



Johanna Baxter

National Executive Committee

A track record of Putting Members First

Report of National Executive Committee meeting held on 27th January 2015

EPLP Report

Glenis Wilmott reported that our MEPs have recently called for concrete action from the EU on tax evasion and supported the European Court of Justice's Advocate General's backing of the EU law on bankers' bonuses that restricts pay-outs. Labour MEPs: have been calling for renewed air quality targets that could save thousands of lives every year and reduce the burden placed on the NHS in dealing with respiratory diseases; have led discussions on tyre safety in the European Parliament; have condemned Jean Claude Juncker's decision not to appoint a new EU scientific adviser; have backed measures to support action by national governments in preventing violence against women and girls and have called on the government to bring dangerous drivers to justice. Labour MEPs also led and secured a vote on the official recognition of Palestine in the European Parliament and have written to Eric Pickles urging him to work with the European Commission to secure the £5.5bn that England's regions are due from the EU, money which could be invested in these areas. Unless Pickles secures agreement there is a risk that projects throughout England will see a gap in their funding.

Glenis reported on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) which is currently being negotiated between the EU and the US. She noted concerns relating to the inclusion of an investor state dispute settlement (ISDS) in the agreement, the lack of transparency of the negotiations and the impact of the agreement on the future of the NHS. She made clear Labour's position - we do not want ISDS to be included in the agreement and we want an increase in the transparency of the ongoing discussions. She added that we will fight to protect the NHS created by our Party and that our MEPs have asked for all public services to be excluded from TTIP, including those privatised under the Tories' dreadful 2012 Health and Social Care Act.

Preparations for the General Election

Douglas Alexander and Lucy Powell gave a presentation to the NEC on the General Election campaign. We talked about our messaging, the five pledges we will make to the country, the manifesto launch and our campaign strategy. We are anticipating the longest short campaign in 20 years. It was noted that the Conservatives are likely to out-spend us 3:1 but that they cannot out-organise us. We now have the biggest field organisation in place ever - over 300 staff in the field including 73 trainee organisers, 51 new mobilisation assistants and 24 student vote activators. Additionally we now have, at 194,269 members, the highest Party membership for over a decade - and unlike the Tories, we don't include registered supporters or small online donors in those numbers, only full paying members - and a record breaking 150,000 people who have also pledged online to volunteer for the Party during the election. We discussed the Manifesto for Women, which will set out what the next Labour Government will do to make life better for women, and the #ShapeYourFuture consultation, which will put the ideas and aspirations of young people at the heart of our plans for the next generation.

I asked that we review the contact rates of all constituencies and for more resources to be made available to activists on the ground. I raised concerns about the number of people who have fallen off the electoral register and asked that we do everything possible to ensure that people [register to vote](#), including supporting the work of [Bite the Ballot](#) on their [National Voter Registration Day](#), and was pleased to hear this would be the subject of an Opposition Day debate in Parliament. I asked what preparations were underway for the TV debates and whether there would be a debate on the economy between Ed Balls and George Osborne.

Owen Smith, Shadow Secretary of State for Wales

Owen Smith, joined us to give a report. The Welsh Party is performing well, despite the Labour led Assembly having had a 10% cut to the Welsh budget under the current government, and feedback on the key seats is positive. We talked about the Tories attacks on Wales and their distortion of the truth about the NHS in Wales, which they do to try to distract attention from what they are doing to the NHS in England. (Owen has written an excellent piece on that [here](#)).

I was pleased to hear Owen speak of the importance of Labour and the Union as the main vehicles for wealth redistribution and the Welsh Party's desire for all parts of our Party to work more closely together - we should not deny our strength as a UK party. Welsh Nationalism is different to Scottish Nationalism and whilst we discussed both it was noted that the threats posed by each differed for a number of reasons.

Association of Labour Councillors (ALC) Report

Jim McMahon reported on preparations for the [Local Government Conference](#) taking place on the 7th February at the East Midlands Conference Centre in Nottingham. Over 200 delegates had already registered and speakers include members of the Shadow Cabinet, councillors from across the country and prominent members from across the Labour movement.

