

## 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 39 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. Initial policy documents were published for consultation early in 2017. However the general election was called in April and the manifesto was drawn up following telephone conferences with NPF representatives in each region and with the policy commissions and signed off by a meeting of the Clause V committee which includes the NEC, NPF officers, shadow ministers and backbench MPs. Despite the haste, the manifesto was well-received across the party and by a large proportion of the electorate, and will form the basis for future development. The policy commissions are meeting again, and the next national policy forum is on 17/18 February 2018.

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.

Finally the party democracy review launched by the NEC at conference will include the ways in which Labour develops policy, and all comments on how the system could be improved are welcome.

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