



Johanna Baxter

National Executive Committee

Putting Members First

Report of National Executive Committee meeting held on 1st November 2011

The NEC paid tribute to comrades, including George Baker, Tony Gardner, Gerald Southgate, Bert Karpin and Campbell Christie, who had passed away since our last meeting. New members Jennie Formby, Susan Lewis, Conor McGinn, Wendy Nicols and Martin Mayer were welcomed to their first full meeting of the NEC.

Campaign Co-ordinators report;

Tom Watson talked about his priorities for his new role as Campaign Co-ordinator, describing it as a gearbox between our Leader, the NEC and members. His top priority will be to review, and improve, our communications with our members and he will be working closely with the General Secretary and his team on this. He is looking at better ways to mobilise members, give them information on and involvement in policy development, and to aid our fundraising efforts.

There was much discussion about the tone of our communications with members – I fed back to Tom the positive response I have received from CLPs since he started communicating with members directly. I asked him to ensure that whilst we up our fundraising efforts we don't e-mail members only when we need money. I also stressed the importance of getting our strategy right for the Scottish Local elections taking place next May given the referendum discussions currently underway.

Boundary Review;

Declan McHugh, the party's Compliance Officer, updated us on the party's response to the Boundary Commission proposals. Consultation meetings have taken place with CLP representatives in every region that has, so far, published their proposals. Based on feedback at those meetings, and other electoral data, Greg Cook, the party officer leading on this, drew up a series of alternative proposals. Those were shared with CLPs with a view to try to achieve consensus across the party. An NEC Taskforce – including Michael Cashman, Ann Black, Keith Birch and Tony Lloyd – was set up to review the Boundary Commission proposals, CLP feedback and the draft alternative proposals. That taskforce agreed the alternative proposals that have been submitted to the Boundary Commission in the Party's name. There are a few regions still to go as well as Wales which is taking longer because of the resignation of two of its Boundary Commissioners. It was noted that this was a highly fluid process – revisions to one boundary doesn't just impact that constituency but others around it – and, whilst the Conservatives have centralised their response to the proposals other parties responses have been devolved a much more local level which can result in contradictory positions being taken by different constituencies in their name.

It was reassuring to see that Iain McNicol was very focussed on ensuring that we think at an early stage on the impact on CLPs and how we support them in adapting to whatever final decisions are made – not just in terms of the possible movement of wards to other constituencies but also in terms of the impact this will have on their activist base.

GS Report;

Iain reported on his first few weeks in the role. It was good to hear that the decision has now been taken to have the General Secretary attend and speak at meetings of the Shadow Cabinet. Iain has also started weekly e-mails to all staff, is holding regular management meetings and, something which I very much welcome, is getting out and about to CLPs. His priorities over the next few months are to work with Tom Watson on reviewing how we communicate with members, drive our recruitment challenge and support our 'Jobs and

Growth' campaign. Iain has also committed to working with the NEC, particularly ensuring that we have sufficient time to properly consider papers on which we have to take decisions.

Conference;

The Party's recent annual conference was discussed in detail. I always enjoy conference and was privileged this year to open the Health debate on behalf of the NEC - you can watch my speech [here](#).

The overwhelming view was that Liverpool had worked well as a venue and that the local police and hotel staff had been both professional and accommodating. It was agreed that CLPs should be encouraged to book their delegate accommodation earlier so as to take advantage of some of the cheaper accommodation in the area surrounding the conference venue. The party also always negotiates special rates with the local tourist board and CLPs are encouraged to book through them for those rates. Disability access, looking after delegates who attract media attention through their speeches, giving more time for delegate speeches and debate, the background music and the layout of the venue were all discussed.

Refounding labour;

It was noted that the final Refounding Labour proposals were adopted by over 93% of conference. This is the biggest shake up of our party's rule book and organisation, ever. I covered all of the recommendations in detail in [the report I issued just before conference](#) so I won't repeat them again here. I am incredibly proud of the steps we have taken, particularly the flexibility we are giving to CLPs, the training and recognition we have secured for members and, crucially, the new minimum wage for CLPs that I advocated throughout the consultation, which will ensure there will no longer be any no-go areas for the party.

Peter Hain talked about the importance of now ensuring that Refounding Labour – and the 125 recommendations arising from it - are properly implemented. The Terms of Reference for the Implementation Working Group that I recommended in September was agreed and I am deeply honoured to be asked to sit on this. Our work will cover – identifying, coordinating and working with senior stakeholders to help deliver change at a local level; collecting best practice; speaking to local parties; mentoring local parties and individual party members; having a programme of information sharing on campaigns and initiatives with our Trade Union and Socialist Societies and; to act as a consultation sounding board for Refounding Labour to Win recommendations still to be delivered over 2012, including the new communications platform. So if you have good practice to share or want me to come and speak to, or mentor, your CLP please let me know.

