

National Executive Committee Meeting, 16 September 2025

Ellie Reeves thanked the NEC for supporting her as party chair, as she now moves to the post of solicitor-general, and expressed gratitude to Angela Rayner for her brilliant service. Members paid tribute to Nicky Gavron, Pat Ireland, Neil Wilson, former general secretary Tom Sawyer and Senedd member Hefin David, whose untimely death was a deep personal loss to his many friends as well as the wider Labour family.

General Secretary's Report

Hollie Ridley thanked party staff for working tirelessly round the clock: September is always busy, but they also had to adjust the conference schedule after an unexpected reshuffle, mobilise for a Senedd by-election in Caerphilly and organise a deputy leadership election with no warning. She reminded us that women now hold three of the great offices of state, and also make up a majority of the senior management team. There are 186 Labour women MPs, almost as many as the entire 2019 parliamentary party. Conference was the party's sovereign decision-making body and also a major source of income, and every penny would be spent on campaign priorities and building towards critical elections in May 2026.

Hollie agreed that safeguarding was essential, for elected representatives and doorstep campaigners in an increasingly hostile environment. Councillors and local candidates in particular had little protection. She deplored the comments made by the former Downing Street head of political strategy. Kindness costs nothing, and we should all look after each other.

Deputy Leadership: Behind the Scenes

Initial instructions for constituency nomination meetings were widely circulated to roleholders. As in 2020, and as for recent mayoral nominations, these were required to be all-member meetings with no quorum specified. A week later I became aware of a later version which included a quorum of 5% of eligible members and said that this was approved by the procedures committee. The procedures committee, of which I am a member, had not seen it. When I took this up the governance and legal unit reply included:

"Since the rule changes passed at conference in 2021, a large number of CLPs have already agreed new quorums with their regional office in line with Chapter 18 of the rulebook ... We've recently gone through a process of electing delegates for conference ... we only had around half a dozen CLPs out of 650 that we've had to be involved with due to iniquorate meeting numbers."

I did not know that dozens of CLPs now operate on a quorum of less than 5%. But more urgently CLPs with a general committee structure have a quorum of 25% of GC delegates. They have never had to meet the 5% level for an all-member meeting, and therefore never applied for a variation. So I was not the only NEC member sending frantic messages during the lunchbreak to avoid our delegate-based CLPs losing out, and I'd like to thank the regional director for speedy and helpful responses. As I write it is clear that both candidates have enough nominations to go forward to the ballot, but there are lessons for next time.

Nothing to See Here

Moving on, there will be a hustings from 12 noon to 1 p.m. on Wednesday 1 October in Liverpool, immediately after conference closes, and this will also be livestreamed. Personally I am fine with the timing. It's hard enough to cram in all the normal conference business and I have little sympathy with those who told *LabourList* that most members go home on Tuesday and this is yet another attack on party democracy. CLPs pay a lot of money for their delegates and we expect ours to stay to the end. Back in January secretaries were informed that *"We expect Conference to close at approximately 2 p.m. on Wednesday 1 October"* and travel arrangements should have been made accordingly.

Treasurer's Report

The treasurer Mike Payne gave an update on party finances and thanked the finance team. The accounts will be included in the NEC report to conference. Members asked that in any future reorganisation, staffing levels in regional offices should be protected. It was also suggested that our 400 incumbent Labour MPs should help their local parties to generate their own funds, and noted that there are wide disparities in wealth. As always I mentioned the NEC development fund which, since 2011, holds most of the income from membership subscriptions. Only a few pounds per member goes back to CLPs, no bids have been invited for months, and grants tend to go to those with inside contacts. Perhaps it should just be wound up.

The Road to Liverpool

Lynne Morris, chair of the conference arrangements committee, ran through the practical aspects, including security and accessibility. The final agenda would be published in the first CAC report. There would be 150 exhibitions and 900 fringe events. Nearly 800 CLP delegates had been registered, with 241 from affiliates, and Lynne would check how many of the 650 CLPs were represented. I also asked when CLPs were notified that they could refer back sections of the national policy forum report, as this was not an option in 2023 or 2024 in the run-up to the election. On Saturday there would be events from 1 p.m. for delegates who booked in anticipation of the women's conference and anyone else who arrived early.

Since the NEC meeting some CLPs have been disappointed that the CAC rejected their motions for failing to meet the criterion that they are "*not substantially addressed by reports of the NEC or NPF.*" Basically the rules have reverted to the pre-2019 model, where motions are turned down if the reports contain even a passing reference to the issues raised. Last year was exceptional because the general election was a brand-new start for Labour in government, and there was no NPF report. But it will be interesting to see how the unions have overcome these obstacles as their motions usually get through.

As a fallback CLPs might want to submit the motions to the NPF at

<https://nationalpolicyforum.labour.org.uk/#policy-form>

The 2025 consultation closed in June, but contributors are still welcome to make policy submissions and these will be considered as part of the next cycle. Just a thought ...

Platform Politics

In addition to Ellie Reeves as NEC chair and Shabana Mahmood as NEC vice-chair, the NEC were asked to appoint six assistant chairs. The disabled members and BAME representatives pointed out that last year they were guaranteed consideration this time, and my notes from September 2024 indeed read:

The NEC approved Shabana Mahmood, Carwyn Jones, Gavin Sibthorpe, Wendy Nichols, Elsie Greenwood and Abdi Duale as assistant chairs, and promised to consider the disabled members and BAME representatives for slots next year.

