and oppression, rather than those who have made it to Britain. We will work to reduce asylum claims made in Britain and increase the number of people we help in the most troubled

regions, and with other countries in Europe, and the UN, to review international legal definitions of asylum and refugee status.

**Greens** believe in controls on immigration and reject an open-borders approach as well as the imposition of an arbitrary numerical cap on migration, which is impossible to achieve and leads to many individual injustices. Any controls must respect international obligations to accept refugees, whether seeking sanctuary from wars, political repression or climate change.

Freedom of movement will end when we leave the EU. Britain's immigration system will change, but **Labour** will not scapegoat immigrants nor blame them for economic failures, and will develop and implement fair immigration rules.

**LibDems** will ensure that the immigration system is operated fairly and efficiently, with strict control of borders, including entry and exit checks and adequately funded Border Control Force policing of entry by irregular routes.

#### **Will your party seek to encourage refugees to come to Britain? How many?**

**LibDems** will offer safe and legal routes to the UK for refugees to prevent them from making dangerous journeys, which too often result in the loss of life, eg by reform of family reunion rules to make it easier for refugees to join relatives living in safety in the UK.

#### **What will your party do to ensure refugees are able to make a full contribution to life in the UK?**

**Conservatives** will make sure Councils get the help they need to deal with people as they arrive and establish schemes to help individuals, charities, faith

groups, churches and businesses to provide housing and other support for refugees.

**Labour** values the economic and social contributions of immigrants; both public and private sector employers depend on immigrants. We will not denigrate those workers, and we value their contributions, including through tax. We will not cut public services and pretend the cuts are a consequence of immigration.

**LibDems** believe that refugees are human beings fleeing from war zones and persecution and we have a legal and moral obligation to offer them sanctuary... (we) believe that we should continue to uphold our responsibilities.

**Will you allow asylum seekers to work in future? If not, why not?**

**LibDems** expect working age asylum seekers who have waited more than 6 months for their claim to be processed to seek work like other benefit claimants, and only receive benefits if they are eligible.

**What are your views on the future of indefinite immigration detention? Do you support UNHCR's alternatives which are cheaper and more humane?**

It is **Green** policy to end immigration detention immediately, act to protect the most vulnerable asylum seekers who have experienced rape, sexual abuse and torture and allow their claims to be processed in the community. The policy includes a commitment on funding for integrated support for asylum seekers and a maximum 3 month processing time for asylum applications. No asylum seeker should be held in detention, other than in the most exceptional circumstances.

**Labour** will end indefinite detentions and distinguish between migrant labour and family attachment and will continue to support the work of the Forced Marriage Unit.

**LibDems** would end indefinite immigration detention by introducing a 28-day limit, and apply the asylum system fairly, efficiently and humanely including the process for those who have no right to remain here.

### **3.Syrian Refugees**

**How many Syrian refugees would your party expect to welcome to the UK? How many of these refugees would you expect to settle in Worcestershire?**

**Greens** have suggested a total of c.240,000, which would be about 370 per constituency. A similar scheme works in Canada and should be made to work here.

**LibDems** would expand the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme to offer sanctuary to 50,000 over the lifetime of the next Parliament. We would expect a proportionate number ... to settle in Worcestershire.

**Will you support David Cameron's commitment to 20,000 people by 2020? Would you extend and simplify the Community Sponsorship Programme?**

**Greens** - see above.

**Labour** supports David Cameron's target and would look to increase the number and ensure that County Councils take active steps to take their fair share of Syrian refugees, estimated to be around 1000 in Worcestershire. A Community Sponsorship Programme would be supported financially by keeping families and groups together to help them assimilate with community support groups.

**LibDem's** aim is 50,000 by the end of this Parliament. We would establish, in conjunction with our Local Authorities, a centrally funded Migrant Impact Fund to help local communities to adjust to new migration and meet unexpected pressures on public services and housing.

**How will you support refugees who come to this country, or are already here, to make sure they are safe and secure?**

**Greens** would provide integrated support for newly-arrived asylum seekers to include reception facilities, temporary housing, language training and assistance with asylum applications and access to health and social welfare services. This should be provided by voluntary agencies or Local Government, but funded and coordinated at a national level.

**4.Finally, would you commit to visiting a refugee camp within 6 months of an election?**

**Conservative:** I regret that I am unable to commit to visiting a refugee camp within 6 months of an election, although I would value the opportunity to visit one, should it arise.

**Green:** Yes! I will certainly want to give priority to this issue after the election.

**Labour:** I volunteered in the Jungle in Calais as a midwife and would seek, if elected, to visit camps in Northern Europe to highlight the plight of refugees and put pressure on Government to increase support, especially for unaccompanied children and those with families in the UK.

**LibDem:** Yes, without hesitation. I would also work with the EU authorities and other member states authorities which are taking a disproportionate share of the refugees and asylum seekers to the EU.

**REFUGEE WEEK – 19-25 JUNE 2017**

**Lots of great events – see programme included with this newsletter and on website [malvernwelcomes.org](http://malvernwelcomes.org)**