



# Johanna Baxter

National Executive Committee

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## Putting Members First

### Report of National Executive Committee meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2012

#### Partnership Into Power/Policy Review Report;

Peter Hain reported on the extended period of consultation on the reform of the Partnership Into Power process agreed as part of the Refounding Labour changes accepted by conference. That extended consultation lasts until the 31<sup>st</sup> January and will take full account of all previous submissions made to Refounding Labour, but if you have something else to add, please submit it to [www.members.labour.org.uk/policymaking](http://www.members.labour.org.uk/policymaking) or by post to: PiP Reform Consultation, c/o Policy and Research Unit, The Labour Party, 39 Victoria Street, London, SW1H 0HA.

Peter reported on the Policy Review and referenced the four 'first stage' policy reports that were published at conference. The Joint Policy Committee has now agreed that CLPs and affiliates should have the chance to use these reports as a basis for debate to help shape their contribution to this stage of the Policy Review. Copies of the four documents, along with short discussion guides to help guide debate, can be downloaded from here: <http://fresh-ideas.org.uk/annual-conference-2011-documents>. In order to support members in getting involved, NEC and NPF (National Policy Forum) representatives have been asked to help lead this work in the months to come, taking the discussions out to the Party. Let me know if you'd like me to help or you can contact your regional NPF representatives at <http://members.labour.org.uk/npfrep>. Policy Commissions will bring together all this work in their Annual Reports to Conference 2012.

Members of the Shadow Cabinet have also been asked to develop reports on specific issues that need attention and Peter agreed that the NEC should have an up to date list of who sits on those Working Groups. Their reports will also be submitted to the National Policy Forum Policy Commissions.

I asked Peter about his plans for the next meeting of the NPF meeting and stressed that, whilst we need to review feedback from the extended consultation, members needed to start to see quickly the roadmap to a changed policy making process in which they could easily participate. I welcomed the conference call with NPF representatives that took place before Christmas but urged the party to ensure that representatives were given a reasonable amount of notice of these things so that they could participate. Peter agreed that this was a fair point and that he was looking at an NPF meeting late June/early July. He also agreed that the use of new technology would allow better interaction with and between NEC/NPF representatives and members.

#### Campaign Co-ordinators report;

Tom Watson talked about the state of the race in every area of the country. In London he stressed that whilst Boris was on his 2<sup>nd</sup> skiing holiday in a month, had 4 other jobs, dodged interviews, cut police numbers and has raised fares, it was important not to be complacent. The traction Ken was making recently was down to the extra resource the NEC agreed to put in to London and the sheer strength of will of the campaign team and volunteers.

In the English regions it was noted that we have 55% of candidates in place for the forthcoming local elections. The party will be aiming to win 350 seats in those elections, where there are fewer seats up for election this time than previously, and whilst targets are identified we will not forget the non-marginals. In Scotland and Wales target councils have been identified and resources are being allocated accordingly. I reiterated the importance of the party performing well in the Scottish local elections given the impending Independence Referendum and the necessity for us to develop our narrative on Scotland's future. Tom agreed

and said that the new Scottish Leadership team will be developing the policy messages there. It was also reassuring to hear that Margaret Curran is already keeping Tom and Iain McNicol on their toes!

### **Boundary Review;**

Declan McHugh, the party's Compliance Officer, updated us the Boundary Commission proposals for Wales. It was noted that these proposals came later than the others because of the resignation of two of the Boundary Commissioners in Wales. The reduction of 10 seats would have a devastating impact on Wales and basing the 2010 results on the new boundaries confirmed that Labour would have been the biggest loser in terms of seats. As with other areas consultation meetings are taking place in Wales with CLP representatives and based on their feedback, and other electoral data, Greg Cook, the party officer leading on this, will draw up a series of alternative proposals in advance of the public hearings which commence on the 15<sup>th</sup> February in Swansea.

