



Johanna Baxter

National Executive Committee

Putting Members First

Report of National Executive Committee meeting held on 25th September 2012

Leaders Report

Ed Miliband gave us a sneak preview of some of the themes that would appear in his speech to conference next week. He spoke of the necessity to maintain our attack on the Coalition for their failure to address the economic crisis, the unfairness of many of their policies and their lack of competence. Ed emphasised that his view of the Liberal Democrats has not changed – they are an accomplice of, not a break on, the Tories – and that whilst he is prepared to work with them on some issues, like the changes to constituency boundaries, we are preparing for government, not coalition. Our challenge going forward he said was to persuade people that we can make a difference right here, right now and that is what he will set out at conference. Ed thanked the NEC and the wider party for the work that everyone has done to ensure that after all the changes we've been through we go into conference as a bigger, united party and one that has the right to be heard.

The discussion following emphasised the committee's desire to highlight the cuts to welfare, the attack on workers' rights, equalities and learning from the Olympics. I asked Ed to make sure we send a strong message to Scotland about our commitment to maintaining the union and, in light of recent developments in the Arctic where a sheet of ice three times the size of Britain has now melted, also asked him to ensure that we talk about the opportunity to create jobs in the green economy.

Deputy Leaders Report

Harriet thanked Party staff for all the work they have been doing to prepare for conference. She then reported on the scale of the challenge we face electorally and the difference in the party's strength across different regions. For example in London where we'll need to take 11 seats we already have a current team of 38 MPs whereas in the Eastern region we'll need to take 11 seats there but we currently only have a team of 2 MPs in that region. So she's working to ensure that members in our stronger areas understand that there's an organizational expression to our strength and that we all need to pitch in.

Harriet also reported on the 30 selections that had completed and informed us that the first 20 marginal seat candidates had been allocated a Shadow Cabinet 'Twin' to assist their campaign. Candidates selected in other marginals will also have a Shadow Cabinet Twin. Harriet also spoke of the number of new candidates that the party will have at the next set of elections and the significance of [the Future Candidates Programme](#) in finding people to stand that are more in touch with their communities and more representative of the people we seek to serve than ever before. Remember if you are interested in getting on the Future Candidates Programme the deadline for receipt of applications for this year's intake is the 12th October 2012 – just click on the link for more information or e-mail candidateprogramme@labour.org.uk.

There was some discussion about the Police & Crime Commissioner candidate selections and the legislation which has prevented a number of selected candidates from remaining in place.

General Secretary's report

Iain reported that all members of staff in HQ were working flat out to prepare for conference and that he was keen for the NEC to have a role at conference in welcoming delegates. To that end if your CLP is sending a delegate to conference, particularly if this is their first conference or they are travelling alone, I'd love to meet up with them to say hello and answer any questions they might have – please do pass on my details and I'll do my best to meet up with them during the week.

Iain updated the committee on the internal review which had now concluded. That review sees 14 members of staff leave under voluntary severance, some of whom have given many years loyal service to the party. Iain also reported that the Scottish General Secretary had also taken the decision to move on. I want to pay tribute to all the staff who are leaving for all the work they have done on our behalf and wish them all the very best for the future.

Iain reported on the party's finances, which are on track, and the appointment of John McCaffrey as our new Commercial Director. Whilst all the recent elections have effectively been self-financed John will start work immediately on a new fundraising strategy to build up our resource for the next general election.

Policy Making

In [my last report](#) I outlined the proposals that Angela Eagle had put forward to reform the party's policy making process, which we agreed. This will be debated on the Sunday of conference and I am pleased that HQ were able to issue it to delegates in advance this year to give them time to consider it. If the paper is agreed by conference the new Priorities Ballot, which will determine the key topics for in depth consideration and consultation by the NPF in the year going forward, will take place on the Tuesday of conference. Angela stated that work was underway on the new Policy Hub and that she hoped this would be fully operational by the end of October. I remain of the belief that the Policy Hub must be interactive and user-friendly – we have only a small opportunity to rebuild trust in our policy making process so if it fails at members first attempt they are unlikely to give it another go. There was some discussion about when the new Policy Commissions would begin their new programme of work and the voting mechanism for agreeing the document and future priorities in the ballot.

Conference

We received a report of preparations for conference from the Chair of the Conference arrangements Committee, Harry Donaldson. We are expecting 594 CLP delegates to travel to conference from 471 CLPs, 10,000 visitors, 510 fringe events to take place and 125 organisations to exhibit. It was noted that the main conference hotel, the Midland, would not, this year be in the secure zone. I asked that we encourage organisations that are due to hold fringe events to try to have representative speakers on their panels. We agreed the grid of events at conference, noted the NEC Officer recommendations on Vice Chairs and NEC Speakers and the CAC recommendations for Merit and Best Practice Awards. We discussed a number of rule changes to conference including one that I had previously requested we add which reinstates Women's Officers as core officer positions in CLPs or alternatively includes an Equalities Officer as a core officer position. The final wording on this will be agreed on Saturday. Remember there are also lots of training sessions being held over conference that your delegate can go to that will help you organise your campaigns ahead of the important elections this Autumn and next year including a full range of hands on technology training workshops. A full list of all the training sessions being held at conference can be accessed [here](#).

Elections

We received an update on the good campaign progress in each of the forthcoming parliamentary by-elections, the Police Commissioner elections and the Bristol Mayoralty. It was noted that turnout was widely anticipated to be low, postal ballots will therefore be key and that the Police Commissioner results were highly unpredictable given the lack on any incumbents, the number of candidates standing and the lack of clarity regarding whether the Liberal Democrats would stand.

Boundary review

It was noted that because of the change in stance of the Liberal Democrats the decision had been made to halt the CLP re-organisation along new boundaries at this stage (though the Scottish CLPs will still re-organise along MSP, rather than MP, constituency boundaries as planned) but that the position would be reviewed again once the Boundary Commission publishes its final proposals.

Who is your +1?

Over the summer the party have been running the +1 Challenge - asking each of us to recruit one new member, and if possible, one new supporter to our party. Every CLP is entitled to one box of free recruitment materials so if you haven't already got these order them now [here](#). My +1 new member is Mohammed from Camberwell & Peckham. Mohammed has voted Labour all his life and campaigned with us on the run up to the Mayoral elections, even getting 3 of his fingers badly bitten by a dog whilst posting one of our leaflets, and I'm delighted to welcome him to our Labour family.



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.

Keeping in touch...

Since my last report I was proud to attend the fantastic Bristol Mayoral fundraiser which was held on the 17th September. I have also been delighted to visit and talk with members in **Warrington North CLP**, **North West Norfolk CLP**, **Enfield LGC**, the **inaugural Ayrshire Women's Forum organised by North Ayrshire & Arran CLP** and **Alyn & Deeside CLP**. Those visits, added to the others I have undertaken, means **I have now visited 80 CLPs in the last 21 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.