



Johanna Baxter

National Executive Committee

Putting Members First

Report of National Executive Committee meeting held on 4th and 5th November 2013

This meeting was our annual 'away-day', which is always a longer meeting than usual, to enable us to consider the party's political strategy and departmental plans for the year ahead alongside our usual business.

Deputy Leader's Report

Harriet spoke about the importance of the Local and European elections and the Scottish Referendum in 2014, building momentum to 2015, the strategic use of the PLP in our election campaigns via an agreed twinning process, and building on the massive success of Women's Conference and integrating it into the main conference structure.

Leaders Report

Ed Miliband reported that the success of Conference was that we had made the political weather – demonstrating the credibility and difference a Labour government would make and giving heart to the Party. He said we would continue to fight on the issues that mattered most to people's lives. On the cost of living he said this is about more than the amount of money in people's pockets – his argument is about how you run the economy and ensure success is shared fairly. Our party will stand up for the living wage and up to vested interests where that is necessary. We will absolutely call out what is happening to the NHS under this government and will let voters know how high the stakes are for the health service at next election. Ed also talked about housing, energy, the degradation of workers' rights and the milestones on the path to the next General Election. That is a winnable election and one we would do everything to win.

I asked Ed about the government's proposals to change Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) legislation in the UK, which currently protects workers when the work they do is transferred to another organisation. The draft legislation, which is expected to come into force in January 2014, would result in significant amendments, including a provision to allow renegotiation of terms agreed in a collective agreement one year after transfer; which could affect many employees covered by historical agreements, changing things like their pension provision and the recognition of their trade union. Ed is aware of this and agreed to look at how we highlight the potential impact of this. I also asked Ed about the Party's approach to food waste and argued that if supermarkets could be persuaded to alter their packaging and offers it could not only reduced the cost of food but result in less being thrown away. He agreed with this and said that Maria Eagle and her team were looking at it. In response to others' questions Ed also spoke about the cost of childcare, the pressure facing local government, the rise of food banks, enforcement of the national minimum wage, free schools and improving the rights of working people.

Executive Director Reports and Plans

We received a report from each of our Executive Directors on their work during the last year and their plans for the year ahead:

- In **Communications**, Bob Roberts reported on the appointment of Patrick Hennessey, previously of the Sunday Telegraph, as the party's new Deputy Director of Communications and Jo Green's appointment as Head of Press and Broadcasting. Bob noted that the department's increased resource allowed us to take the front foot in the news agenda, being more proactive and churning leaflets out more quickly. The biggest change has been in our social media presence where we now have the most active of all the parties' political feeds and a stand-alone digital team who treat bloggers with the same importance as broadcasters and print journalists.
- On **Elections and Stakeholders**, Patrick Heneghan talked about the importance of good voter contact rates and having organisers on the ground in key seats. He noted that every one of the 106 key seats were due to finalise their campaign plans by the end of this year and progress against those plans would be monitored, with additional materials being given to those meeting targets and support to those who aren't. We talked about the improvements that have already been made to Contact Creator and those that are still to come on board – as well as the much-awaited app there will also be a new In/Out optimization field. I asked about member mobilization schemes and Patrick's willing to hear your ideas on this so do get in touch with any suggestions. I also asked about voter registration and the team will be working on this.
- Fiona Stanton reported on **Governance, Party Services and Membership** in Emilie Oldknow's absence, on maternity leave (and big congratulations to Emilie and NEC colleague Jonathan Ashworth on the safe arrival of their new baby!). Fiona reported that 138 seats had selected their candidates so far and

another 54 selections were underway. Of the 106 key seats, 99 have selected already and the rest were due to complete by the end of the year. Fiona reported on the move to a single internal comms stream to enable the party to better deal with the volume of communications coming into the various offices. There will also be a hardware upgrade which should be future-proof and an improvement to mobile comms. In terms of members, Fiona reported an increase in total membership of 1.5% in the year to date. I asked about our retention strategies and for the equality statistics of our 1600 role holders so that we can plug any gaps for development.