However the NEC ignored this. My call for a secret ballot was rejected by 17 votes to 10, and as the NEC meets in hybrid mode it could not have been held anyway. On shows of hands members elected Joanne Thomas, Abdi Duale, Maggi Ferncombe, Anu Prashar, Peter Wheeler and Peter Mason. I voted for Joanne, Maggi, Anu and Ellen Morrison. It is hard enough to persuade disabled people that Labour is on their side after the bruising arguments over welfare and seeing their elected representative chairing conference would have sent a small positive signal.

In July the NEC deferred two rule changes to this meeting. The proposal to change the make-up of the conference arrangements committee had gone away, but the NEC now agreed, by 22 votes to 7, that NPF constituency representatives will be elected by conference delegates within their region instead of by one-member-one-vote. Only youth delegates will elect the regional youth representative, but it is not clear whether the card vote will be based on their full CLP membership or on the number of young members in their CLP. I voted against, and was disappointed but not surprised. The cost of £10,000 for an OMOV ballot is hard to justify when turnout is so low, and if we do not use our democratic rights we will lose them.

Prime Minister's Report

Keir Starmer added his personal tribute to Angela Rayner, an outstanding example of social mobility, a champion for workers' rights and social housing, and an inspiration to many. She made an honest mistake and rightly stood down, but her departure was a sad loss. He had less to say about Peter Mandelson.

Keir said that the impact of Saturday's march, led by a convicted criminal, was being felt across the country, especially by people from minority communities now less secure in their own home. They needed to know that Labour would protect them. Like other countries we faced a new kind of politics, and had to stand for true patriotic national renewal against fake alternatives which would tear the country apart.

He stood on the side of the Hillsborough families, where after 35 years and unkept promises by six prime ministers Labour was at last bringing in a law which would require public servants to act truthfully, ensure that wrongdoing is not concealed, and deliver justice. The victims of Hillsborough, Grenfell, infected blood and the Horizon Post Office scandals shared common threads: working-class people who were not listened to or respected, and where the initial harm was compounded by state injustice and indifference.

Keir also highlighted five million NHS appointments, the employment rights bill going through parliament unamended, breakfast clubs, limiting school uniform costs, and free childcare from nine months to four years. This would save families £7,500 a year, help parents to return to work, and give all children an equal start at school. (Though my understanding is that parents without a job or paid less than £10,000 a year are not eligible, and their children are probably the most disadvantaged. I will follow this up.) Internationally the situation in Gaza was ever more intolerable, with tens of thousands killed including children, and a human-made famine. He condemned the attack on Doha, and together with Canada and others the UK would recognise Palestine as a state. Russian drones crossing the Polish border showed a disturbing escalation of the war on Ukraine, and he hoped to discuss all these issues with President Trump.

Question Time

Keir then responded to a wide range of questions. He was thanked for his work on Hillsborough and employment rights, where the unions were broadly reassured. Members hoped that Great British Railways could avoid continuing fragmentation. He personally messaged Diane Abbott when the appalling new texts emerged, and dismissed the offender, but it was for the chief whip to decide about readmission to the PLP.

I expressed alarm that the new Right were weaponising flags. St George's crosses worn as cloaks, hung from bridges and painted on roads were more intimidating than 80-year-old vicars holding placards, and we should not get dragged onto Reform's agenda. Keir replied that we can never surrender our flags, the symbols of our heritage, or forget those who fought and died for them, and they must not be used to divide us. Labour had to show that, as social democrats, we could get a grip on migration. I agree with effective policies, including on borders, but members do not like boasts about deporting 35,000 illegal incomers or pictures of officials detaining Black and brown people. They would rather campaign on free school meals, housing and the NHS. From my inbox:

"I have resigned from the Labour Party. It is now a centre right party and for me the trigger point was the 'island of strangers' speech. An Enoch Powell tribute."

"After 41 years of continuous membership I have resigned from the Labour party. I can no longer stomach the constant migrant and refugee bashing. My Facebook feed is awash with revolting attacks"

Others criticised Nigel Farage for comparing the UK to North Korea and calling for the United States to impose sanctions on Britain, and asked if Elon Musk's calls for the marchers to overthrow the government constituted incitement to violence or even terrorism. Keir said that various options were being looked into, and existing laws would be fully enforced.

Looking forward to the 2026 elections Keir again ran through the government's many achievements, and stressed the need for self-confidence. I entirely agreed with the colleague who asked for one good exciting policy announcement every day of conference, and he promised to pass the request on to the organisers.

Chairs' Reports

Anna Turley was welcomed as the new party chair. She thanked Ellie for all her work, and envisaged her role as bringing party and government closer together, with MPs, councillors and members co-operating as a team across departments, delivering for working people. We were facing the fight of our lives, with challenges for the party, the country and democracy itself, with a rise on the left, Scottish and Welsh separatists exploiting grievances and Reform playing on fear and insecurity, but our opponents were y beatable. A member suggested that we should use the threat of Reform an organising opportunity, encouraging people to join Labour as the only party who could stop Nigel Farage, and the NEC were urged to be upbeat and optimistic.

Ellie, who continues as chair of the national policy forum, confirmed that the annual report was approved by the joint policy committee in July and would go forward for endorsement by conference. See you there!

Please feel free to circulate / post online, and contact me at annblack50@btinternet.com / 07956-637958.