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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Woolas challenged to admit UK population will hit 70 million**

**Figures buried in official document confirm dramatic rise in population**

**Population explosion requires a new Birmingham to be built “every two or two and a half years”**

Phil Woolas is today challenged to confirm figures published by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) which show that the UK’s population will hit 70 million within the next 25 years.

Mr Woolas is due to appear in front of the House of Commons Select Committee on Public Administration today to discuss immigration and workforce statistics.

Last week the DCLG issued a document which referred to the preliminary findings of research that they have commissioned from the National Institute for Economic and Social Research (NIESR). They implied that the population of the UK will increase from its present level of just under 61 million to 69.2 million in 2031 and 74.3 million in 2056. The Immigration Minister has repeatedly said that he does not accept such projections.

Commenting on the figures, the Co-Chairmen of the Cross Party Group for Balanced Migration, Frank Field MP and Nicholas Soames MP said:

“Today the Immigration Minister should come clean: unless immigration is brought under control, the population of the UK will hit 70 million sometime in the next 20 to 30 years. Depending on whether you accept the view of the ONS or the DCLG, we will have to build a city the size of Birmingham every two years, or every two and a half years. Either represents a huge increase in our population. The new Points Based System will not begin to address this – it shaves just 5% off net immigration, when it must be reduced by 75% to stabilise our population. So long as ministers refuse to face the facts, how can they begin to confront the challenge?”

**Notes to Editors:**

- 1 The DCLG document “Managing the impacts of migration: improvements and innovations” was issued on 19 March. See in particular page 11: “the research suggests that net migration is likely to fall towards the 2006 based low variant projection made by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).” The “low variant” is one based on continued net immigration of 130,000 a year rather than the 190,000 that the ONS considers most likely.
2. The low variant projection appears on page 56 of the ONS 2006 based National Population Projections.
3. Uncorrected evidence of the Home Affairs Select Committee on Tuesday 17 March is as follows:

**Q369 Mr Clappison:** Thank you very much. Minister, on the question of the future population growth, economic migration covered by the points-based system is a big factor in net migration, and net migration is itself a very big factor in the future population growth. I think you have suggested, correct me if I am wrong, that you do not accept the prediction which has been made by the Office for National Statistics, the Government Actuaries Department and the United Nations that the population of this country is going to hit 71 million within a different timescale in the case of those bodies. You do not accept that, do you, or do you?

**Mr Woolas:** No.

**Q370 Mr Clappison:** No; right. Those are the figures which come from the independent Office for National Statistics, the Government's own actuary. You are saying that they are not right.

**Mr Woolas:** No, I am not saying that they are not right, Mr Clappison.

**Q371 Mr Clappison:** Are you saying that the population is not going to hit 71 billion by, say, 2031?

**Mr Woolas:** That is my belief.

**Q372 Mr Clappison:** If that is your belief, it is a very unsatisfactory situation for people who are concerned about this issue, where there are statistics coming from an independent body and from the Government's own actuary and the Government itself is saying that they are wrong. Can you write to us and let us have your prediction for what the population growth is going to be, if you are saying they are not right?

**Mr Woolas:** No, I cannot, because you are misinterpreting, I think deliberately. The ONS figures give an extrapolation of population based on the previous number of the last few years. I think it is three from memory. Those population figures define population as being those people who are in the country for 12 months or more. Clearly, that, therefore, includes overseas students, it includes everybody who comes into the country under the points-based system. Those people are here temporarily for up to five years. So to extrapolate and to turn that into a projection is a false logic. Secondly, my view is that, even if it were a projection, not an extrapolation, the policy measures that we are taking would avoid that increase in population.