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## POPULATION

### Background and Principles

P100 All Green Party policies are based on the principles of ecological sustainability, equity and justice.

P101 There is a limit to the level of ecological impact the Earth can sustain. The number of people on the planet, their levels of consumption and their local and global impacts are key factors determining how far the Earth's ability to renew its resources and to support all life is compromised. Even within this limit, high rates of population growth, as well as local depopulation can have a damaging effect on sustainability, equity and justice.

P102 'Carrying capacity' is the term used to describe the population that can be sustainably supported in any given region. It is not a fixed number but depends on consumption patterns.

P103 There is a need to explicitly consider population since, if it is ignored indefinitely, the risk of over-consumption of natural resources will increase, leading to conflict and ultimately a reduction in carrying capacity.

P104 There are many causes of population growth and some of these must be addressed to avoid overpopulation. Causes may be as basic as a lack of family planning information and contraceptives. Inequality and lack of opportuni-

ties can result in people having more children than they would otherwise want. On a wider scale, it has been observed that populations often increase following wars, social strife and environmental disasters.

P105 Green Party policies as a whole aim to reduce inequality, both global and local and to make educational and work opportunities available to all, throughout life. Green Party policies also aim to avoid social and environmental disruption that can trigger population growth.

P106 The Green Party holds that the number of children people have should be a matter of free choice.

P107 Long-term trends in population size are proper considerations for public debate and government policy in order to plan housing, health, education and other needs.

P108 The Green Party notes that the population of the UK currently supports its way of life by consuming more resources than can be sustainably supplied from within the UK, and more than its fair share of global resources - often to the detriment of the people and the environment in producing areas.

P109 A measure of the impact of a population is its ecological footprint. The Green Party believes that it is essential to reduce the

UK's total ecological footprint. To this end the Green Party aims to reduce total resource consumption, ensuring maximum use of renewable resources, in order to reduce per capita consumption. This will ensure that the UK population leaves a reduced ecological footprint, eventually enabling it to become sustainable.

P110 The Green Party believes that it will be socially and environmentally beneficial for a decrease in resource consumption to be brought about by a range of policies. These policies will reduce overall resource use, maximise the use of technologies based on renewable energy, adopt a sustainable approach to economic development, design, planning and infrastructure, and will promote socially and environmentally sustainable population levels.

P111 The Green Party has a liberal migration policy and wants greater global justice and equality, so people who migrate can do so on the basis of choice, not economic hardship. Where migration patterns increase or decrease population levels it is essential that social, economic and environmental pressures are mitigated in such a way which fully respects the rights of migrants and existing local populations.

P112 There is a need for regional economic and land use policies that are sustainable with a stable or falling population rather than dependent on a continuing influx

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of, often exploited, labour from elsewhere in the UK or overseas. The Green Party seeks a more balanced and just approach to regional development in the UK so that there are not huge growth pressures in some areas and none in others.

P113 As the birth rate falls, and the so-called "baby boom" generation approaches retirement, the population will be one with a higher proportion of the elderly and very elderly.

P114 With Green health policies emphasising the need to further improve health with prevention rather than cure, we look forward to a society in which people of all ages continue to work as long as they wish. This, together with the reduced consumption of resources and the increased commitment to social welfare characteristic of a Green society, means that the increased proportion of elderly people will be economically manageable. We reject an economic order that supposes the need for an ever-growing younger population to support the retired.

P115 The UK, as one of the world's richest countries, owes the rest of the world far more in overseas aid than it now gives. The UK casts its ecological footprint over the world reflecting the real costs of a high, and still growing, population with high consumption. A Green government would seek to help poorer countries to develop their economies in a sustainable way so that migration was based on choice rather than economic necessity.

P116 It is essential that women have greater control over reproductive health care. Many of the world's poorest countries have

formal government policies - often assisted by development agencies - which further this objective and also thereby lead to more stable, sustainable population levels. The Green Party acknowledges that poverty alleviation and education are crucial for women in poor countries to be able to exercise their reproductive health rights and take control over their own family planning. The UK and other rich countries should do more to support initiatives - both globally and locally - which uphold women's rights over reproductive health, increase education and which address poverty and potential pressures on the global environment. Given the much greater impact on the world's resources each person in a rich country has, the rich countries have a major responsibility to minimise their own impact as well as provide resources to poorer countries to ensure that they can develop sustainably.

## Policy Objectives

### *Long-term*

P117 To achieve a level of consumption and, through education and the free provision of family planning services, a birth rate consistent with the goal of long term sustainability.

P118 To achieve consumption and population levels that are globally sustainable and respect carrying capacity.

P119 To work towards a world where people are free to move between countries and are not forced to do so by terror, hunger, environmental degradation or economic need.

### *Medium-term*

P120 To promote debate on sustainable population levels for the UK - to include consideration of levels of consumption and material comfort. The aim is to increase awareness of the issues - not to set specific population targets.

P121 To reduce the ecological footprint of the UK, the rest of the EU and other countries in the developed world as an essential step towards reducing exploitation of the environment and the poorest peoples of the world.

P122 The Office of National Statistics (ONS) will continue to monitor the UK population trends, and develop natural resource and footprint accounts to monitor the ecological impact of that population.

### *Short-term*

P123 To provide comprehensive sex education in schools that covers the wider emotional, personal and societal aspects of relationships not the mere biological. (See ED307)

P124 To provide a comprehensive, free family planning service, available to everyone, in convenient high-street locations, funded by a separate budget within the NHS. This will include information, facilities and the materials necessary for people to plan their families. (See H315)

P125 To ensure that condoms are supplied free on demand from chemists and at a subsidised price from machines in public places.

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P126 To support research into new methods of contraception.

P127 To address the issue of an ageing population in the UK and the EU. Measures would include

the removal of the compulsory retirement age and the introduction of more flexible working arrangements.

P128 To encourage debate as to how sustainable lifestyles can be developed to provide meaningful and satisfying lives with or without children.