Jim raised concerns about the Government's cuts to council budgets. The NEC noted that despite having to set challenging budgets, councils across the country are delivering projects on the ground which are making a real and positive difference to people's lives - as highlighted by the recent '[50 Achievements' publication](#). He reported that the inaugural meeting of the Shadow Regional Cabinet was held in Manchester in the autumn to establish its remit. The second meeting will be taking place in the next few weeks and will set out more detail on the devolution agenda. Jim also spoke of the support the ALC was providing to councillors through their policy briefings and webinars - info [here](#).

Deputy Leader's report

Harriet Harman reported in Ed Miliband's absence - he was delivering a speech in another part of the country at the time of our meeting. She paid tribute to the work of Dave Watts MP, who has stood down as PLP Chair. She talked about the manifesto launch and the 'Woman to Woman' campaign that she will be leading, which will be launched in Stevenage on 11th February. During the campaign Harriet will be on the road in a mini-bus touring the country finding out from women about what they want Labour to deliver in Government and highlighting Labour's offer to women. Follow #labour4women on twitter for updates.

General Secretary's report

Iain McNicol reported on the expansion of HQ to the first floor of the neighbouring building to accommodate the expanded field operations team in place for the election. He noted that we are further ahead in candidate selection than any other party and that in the 106 key seats - 50 men had been selected and 56 women. He reported that we are out-performing as a Party against Ed Miliband's target of having 4 million conversations with voters by the election.

Other issues;

- We approved the re-selection of sitting MPs and agreed the NEC Officer decisions in relation to the arrangements for the membership and operation of the Special Selections Panel.
- We reviewed the work of the Policy Commissions and discussed the steps that would be put in place to formally sign off the manifesto.
- We received a report from the Business Board on the party's finances and annual budget.
- We discussed the arrangements for a special pre-election event, to be held on the 14th March at the ICC in Birmingham, where we will unveil our five election pledges to the people of Britain. To register for the event click [here](#).
- We received a report of the work in our nations and regions. The NEC placed on record our congratulations to Jim Murphy and Kezia Dugdale in their election as Leader and Deputy Leader of the Scottish Labour Party and extended an invite to Jim for our next meeting in March. We also noted that 2 new Deputy Regional Directors had been appointed - George Carr Williamson in the East Midlands and Emma Foody in Yorkshire.
- We received an International Report and discussed the election of Syriza as Greece's largest party.

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've spent a lot of time on the doorstep with members across the country. As well as campaigning across my patch - in **Camberwell & Peckham** and our twinned marginal of **Bermondsey & Old Southwark**, where we're doing our best to make sure Neil Coyle takes Simon Hughes' seat in May - I've also been out campaigning in the key seats of **Ilford North**, **Erewash** and **Grimsby**. I joined the campaign in Erewash as part of Progress' Operation Flight. I don't always agree with Progress but joined them on the doorstep because, for all our differences, the thing that should unite all of us in the next few months is the campaign to get our Labour candidates elected and the NEC should provide leadership here. That's why I'm on the doorstep every week and why today I'm back out joining Tessa Jowell's 3 seat challenge campaigning for Uma Kumaran in Harrow East, Andrew Dismore in Hendon and Sarah Sackman in Finchley and Golders Green and why, wherever I see members organising to get our candidates elected, I'll try to support their work in any way I can.

I've also tried to support candidates fundraising attempts - I attended fundraisers for **Harrow West**, **Streatham** and **Dulwich & West Norwood** and spoken at the **Canterbury CLP** and **Wantage CLP** fundraisers. I've also spoken at **Hampstead & Kilburn CLP** and attended the **Fabian Society New Year conference**, the **Camberwell & Peckham CLP Gala Dinner**, the **Labourist dinner** and the **Fabian Society's and Labour Women's Network** Christmas events. If you'd like me to visit your CLP to give an NEC report, facilitate a policy discussion or join you on the #LabourDoorstep please don't hesitate to get in touch.