



Johanna Baxter

National Executive Committee

Putting Members First

Report of National Executive Committee meeting held on 29th May 2012

This was the first meeting of the NEC in the party's lovely new offices in Brewer Street. The building is a really good space – self-contained and full of daylight. This was also the first meeting since the election of the new PLP Chair, Dave Watts, and Peter Hain's resignation from the Shadow Cabinet. Sadiq Khan has taken over from Peter as the Shadow Government representative on the NEC. Sadiq and Dave were welcomed to their first meeting. It was announced that Tom Watson would take over Peter Hain's work on the implementation of Refounding Labour and that the Refounding Labour Implementation Working Group would be renamed the Community Campaign working group. Thanks were recorded to Peter for all of his work on the Refounding Labour project.

Campaign Co-ordinator's report;

Tom Watson took us through the analysis of the party's performance in the recent elections. Whilst we already have some detailed stats further analysis will be done once the marked registers have all been uploaded. Key points were;

- In the English local elections we had 38% share of the vote and we made 823 council seat gains overall (405 of which were from the Conservatives, 336 of which were from the Liberal Democrats, the rest from other parties). This resulted in us making 33 council gains. Whilst there was an increase in the vote shares of both the Greens and UKIP this was down to different voting patterns – the UKIP vote looks to be less focussed than the Greens, who now appear to be competing with the Liberal Democrats in local government.
- It was deeply disappointing that we didn't win the London Mayoral election but we defied all the major polls of the last month of the campaign by coming within 3% of Boris Johnson.
- Our share of the GLA vote was up 13% since the previous elections. This resulted in us gaining 4 GLA seats and we pushed the Liberal Democrats into 4th place across the city.
- In Scotland the SNP's share of the vote was up since the last set of council elections but down from the last Scottish Parliamentary elections. The Liberal Democrats lost half of all their councillors in Scotland. The success in Glasgow was both incredible and essential to prevent any perception of further momentum for the independence cause and the allocation of our resources in Scotland had been absolutely spot on. Turnout however was down 10% since the last set of council elections.
- In Wales our share of the vote had increased 7% and we now have control of 21 of the 22 councils that had all-out elections – that's a net increase of 8 councils and 237 councillors.
- There are a number of differences between the elections that took place in 2011 and these ones in 2012 including: the massive slump in support for the Liberal Democrats; the fact the Conservative vote dropped in every region of England and Wales; disaffected Liberals are no longer going to the Conservatives; we have made in-roads in the South East and West and good progress in the key marginals we will need to win back at the next general election.
- *But* – the estimated 32% turnout is almost 6% down on last year and the propensity for the electorate to stay at home will negatively impact all of the major parties. We need to give them a reason to get out and vote.
- Looking at the future there are Police Commissioner elections in November and next May there are elections in 27 Shire and 7 Unitary Councils, covering the 40 marginals we need to win back at the next general election.
- Thanks were paid to the many party employees and activists who had invested so much in the elections.

We will roll out a presentation on our election performance and future strategy to all stakeholders and will be running an audit on the health of the local parties in all of the key seats we need to win back in 2015 (based on the new constituency boundaries). We will also be rolling out a series of Shadow Cabinet visits to CLPs in our key areas and will be investing in building capacity at local level.

I asked Tom what the plans were for the Scottish Independence referendum and it was agreed we invite the leader of the Scottish Labour Party and Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland along at our next meeting to discuss that in more detail. I welcomed the planned series of Shadow Cabinet visits which will be crucial in helping to mobilise and motivate our members in CLPs that don't currently have a Labour MP. I also asked that we review our use of social media so that it is used intelligently, as an online campaigning tool which is a conduit for developing relationships with voters, rather than a another way of circulating press releases.

