Annual General Meeting / Public Attitudes to Migration Event

Wednesday 5 September 2018, 4.00-5.30pm
Committee Room 10, House of Commons

1.	Attendance	**Panellists:** Lord Cooper of Windrush - Advisory Board Member, Global Future Joe Twyman - Co-Founder and Director, Deltapoll Emma Harrison - Director, IMiX **Chair:** Kate Green MP - Labour **Parliamentarians in attendance:** Paul Blomfield MP - Labour Baroness Hamwee - Liberal Democrat Diana Johnson MP - Labour Lord Teverson - Liberal Democrat Stuart McDonald MP – SNP **Secretariat:** Elspeth Macdonald – Head of Policy and Parliamentary Affairs, Migrants' Rights Network Rita Chadha – Interim Director, Migrants' Rights Network **Other attendees:** Over 30 representatives from a range of non-profit, academic and private sector organisations working on migration issues
2.	**Purpose of meeting**	To hold the APPG's Annual General Meeting 2018, followed by a discussion session on public attitudes to migration.
3.	**AGM**	● Election of APPG officers - Kate Green MP and Lord Teverson were elected as co-chairs. Steve Double MP and Baroness Hamwee were elected as vice-chairs. ● Income and expenditure statement 2017/18 – the statement was approved. ● Future activities – a meeting with new officers would be organised in October to discuss and plan future activities. Other APPG members were encouraged to contribute ideas, and should contact the Secretariat to do so.

		● Report from joint roundtable on Brexit and Roma – the roundtable had been held in July 2018 by the APPG on Migration and the APPG on Gypsies, Travellers and Roma. The report was approved.
4.	**Discussion session presentations**	**NB. Please see speaker slides / presentations at www.appgmigration.org.uk** **Lord Cooper of Windrush** (LC) ● Gave an overview of the findings from Global Future's recent report "Open owns the future" ● Migration was exerting more influence on voter behaviour than it used to ● The report found a very strong generational divide in the UK – with under-45s being net positive about issues such as immigration, multiculturalism, diversity, feminism etc, and overs-45s net negative about those same issues. ● If this finding was correct, over time there would be an increasing number of people who felt positively about migration and related issues. ● For how long this would stay such a strong determining factor in people's vote was not clear ● But for as long as it did, the traction that populism found with the public around immigration issues would reduce. **Joe Twyman** (JT) ● Public attitudes to immigration had been studied for a long time. It was important to note that the data was not perfect e.g. Ipsos Mori Public Attitudes survey used the term "race relations" until 2012. ● People's views on the importance of immigration varied over time - from late 1990s onwards it increased in importance, reaching its highest level in the run up to the EU referendum in 2016, and then reducing. ● People tended to see immigration as an important issue at the macro level for the country, rather than at the micro level for themselves or their family. ● Based on polling, people did not have a good sense of the actual figures involved, but a majority wanted to see a reduction in immigration to the UK ● Much of the political discourse on immigration was about jobs and skills. But the research suggests that most people saw the issue in much wider terms than that – with political, social, cultural, and even spiritual concerns playing a role ● A person's gender, age, education level and location correlated to how they viewed immigration – e.g. women, young people, urban dwellers and those with higher levels of education tended to be more favourable to immigration than men, older people, rural dwellers and those with lower levels of education ● The rate of change in an area seems to be more important than absolute numbers. So areas that have experienced the

quickest change (rather than those which have the largest migrant communities) tend to be the most wary.

- Narratives are important, since British perceptions of immigration often differ significantly from the reality / facts.
- Conservatives always seen as best party on the issue, but politicians in general are not trusted on it

Deltapoll recently polled public attitudes for Channel 4 News. They found that:

- More people saw immigration as having been beneficial to the UK than not
- Controlling immigration - particularly from EU – was seen as important, especially in terms of reducing strain on public resources
- A majority wanted a reduction in immigration post-Brexit
- A majority believed that the net migration target was a good idea, but they were more divided on whether it was actually possible to achieve the target
- A majority felt the UK government should only allow EU citizens with specialist skills to work, and that EU and Commonwealth citizens should be treated the same
- On the Windrush scandal, nearly half of people polled believed that skin colour had nothing to do with the way people had been treated
- A majority of people believed the government should continue its hostile policy towards illegal immigration

Emma Harrison (EH)

- It was important to recognise that the value of polling was limited. It may tell us what a person believes, but it couldn't tell us how that belief was formed, nor how we could influence it
- Facts and stats might be good for policy work – but they were not good at influencing people
- iMix used a segmentation model that broke the population down into four broad categories in terms of views on immigration (see attached presentation for details)
- It was important to note that segmentation could upset people. Humans generally did not like to be categorised or given labels – they were complex and contradictory
- As such organisations should not use the segments/labels overtly in their communications work – they should inform and guide instead
- How should organisations deal with people in the "sceptics" category? ie. people who were vehemently anti-immigration. Campaigns often tried to please all segments. But in fact, if you were fighting for a progressive immigration policy, campaigns that were true to your beliefs would - and should – cause outcry amongst the "sceptics". Rather than being drawn to where the sceptics were, you should seek to alienate/neutralise them.
- For the other segments, campaigners should think about what ideas and language appealed to people in them. People in the "grafters" and "traditionalists" categories were likely to be