### **GS Report;**

Iain reported that in his first 14 weeks into the role he had, by Christmas, met with every member of staff, he has visited every regional office except Wales (which is forthcoming), started work on the Commercial & Management review which has seen the 6 Executive Director posts advertised, started a weekly brief for staff and NEC members, scheduled regular meetings with the Leader, Deputy Leader, the campaign Co-Ordinator, the Chair of the NPF and party Treasurer. Iain congratulated everyone who was involved in helping secure the Feltham and Heston by-election victory. Iain also confirmed that he has now signed the lease on a new property which HQ will move to very shortly. The address remains under wraps for now but I took the opportunity of visiting it and I'm really pleased – it's a great self-contained space for our party staff and will look brilliant when renovations are complete.

### **Leaders report;**

Ed Miliband focused on the party's recent announcements on the economy. He stated that he felt the announcement was necessary in order to frame the debate for the next general election. He stressed that the Tories are not on track to clear the deficit in one term as they promised, that unemployment and borrowing are both up. Ed stressed that where the choice was between jobs or pay increases the choice had to be jobs and that if the party ducked that choice we would not demonstrate fiscal credibility. Ed made clear that this does not mean that the party accepted the cuts – simply that we could not promise which we could reverse 3 years out from an election. He remained clear that he felt the cuts being made were being implemented in an unfair way and that more had to be done to tackle abuse and excessive reward, at the top.

The NEC had a full and detailed discussion on this issue. Ed responded to each and every point raised. I stressed to him that we have to address the difference between the message we believe has been sent and the message that voters have heard and we need to continually clarify and stress the different choices we would make to deliver a fairer system.

### **Andy Burnham;**

Andy Burnham addressed the NEC on the work of the Party's Shadow Health team to get the Government to drop the Health Bill. He and the team have spent 10 days in each of the English regions shadowing NHS staff, speaking to members and campaigning to get the bill dropped. This campaigning effort is starting to have an effect with an increasing number of organisations, including recently the RCN, coming out against the Bill. He stressed that the more people let their views known, on <http://www.dropthebill.com/>, the better. Andy stressed that if the bill was passed and our party got back into government at the next election we would repeal the act. We would have to look at how we did this given the significant fragmentation of services that would occur but that fundamentally we were, and would remain, committed to a national health service.

*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 **Pontypridd CLP**, **Hertford & Stortford CLP** and **Blaydon CLP**. Pontypridd CLP was my 52<sup>nd</sup> CLP visit in my first 52 weeks of joining the NEC! I made a short clip of my tour of constituencies to celebrate that year here. I've also been out campaigning in **Battersea CLP**, **Southwark** and in the **Feltham & Heston by-election**. I've attended the [David Cairns memorial dinner](#), [Val Shawcross' GLA Fundraiser](#) and [campaign launch](#) and the [launch of Labour Business](#).

## **Campaign for re-election**

On the 5<sup>th</sup> January I also announced my intention to stand for re-election to the National Executive Committee. It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as your representative to date and I'm proud of my record – I've provided regular reports of our work, sought your views on the big issues of the day and visited more CLPs than anyone else. If you re-elect me to the NEC I will: continue putting members first; ensure the commitment to a clearer, more transparent policy making process, which puts members at the heart of our decision making structure, is met; ensure that members and users are at the forefront of decisions taken about the party's new technology platform and lead the charge for greater accountability within our democratic structures.

You can find more information about my campaign for re-election and all of my previous NEC reports and articles here; <http://johannabaxter.com>. Please do share my campaign leaflet with your fellow members, pledge your support on the site or contact me if you would like me to speak to your CLP.

CLPs have until the 5pm on Friday 30 March 2012 to make their nominations. CLP Secretaries can submit nominations online via Membersnet [here](#). If you need paper forms or a form in a Word format just email [ballots@labour.org.uk](mailto:ballots@labour.org.uk) or call 020 7783 1498.