We discussed and reviewed the guidance that will shortly be issued to all CLPs covering the main recommendations in relation to CLP, BLP and LGC structures and organisation, as well as how to go about accessing some of the benefits that are now available to you. This is a really comprehensive document which will take some time to work through, but if you need any help or advice in doing so just drop me a line.

Leaders report;

Ed Miliband welcomed new members of the NEC to their first meeting. Ed touched on three main points; the continued pressure on the economy and our alternative plan for jobs and growth, the concern he has about predators being that the rules not being written fairly for ordinary people and the hugely damaging NHS bill and the worsening patient experience.

I asked Ed to comment on Greece's proposal to have a referendum on the European bailout deal. It was clear he was concerned about the continued uncertainty this would mean and he made the point that the overriding issue was the lack of growth or growth strategy.

I urged Ed to ensure that we raise the profile of what the Party is doing to oppose the Coalition's attack on workers employment rights - only recently we have seen a leaked memo outlining thoughts about getting rid of unfair dismissal rights in relation to capability. Many colleagues echoed this and urged Ed to ensure that the Party is, and is seen to be, on the side of public sector workers on the 30th November.

I told Ed about the very positive feedback I had received from CLPs who are due to benefit from the new minimum wage for CLPs agreed as part of Refounding Labour, quoting to him an e-mail that Banff and Buchan

CLP sent me during conference in which they stated that “first time I feel that we are valued in the Party”. Ed was pleased with the steps we had taken and stressed the importance now of making them work.

Deputy Leaders report;

Harriet Harman expressed her concern for the next generation and the attacks facing young people from the Coalition. She spoke of the consensus in the PLP on the plan for Jobs and Growth and the importance of a symbiosis of our organisational and political strategies to get our alternative heard. You can read more about, and download campaign materials for, the plan for jobs [here](#).

NEC Aims and Objectives;

Key party staff gave us a number of presentations covering the big issues we need to focus on in the forthcoming year and we discussed our strategy in respect of each. Many of those relate to sensitive electoral or financial information which for obvious reasons cannot be shared in a public forum. Some interesting points to note though;

- We have recruited many new organisers in the field and launched a local organisers programme.
- 14 PPCs will have been selected by year end in the early selecting seats.
- 2034 members have taken part in nearly 300 training events through Train to Win. I asked if we could ensure that the, excellent, webinars could be downloaded by members for replay.
- Contact Creator capacity has been increased and Contact Creator+ training is being rolled out.
- 93 CLPs have won free campaign literature after meeting their Reward to Win targets.
- The Shadow Cabinet policy working groups will report to the policy commissions in the next few weeks.
- There will be further consultation over the next two months on the reform of our policy making structure. In the meantime all NPF members will be assigned to a policy commission.
- A quarter of the members who have joined since May 2010 are below the age of 27.

Other issues;

- We considered the NEC’s sub-committee and policy commission membership and I am very pleased to have retained my place on both the Organisation Sub-committee and the Health Policy Commission.
- Charles Allen gave an update on his Management & Commercial review. Whilst much of this relates to our internal resource, finances and management structure – and therefore is necessarily confidential – I am really impressed by how he is going about this. He has already held over 200 face to face sessions with people across the organisation and is clearly very focussed on ensuring that we secure a co-ordinated, integrated structure that gives people the tools they need to do the job and delivers for members. Charles’ work will continue and he will come back to the NEC with any recommendations.
- Dave Sparkes’ local government report highlighted that local government finance was still the biggest issue hitting our local authorities.
- Glenis Willmott’s EPLP report highlighted the work our MEPs are doing to support calls for a Robin Hood tax.

This is my personal account of this meeting and should not be taken as the official record but please do pass on to Labour members who may be interested.

Keeping in touch...

Since my last report I have been delighted to be able to visit and talk to members in **Rochford & Southend East CLP, South West Norfolk CLP, Rayleigh & Wickford CLP, Orpington CLP** and **Dartford CLP**. I have also joined hundreds of other volunteers in party HQ **calling for Ken**, attended the annual **Chinese for Labour Mulan Awards** (which recognise and celebrate Chinese women for their professional and volunteering efforts), attended the **Special Scottish Labour conference** held last weekend (you can read my report of that conference [here](#)) and spoke at the Fox in Parliament fringe meeting on Animal Welfare at **Eastern Regional Conference** yesterday.

I’m always keen to talk, and provide verbal reports, to CLPs so if you’d like me to visit yours please don’t hesitate in contacting me and I’ll do my best to get there.