		persuadable on immigration. They could be attracted by the sceptics – but also by progressive ideas if communicated well. ● Personal stories were powerful – Windrush was a good example.
4.	Q & A	The first question from the floor was **whether focusing more on the details and nuances of immigration policy was a good way to garner support?** ● JT noted that the general public did not pay attention to details of policies – this was reflected in their answers to polls. It was not the detail that caught their attention, but the narrative e.g. with the net migration target, the specific number did not matter (under 100,00) so much as the general narrative of "reducing numbers". ● EH highlighted the amount of incorrect information put out by anti-immigration campaigners. There was a need for pro-immigration organisations to call out and proactively combat incorrect facts. Organisations should not be shy about doing so. She also pointed out the amount of poor polling data used – it was important for the polling data to be properly cited/referenced, so that people could assess its validity. ● LC recalled Tony Blair's observation that politicians usually overestimated the amount of interest the general public had in an issue – this could distract you and cause you to focus on small rather than big issues. ● JT also noted that, generally speaking, people tended to believe the UK needed more "specialists", not more "people". So framing and language could be really important e.g. care support workers were technically classed as "low skilled" but they actually had skills that were vital for the country. Several questions were asked next, including: **whether the time had past for global, internationalist, liberal leaders?**; **the extent to which the idea of an "English identity" could be leveraged to garner more support for immigration reform?**; and **whether communications activity on immigration worked best at the local, regional or national level?** ● LC explained he was short-term pessimistic but long term optimistic about the possibility for a return to internationalist, liberal ideas. His optimism stemmed from the Global Future's finding, mentioned above, showing that younger people were more "open" in their attitudes to the world, and that their attitude seemed to remain the same as they grow older. ● EH highlighted how the news cycle had changed in recent years, and as a result the voices that got most airtime were the ones that don't care much about rational arguments. Nonetheless, it was important for pro-immigration organisations to try and assert a different type of narrative to counter this. She noted it was important for campaigners to publicly support politicians when they took risks and spoke out positively on immigration.

- In terms of local, regional and national level communications work, EH noted that local media had changed a lot in recent years, with papers going out of business and the number of local journalists reducing. Despite this, it was important to remember that local media was still more trusted than national media by the public, and that a lot of impressive social media work happened at the local level e.g. online forums with high levels of participation. At the national level, pro-immigration campaigners needed be bolder and more confident about making their arguments in the media.
- JT did not know when a political leader would win by being liberal on migration – but he was sure it would happen at some point. The period of very rapid migration seemed to be ending - given how the rate of change affected people's acceptance of immigration, this might helpt to shift the debate somewhat. Authenticity was also crucial for leaders when talking about immigration e.g. the problem for Ed Miliband when he tried to "toughen up" Labour's immigration stance in 2015 was that his efforts were perceived by many as inauthentic.
- On leveraging aspects of "English identity" to support immigration, JT suggested one concept that could help was "fairness". Many people believed migrants wer able to "jump the queue" and that was seen as unfair.

Noting that the discussion had focused a lot on messages, the next question asked **what was the importance of the right messenger?**

- EH noted that you needed a variety of messengers. There was a core of people who want to hear directly from refugees for example – but it was a limited group. Most people were persuaded by what their friends and family thought, so it was important to find ways to capitalise on that. Advice workers were usually perceived as having a lot of credibility, since they worked directly with migrants and had first hand experience of the issues.
- JT noted that finding the right messenger who worked for everyone is impossible. Even David Attenborough – who had some of the highest trust ratings of any public figure in the UK – would struggle on the issue of migration.

The next question was **what advice EH would have for a small organisation in terms of campaigning?**

- EH underlined that no organisation could win the battle on their own. They should think about the supporters they already had, and then how they could best use them to spread and increase support.

The issue of racism was raised. It was a key factor in many of the problems faced by migrants. But it was also a difficult topic, and could generate strong reactions. **How could migrant organisations call out racism successfully in their communications**?

- EH agreed it was a difficult question. Windrush was a good example of a problem where racism had played a part – but, as JT had noted, a lot of people refused to believe that skin colour had played a role. Most people who held racist views would never describe themselves as "racist" - but rather, for example, as "patriots". So trying to win an argument by labelling people as "racist" was risky and likely to be counterproductive. Nonetheless, the intersection of race and migration was important and an issue that needed to be better highlighted. EH recommended consulting the Runnymede Trust, a leading UK race equality think tank, for ideas and guidance.
- JT noted the importance of looking at the intersection of freedom of religion and migration as well.
- The chair suggested focusing on breaking down the us/them framing. This could be done through the idea of "shared history" and emphasising the role that people from other countries had played in the UK's history e.g. the large numbers of Commonwealth soldiers who fought alongside British soldiers in WWI and WWII. The message could be summed up as "we are us".

Paul Blomfield MP asked **how stable the generational divide, identified by Global Future, was across different locations and classes?**

- LC explained that there were some variations across the country. One example were young people in London who held very strong, "turbo-charged" liberal views. However, according to their research the age divide was surprising stable across different locations and classes in the country.

Another participant noted that **much of the debate on immigration focused on economic and business arguments. What more could be done to connect the debate with others types of issues?**

- JT agreed that many people did think in quite transactional terms about immigration e.g. if immigration went down, NHS waiting lists would go down, council housing waiting lists would go down and so on.
- EH warned of the dangers of playing it safe and promoting your own campaign to detriment of others in the sector. An example might be talking about only refugees because they garnered public sympathy, without pointing out that many of the problems they face were faced by migrants more widely. What was needed was a really clear, big vision for immigration in the UK. It did not exist yet – but with Brexit approaching fast, it was needed more than ever.

The chair thanked the panellists and brought the meeting to a close.