



Building a new coalition
campaign for deep change for
asylum-seekers and refugees

March 2021

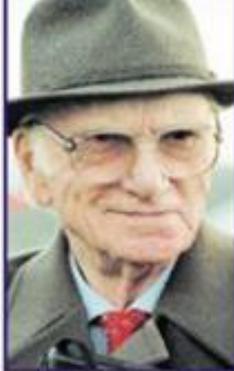
Ben Jackson

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The Asylum Reform Initiative

- Set up in 2019 by six national organisations to develop a strategy to drive long-term, deep change in Britain's approach to asylum-seekers and refugees (Asylum Matters, British Red Cross, Freedom from Torture, Refugee Action, Refugee Council, Scottish Refugee Council).
- Ben Jackson became its first Director in 2020, with a small team now in place. Co-funded by its members and foundations.
- In consultation across the sector, ARI has been incubating proposals on building a broad coalition for system change over recent months, especially ahead of to stimulate discussion, thinking and action. All the more urgent because of the Government's planned Borders Bill to 'fix a broken asylum system'.

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Why?

Why a new coalition?

- Our times:
 - Scale of global crisis. Unjust, broken UK system.
 - Our politics. Rise of populist nationalism. Hostility to refugees. Racism. Long trends - new urgency.
 - Media & public narratives. 'What the public think'.
 - Black Lives Matters. Windrush. Hidden support.
 - Post-Covid: "Them and Us" or "Bigger Us"?
- Our movement:
 - Active, passionate, diverse, collaborative.
 - But also under attack, stretched, fragmented.
 - React to our opponents' agenda, not set our own.
 - People with lived experience need power & prominence in national campaigns.
 - Insider / outsider? Both.

How can we harness the power of our diverse movement to set the agenda, inspire hope & win change?



How?

How could a new
coalition help us
win change?

How could a new coalition campaign help us win change



Inputs

Incubate the approach

Harness the energy of the movement.

Mobilise some central capacity.

Bring supporter base together.

Activities

Develop & project compelling common narrative.

Project our message – not respond to our opponents.

Mobilise our united base and allies – activate the sympathetic-but-inactive.

Lobby better to harvest openings created by public pressure.

Catalysts

Borders Bill threat adds urgency to unite.

Coalitions & collaborations been building.

Thriving & diverse grassroots movement.

Funders who support collaboration.

Assumptions

Our current approach isn't working.

UK decisionmakers oppose reform or feel they must assuage a hostile public. Only sustained external pressure can change this.

Long-term pressure for system change - but built by wins in steps.

Scope for local and nations leaders to leverage UK change.

Outcomes(2022)

Uplift in media coverage of our case for system change.

Use Bill to rally pressure for campaign wins - spur momentum to wider change.

Scotland, Wales & mayors elections – starts to build leadership for change from below

Borders Bill passes but fails to carry public opinion – a turning point for a fight-back?

Big Goals

Core public consensus for a just, humane & effective asylum system.

Thriving, diverse & united movement. People with lived experience leading.

Core political consensus on a just, humane & effective asylum.

Asylum-seekers & refugees get just and humane treatment in the system.

Three planks of the coalition approach.

1. Shift media & public narrative.
2. Build movement & support base.
3. Develop political support & win policy change.



*When &
where?*

	External	Campaign phases	
Jan-Mar		Prepare, consult, convene	
Mar Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government proposals announced 	Respond to government proposals	
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elections: Scotland, Wales & English mayors. Queens speech with Borders Bill 	★	<p>Campaign launch:</p> <p>Project broad support for a better alternative</p> <p><i>Launch of coalition (website, brand etc) with sector backing; Popular & news media; Lay out our call for a positive alternative; Campaign pledge-for-better action; allies & diverse voices speak up in support; Engage decisionmakers & policymakers.</i></p>
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK G7 Summit. Refugee week. Borders Bill introduced 	★	<p>Campaign days of action:</p> <p>Build pressure for a different path</p> <p><i>Link to Refugee Week: media – inc. support for local & nations coverage; Campaign mobilisation for better alternatives with strong local angle e.g. constituency-level with MPs & coming Bill; parliamentary work builds cross-party support.</i></p>
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70th anniversary UN convention 	★	<p>Build & broaden support:</p> <p><i>Media work uses 70th anniversary to celebrate contribution of refugees to life in Britain – and threat posed by current proposals. ?Legal angles re. UN Convention; continue to build allies & support for better approach; public support from new allies.</i></p>
Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-lockdown Summer? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ?Opportunities to amplify messages via cultural events over summer if Covid opening continues?
Sept-Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Borders Bill in parliament 	★	<p>Sustain & escalate pressure:</p> <p><i>Further campaign day of action, media, mobilisation event, coordinated parliamentary work? Details TBC</i></p>



Coalition building & next steps

- Incubate concept & sector consultation
- Develop approach & initial plan
- Initiate coalition
- Prepare for action
- Launch
- Deliver key campaign 'moments' & joint action.



*Thanks – and
questions.*