

Partnership Made Easy – Labour’s Policy-Making Process

The National Policy Forum (NPF) has around 200 members. They include 55 elected by individual members; 22 elected by regional conferences, one from Northern Ireland, one from International Labour; 30 from trade unions; 9 MPs; 6 MEPs; 8 cabinet or shadow cabinet members; 10 from local government; 2 members of the House of Lords; 3 from socialist societies; 4 from BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic) Labour; 1 from Disability Labour; 1 from LGBT Labour; 3 from the Co-op Party; one from Labour Students; four officers of the Welsh policy forum; four officers of the Scottish policy forum; and the 35 members of the National Executive Committee. It meets once or twice a year.

Between meetings all work is carried out by eight policy commissions, listed below with the government departments that they shadow:

International (Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence; International Development; Brexit)

Early Years, Education and Skills (Education)

Economy, Business and Trade (Treasury; Business & Industry; International Trade; Industrial Strategy)

Environment, Energy & Culture (Energy; Climate Change; Environment, Fisheries & Rural Affairs; Culture, Media & Sport)

Health and Social Care (Health)

Housing, Local Government and Transport (Communities & Local Government; Housing; Transport)

International (Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence; International Development; Brexit)

Justice and Home Affairs (Home Office; Justice; Cabinet Office; Leaders of Commons and Lords; Attorney General; Northern Ireland; Scotland; Wales)

Work, Pensions and Equality (Work & Pensions; Equalities)

The commissions are comprised of members from the Forum, the NEC and the frontbench. NEC members act as co-convenors and represent the NEC on the Joint Policy Committee, which also includes Forum and frontbench members. The JPC decides how the Forum operates, agrees policy recommendations, and signs off final documents.

Under *Partnership in Power* all policies are reviewed during a parliament, and the results should underpin the next manifesto. The current cycle has just started, with initial policy documents published for consultation through to 31 May, before a meeting of the Forum on 1/2 July 2017 which will decide what to take forward to annual conference. This will be followed by the second draft in 2017 / 2018 and the final draft in 2018 / 2019, with conference agreeing the party policy platform which will go forward to the manifesto.

Members can contribute through discussion in local branch and constituency meetings, specially-organised local policy forums, and their trade unions or other affiliates. In addition individuals as well as branches and constituencies can feed in views through the policy forum website at <http://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/>. This allows everyone to read and comment on others' views. All submissions should be notified to members of the relevant policy commission, so they can reply.

As well as medium-term policy development the commissions are also responsible for day-to-day dialogue with the party, and in opposition this is even more important than in government, where the party must respond rapidly to government moves and national and international events.

The policy commissions submit reports to annual conference which include the developing policy documents and a summary of current issues which have been raised with them. Constituencies may submit contemporary issues to conference only on matters not covered in these reports from the Forum, the policy commissions and the NEC, which are published in late summer.

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