Deputy Leader's report;

Harriet Harman talked about the momentous times we are living through in terms of Europe and the economy. She spoke about the unfairness of the Coalition's budget and said that Ed Balls had been proven right on the economy. She said that the whole of the Shadow Cabinet team were working on making sure that we challenged the mistakes of the coalition and brought together an alternative programme for returning us to power at the next election. She spoke about our need to ensure our organisational resources followed our political logic and the need for us to better co-ordinate resources across regions. She also spoke about the need to ensure Scotland is represented on the NEC.

As someone who grew up in the Scottish Labour Party, and cares passionately about it, I absolutely agree with Harriet on that point. The issue was supposed to have been resolved in Refounding Labour – with the Leader of the Scottish Labour Party having representation – but that needs to be implemented urgently so that we can all unite in defending the union in advance of the Scottish Independent referendum.

I pressed Harriet to ensure that the unfairness of the Beecroft proposals were challenged at every possible level – not only are they an ideological attack on workers' rights which have no basis in fact, they will add to the existing economic difficulties as greater numbers of workers get sacked at will and start claiming job seekers allowance. I also asked her to ensure that the impact of these proposals on the mental health of people at work (as well as those out of work) was highlighted. I have written in more detail about my concerns with these proposals [here](#).

General Secretary's report;

Iain introduced all of the new Executive Directors that had been appointed in recent months and it was good to hear from them about the work they are doing to better utilise all the talents within the party and ensure it is well governed. Our new Executive Director for Members & Supporters is Olly Buston – his priorities are to increase our density of activists, increase our number of new members and supporters, increase our retention rate and improve our members experience of the party. I particularly welcome Olly's desire to improve our members experience and his willingness to be open to new ideas to achieve this. I met Olly just a couple of months ago and at that first meeting challenged him to get out of the office and come on the road with me to listen to the views of members on the ground who are doing the daily slog of keeping our party alive. To his credit he agreed and came with me on a visit to New Forest West CLP where he got both a warm welcome and a full and frank assessment of things that needed to change. He has agreed to come on the road with me again so if you're booking me for a visit let me know if you'd like me to bring him along and I'll see what I can do.

Other issues;

- There was no formal report from the Chair of the National Policy Forum since Peter Hain had stepped down and Angela Eagle has yet to assume responsibility for that work. It was however noted that the 6 policy commission documents had been issued to CLPs for consultation. I argued that the party had, with less than a month's notice, given insufficient time for local parties to input into that process. It was stated that there were no hard deadlines for CLP submissions so these should be encouraged wherever possible. The Policy Forum is next scheduled to meet on the 16th and 17th June in Birmingham and it will be at this meeting NPF reps will have the opportunity to discuss the proposed reforms to the policy making process (set out in my last report [here](#)). I also stressed the importance of policy discussion rather than speeches at that meeting.
- We received a report of the elections taking place across Europe and congratulations were noted for President Hollande.
- Dianna Holland was congratulated in her re-election to the role of Party Treasurer, having been the only nominated candidate at the closing date for nominations.
- The NEC received an interim report from the working group looking into the party's defeat in Bradford West. The content of that paper was confidential since the working group is still undertaking their investigation.

This is my personal account of this meeting and should not be taken as the official record but please do pass on to other Labour members who may be interested. Ed Miliband was not present at the meeting because he was on leave celebrating his wedding anniversary.

Keeping in touch...

Since my last report I have focussed the majority of my activity on campaigning in the run up to the May elections – I **campaigning in Scotland, in the Tower Hamlets Spitalfields and Banglatown ward by-election and led the Mayoral & GLA campaign in the Lane Ward, Southwark**. I have also continued to visit local CLPs and have been delighted to visit and talk to members in **Warwick & Leam CLP, Mid Sussex CLP and New Forest West CLP**. Those visits, added to the others I have undertaken, means I **have now visited 73 CLPs in the last 16 months (full details [here](#))**. If you'd like me to visit your constituency to provide an NEC report or facilitate a policy discussion please don't hesitate to get in touch.