



Johanna Baxter

National Executive Committee

Putting Members First

Report of National Executive Committee meeting held on 21st May 2013

Party Organisation

- The General Secretary (GS) noted the party's good performance in the recent Local, Mayoral and South Shields elections and thanked all members, activists and staff for their contribution to that success.
- The committee discussed the work of [Blue State Digital](#) who have been brought in to revolutionise the party's use of new and social media as part of our suite of campaign tools. It was noted that [Matthew McGregor](#), Head of Blue State Digital's London Office and former Obama 'wonk', had been tasked with compiling a report on the party's current capabilities and proposals for developing those further which will come to the next meeting of the NEC for consideration. The Party's last, excellent in my view, Party Election Broadcast was produced in-house and it was hoped that this would be the first of many enhancements to our technical capabilities.
- On a related issue we discussed the progress of developing NationBuilder for Party use. This is the web based campaign/volunteer management tool that we committed resource to as part of Refounding Labour to fundamentally change our web-based interface with members, supporters and activists. It is the tool that brought us the YourKen website and was trialled, with good results, in Scotland in their most recent elections. This is an off the shelf product – we know that both the SNP and the Liberal Democrats have used it in the past – the effectiveness of which therefore relies on good backroom development and customisation. Our team in HQ have been in negotiations with the developers to create bespoke commands that will allow us to completely integrate the system with our membership system and Contact Creator. This will give the national party, and additionally individual CLPs who sign up to it, a website that is easy to use with much better functionality in terms of sharing and creating membership/supporter lists and better intelligence and tailoring of issues to individual preference. It is hoped that the new site and CLP functionality will be ready in time for it to be launched at conference. CLPs will be invited to apply for the new functionality (so giving them their own site and list integration as well obviously as access to the party's revamped national site and Membersnet). Whilst the whole work is being heavily subsidised by the national Party it looked like the cost to individual CLPs that signed up would be £200 per CLP per year - the existing website package for CLPs is £400 so this represents a reduction of half the cost for the 150 or so that are already signed up to that. I raised a concern, along with Ann Black, about the amount CLPs would be asked to contribute given we only recently delivered the CLP re-financing initiative which saw some funds being redistributed by the centre to those with greater need. I'm pleased that as a result of our representations we have achieved a reduction of 50% in the cost to those CLPs with fewer than 200 members (so if they sign up they will only be charged £100 per year).
- It was noted that the recruitment of new trainee organisers was progressing well with 500 applicants for 16 positions and over 170 applicants attending the recent assessment centre in Stoke Rochford.
- It was agreed that Arnie Graff will be attending the next meeting of the NEC to update us on his work with party staff, trainee organisers and members.
- The selection of Prospective Parliamentary Candidates is also progressing well with another 4 PPCs being selected over the weekend and another round of Future Candidates Training taking place next weekend.

Deputy Leader's Report

Harriet spoke about the serious challenges posed to all parties by UKIP and the rise of the 'anti-politics' vote. She spoke of the necessity for the party to put the positive case for Europe, to articulate solutions to the concerns that people have about migration and expose UKIP for what they are.

Leaders Report

Ed Miliband thanked members, party staff and activists for their work in the recent elections. In discussing those elections Ed noted that the results demonstrated good progress in those areas which would not normally be deemed natural Labour territory. He was clear that there was further to go in terms of preparing the ground for 2015 and part of that is the crucial policy development work that is ongoing.

Ed also spoke of the challenge of the 'anti-politics' vote and of UKIP he said three things: we will not let them dictate the terms of the debate, we will not be afraid to talk about people's concerns because only by engaging with them will we be able to address them; we will give people an alternative that will demonstrate we can improve their lives and; we will do politics differently. On this it was noted that Ed's recent 'town-square meeting tour' was overwhelmingly well received in every area he visited.