- Torsten Bell, Angela Eagle and Jon Cruddas reported on **Policy Making and Rebuttal**. It was noted there had been a drumbeat of policy content being announced each day which gave good momentum. The work of the policy team as a whole is moving up a gear in preparation for the final cycle of policy development in advance of 2015. Torsten talked of work that was being done to develop a mobile policy talking-point app that could be used to help activists on the doorstep. It was noted that 75,000 people and organisations have used the [YourBritain](#) site since its launch and we've received 1600 formal submissions to the policy commissions. NPF member profiles are due to go online shortly following the distribution of information to reps about how to complete them and additional functionality is being added to allow the submission of amendments to final year policy documents. It was noted that the Joint Policy Committee had met, and that we had agreed the [Party's policy-making timetable for the run up to the general election](#). We also agreed to postpone the elections for the NPF until 2015 and extend the term of office of current members by one year to ensure continuity through that timetable. Angela Eagle stressed that the work of the Shadow Cabinet teams would come through the NPF and would be owned by the party. It was also noted that the date of the next full meeting of the NPF is likely to be 18th -20th July 2014 so NPF reps should pencil those dates in now and await confirmation from HQ.

- Iain McNicol reported on his work as **General Secretary**. In 2012 the focus was on 'sorting' – internal restructuring through Refounding Labour that laid the foundations for change. 2013 has been about 'building' – rebuilding the regions, our ground game, new innovations in HQ and cultural change. 2014 will be about 'delivering' – party reform, the local and Euro elections, the Scottish referendum, more staff and the final pre-general election conference. Iain noted there had been an increase in membership of the Party's 1000 Club and there were plans to increase the number of small value donations.

Other issues;

- The Scottish Leader and Deputy Leader are provisionally booked to attend our January NEC meeting to give an update on the referendum campaign.
- Douglas Alexander, Chair of General Election Strategy, and Spencer Livermore, the party's new Campaigns Director, are due to attend our January NEC meeting to give a full update on their plans for the General Election campaign.
- We noted the success of the Scottish Party in the recent Dunfermline Scottish Parliamentary by-election and extended our thanks to all who had helped.
- We received a report on the work being undertaken by Ray Collins on party reform and agreed to add an additional NEC meeting to our calendar for the year to allow us sufficient time to consider his findings in advance of the special conference in March. We asked to see submissions received from members/affiliates to date and the general secretary said that would be arranged. You can find out more information about the consultation process, and submit your views [here](#).
- We received a report of Annual Conference and I was particularly pleased to note that we had the highest number of CLPs represented in 6 years. I thanked staff for the conference app which proved to be invaluable. I asked that more support is given to new delegates in understanding how conference works and that Chairs of Conference are given some way of identifying PPCs, so that we can ensure a balance of representatives across the party can be called in debate. It was also agreed that conference documents should go online so that members following events from home could keep up with decisions made. You can see the speech that I gave to conference on the work of our Better Politics Policy Commission [here](#).
- We received a report from John Denham on the work of the Southern Taskforce and the campaign plan they are developing.
- The General Secretary gave an update report on Falkirk, and confirmed the panel and the timetable for the selection of the Westminster parliamentary candidate.
- The NEC's Aims and Objectives and Terms of Reference for the year ahead were agreed.
- We agreed the new membership of our NEC Sub-committees and I was pleased to retain my seat on the Organisation Sub-Committee and Disputes Panel.
- We agreed the new NEC membership of the Party's Policy Commissions and I was pleased to keep my position as Co-convenor of the Better Politics Policy Commission.

This is my personal account of this meeting & 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 visit and talk with members in Grimsby CLP, campaign in Harrow East CLP, attend a fundraiser for Neil Coyle, PPC for Bermondsey & Old Southwark and the LabourList gala dinner. 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.