



Johanna Baxter

National Executive Committee

A track record of Putting Members First

Report of National Executive Committee meeting held on 19th May 2015

Harriet Harman's Report

Harriet reiterated the four priorities for the Party that she had outlined the week previously; to be an effective opposition, provide stability and unity, learn lessons from our defeat and get on with electing a new leadership team to take the party forward. Harriet outlined the responsibilities of the [new Shadow Cabinet](#). It was noted that the leadership election would be an opportunity to talk to the country and we should take that opportunity rather than only talking to ourselves. We discussed the Conservatives agenda for the forthcoming Queen's Speech and the importance of exposing quickly the policies they are likely to bring forward that attack those most in need.

Learning the Lessons Taskforce

We agreed the establishment of a 'Learning the Lessons Taskforce'. (This is separate to the review that John Cruddas has been linked to). This review will focus on two distinct pieces of work, both of which would be available to help guide the new leadership of the Party. One is to bring together and analyse all the data about how people voted in all the different parts of England, Wales and Scotland. The other is to draw on the experiences of our key stakeholders - people who performed different roles in different types of seats - and listen to the public.

The Taskforce will take online submissions and hold hearings in the nations and regions across the country and will seek to conclude its work in time to report to the new leadership team and the NEC. It was noted that time is of the essence given the Scottish Parliamentary, Welsh Assembly, London Mayoral and local government elections taking place in May 2016.

The questions below are the key areas we would like to get your feedback on:

- 1) Why do you think Labour lost the election?
- 2) What were the key issues being raised on the doorstep in your local area?
- 3) What Labour campaign messages/themes and policies worked and did not work in your area?
- 4) How well did Labour do at communicating its key campaign messages/themes and policies?
- 5) How effective and active were your local opponents on the ground?
- 6) How effective did you feel were the messages and themes of our main opponents?
- 7) If you've been involved in a general election before how do you feel this campaign compared in terms of:
 - a) General organisation on the ground
 - b) Getting more people active in key seats
 - c) Having the best positive and attack messages in the campaign
- 8) What do you think Labour needs to do better to be more successful at the next general election?

As soon as the link to the web submissions page is live it will be circulated, but in the meantime please continue to send me your views at johanna.baxter@btinternet.com. I asked that Party members have a representative on the Taskforce and I'm pleased NEC Officers took on board this suggestion. The full membership of the Taskforce panel has been agreed as;

- Chair of the Taskforce – Margaret Beckett
- Chair of the NEC - Jim Kennedy
- General Secretary – Iain McNicol
- Candidate from target seat – Sharon Taylor
- Candidate from target seat – Anne Snelgrove
- BAME representative – Valerie Vaz
- Representative from the PLP – Tom Blenkinsop
- Representative from Scotland - Margaret Curran
- Representative from Wales – Chris Ruane
- Representative from local government – Alice Perry
- Representative from members – Johanna Baxter

Leadership of the Scottish Labour Party

The NEC noted the resignation of Jim Murphy and placed on record our thanks for the work he did as Leader of the Scottish Labour Party. The Scottish Executive Committee will oversee the procedures for electing a new Leader in Scotland.

Association of Labour Councillors (ALC) Report

Jim McMahon reported on the Tories devolution of responsibility for health spending in Manchester which is exposing the issue of low pay for workers in some areas. It was noted that other Northern cities might accept elected Mayors as the price for similar powers and we discussed the need for experiences of how to tackle Tory attacks to be shared across local authorities.

General Secretary's report

Iain McNicol reported on Party financing and staffing levels post-election and the compliment of staff across the nations and regions going forward. It was noted that the number of new members that had joined since the general election has now reached 42,000 and it was agreed that every effort should be made to ensure they receive a positive introduction to the Party. It was agreed that the three NEC representatives on the London Mayoral Selection Committee will be Keith Vaz, Ellie Reeves and Andy Kerr. The other three representatives of that Committee will, as per the selection process, be comprised of members of the London Regional Board.

General Election Results

The Executive Director for Field Operations took us through a detailed presentation of the election results broken down by nation, region, Mosaic group etc. It was noted that in Scotland there was a tsunami of votes for the SNP - 50% of the Scottish votes, giving them 56 of the 59 seats – which rendered it almost academic to look at the performance in individual seats. I've written more about the reasons for that [here](#).

In England and Wales the two main parties increased their share of the vote. That should have resulted in a swing to Labour but for a number of reasons that didn't happen – whilst we gained twelve seats from the Liberal Democrats and ten from the Tories we lost eight to the Tories, and UKIP and the Greens won one seat each. The biggest increase in the Labour vote came principally from the big cities – London and the North West were some of the best performing areas – and we stacked up votes in some of our Labour held seats. We did well when up against the Liberal Democrats but less well in traditional Tory/Labour marginals. Some of the Mosaic data was particularly interesting, with seats made up of key demographic groups doing particularly well/badly.

One of the most concerning aspects of the results is that only 24 Tory seats have majorities under 3,000 and only two Scottish seats have majorities under 5,000. So in order to win an overall majority of two in 2020 Labour will need to gain 94 seats with a swing of 8.7%, even before any boundary changes come into effect.

We discussed the quality of the data that we were receiving from our canvass returns and how that compared to the polls. It was made clear that all the polling data seen by the party mirrored that being conducted by other pollsters. We discussed the effects of campaign organisation and how that affected the results, the performance of the smaller parties and the rise of nationalism in all its different forms.

Other issues;

- We agreed to devote a large part of our next meeting's agenda to discussing the European referendum.
- We put on record our thanks to our sister parties from across the globe for their support throughout the election campaign. We noted the results of the recent elections in Finland, Israel, Nigeria and Poland.
- We noted the work of our Labour MEPs in preventing millions of pounds intended to help some of Britain's poorest communities from being lost after failures of the British government had left huge sums unspent in 2014. Action backed by MEPs will ensure that unspent money in the EU's regional development programme is carried forward to 2015 so that it can still be used to support projects across the UK.

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 of our March NEC I spent a lot of time on the doorstep with members across the country. I was out campaigning regularly across my patch - in **Camberwell & Peckham**, our twinned marginal of **Bermondsey & Old Southwark**, and my home CLP of **North Ayrshire & Arran**. I also hit the doorsteps, supporting members and candidates, in **Ilford North, Hampstead & Kilburn, Westminster North, Hove, Brighton Pavillion, Brighton Kemptown, Enfield North, Hornsey & Wood Green, Finchely & Golders Green, Tooting, Battersea, Ealing & Acton Central, Glasgow East, Glasgow Central, East Renfrewshire, Kilmarnock & Loudon, Inverclyde**.

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.