I asked Ed if he would like to comment on our membership in light of [recent press reports stating that senior advisors of David Cameron had referred to Conservative members as 'swivel-eyed loons'](#). My point to him was two-fold – firstly that any political party ignores its base at its peril and secondly that this issue goes to the heart of the divisions which exist within the Conservative Party, will run and run because of it and it isolates and is extremely damaging for Cameron. I was pleased that in his response Ed stated he had the utmost respect for our Labour members and the work that they do. He also re-stated his long-held view that if our members had been listened to more in the past we might have taken different decisions on some issues. I also lobbied Ed again on the 'Good Work' agenda and called on him to ensure that the government's degradation of employment rights – including the forthcoming introduction of employment tribunal fees – and our alternative is well publicised.

NPF Chair's report

- Angela Eagle reported on the continuing work of the policy commissions and it was noted that their latest round of policy papers have now been published on the [YourBritain website](#) for consultation. Please do log on here and give us your views!
- It was noted that the YourBritain site had now received 30k visits and over a thousand individual submissions.
- John Cruddas was not able to attend but we asked again if we could see the Shadow Cabinet Policy Review papers and for clarity in terms of how these will link in to the work of the National Policy Forum. Angela reported on the work that she and John were doing jointly to bring these two policy strands together and referenced [their recent joint article on LabourList](#) where this objective is clearly stated.
- It was noted that the next meeting of the National Policy Forum would be on the 22/23rd June and a further report on this will be given then.

Campaign Organisers Report

Tom Watson reported on the good performance at the recent elections, particularly noting: that we had exceeded our previous expectations of 250 gains and now have 2,000 more councilors than we had in 2010 and control of more councils since 2002; based on those results 26 of our battleground seats would have been won; there was good performance in our defensive marginals; our print and on-line content was sharper in these elections and would become more so; we had better doorstep scripts for activists and we were more directional re Shadow Cabinet visits which helped motivate and mobilise activists in key areas. It was noted that having PPCs in early was also making a hugely positive difference so it is good that this selections work is progressing apace. It was noted that the Field Operations team have been commissioned to produce a detailed analysis of what was happening to our vote in the key battleground seats, for consideration at our next meeting, so that can feed into our 2015 General Election preparation.

Other issues;

- It was noted that the LGA Labour Group has convened a conference for Labour Groups on 7th June to discuss the role of local government in responding to the devastating effects of the bedroom tax.
- Congratulations and thanks were expressed to MEP colleagues for their excellent work in securing the backing of the European Parliament for a new initiative on removing asbestos from public buildings across the EU. Given this is the single greatest cause of work-related death in the UK (around 4,000 people die in the UK every year due to asbestos related illnesses) this is a great achievement. It was noted that the only opposition to the action came from UKIP MEPs and their allies, who voted against it.
- At our meeting of the Organisation Sub-committee the previous day I requested a review of our Selection Procedures for selecting MEP candidates and was pleased to secure agreement to this. Please do therefore send me any specific amendments you would wish this review to consider and I will do my best to reflect those views in to the review.
- I was also pleased to support calls for an amendment to the Westminster Selection Procedure which reduces the timetable from 12 weeks to 8 weeks. This is important in trying to level the playing field between candidates who have substantial financial backing and those that do not – something which is crucial if we are really to ensure that we get more representative candidates coming forward and through selections.

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 have been delighted to see and talk with members at **The Politics of One Nation Labour conference at Queen Mary University of London, Scottish Labour Conference, East Dulwich BLP Fundraising dinner, Chesham & Amersham CLP, Progress Conference and Chelmsford CLP**. I have also been busy **coordinating the selection procedure and interviews for candidates looking to stand in the 2014 local elections in Southwark** where we had 98 candidates put themselves forward. Other LCF Procedural secretaries have my sincere sympathies...I feel your pain! And today I've just landed in Valencia to talk to **Labour International CLP** at their meeting tomorrow – the furthest I've travelled to meet members of our party. 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.