

# LABOUR VALUES SUBMISSION TO REFOUNDING LABOUR

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# Introduction, summary & recommendations

## *Introduction*

Labour Values is a group set up in 2010 with a particular focus on party reform and renewal.

Section 1 sets out our thoughts and responses to Refounding Labour and particularly draws out a positive vision of what a **healthy and successful Labour Party** would look like. Section 2 – responds to the particular questions, issues, and areas identified in the Refounding Labour document including the role of conference and the NPF, propose structural reforms within the Party and the role of members and supporters and community organising. Finally there Annexes which include various documents prepared as part of the review.

This document draws specifically on work Labour Values has been doing since its inception in early 2010 as well as workshops and on/offline consultations it has conducted with its 300 or so signatories specifically for the purpose of preparing this submission.

## *Summary and Recommendations*

Labour Values welcomes the Re-founding Labour project. For the reasons given below (most of which are also to be found in RFL document) we consider the project long overdue and it's diligent and competent application imperative if the Party is to have a healthy and successful future.

Our **principal recommendations** are as follows (**many more detailed suggestions are made in the body of the submission**):

- The next step should be the composition of a **clear positive vision** of the Party for the future.
- **Major cultural change** is required to build and support the membership, supporters and activists. They are and will always be our **most valuable asset**. We must improve the stock of strong respectful relationships in the party.
- The Party should **employ local organisers** who offer support, training, resources and expertise to local party units in order to promote effective community organising, campaigning and recruitment. These paid officials would also be responsible for helping develop local "leaders" who can then take on the role of training others.

- The party structures need to adjust to this new set of priorities – a **membership unit** should be established and the Party ought to pursue a **“network based model” in preference to “command and control”**. Save for elections the regional offices should be disbanded.
- Greater power should be devolved to local party units (i.e CLPS is retained) as and when merited – once new skills and competencies have been developed the Party should offer greater autonomy.
- The party’s approach to **fundraising must change**. It has to become an integral part of being a member.
- Policy formulation should be restructured in order to draw on the **wealth of expertise** contained in the party membership. We suggest subject specific policy fora.
- World class robust **“Get out the Vote” strategies are the only way the Party can win**.

## ***Labour Values***

Labour Values came out of discussions between Labour members and activists who wanted to play a part in renewing the Party in accordance with certain beliefs they consider intrinsically Labour. Labour Values isn’t an organisation – it is ‘owned’ by everyone who signs up to the principles set out on the website. Neither is Labour Values aligned with any particular wing, section or group in the Party. It is run entirely by volunteers.

The 2010 election showed that Labour activism and well-run local campaigns can connect with people and buck national trends. But Labour has to change. We think the Labour Party therefore needs to:

- become a mass participation progressive movement
- empower members, activists, and supporters with the tools and resources to transform their communities whether or not the Party is in government
- invest authority in the people and groups that deliver this change

One aspect of our work has involved the compilation of case studies and lessons learnt from the 2010 general election, engagement with the candidates in the leadership election regarding their ideas for reform and the preparation of a toolkit for activists.

For more details on Labour Values please go to: [www.labourvalues.org.uk](http://www.labourvalues.org.uk)

## Section 1: The Refounding Labour project

This section set out our ideas and response to the Refounding Labour project and document. We have highlighted areas we would like to endorse, items we consider necessary to complete or deliver on the project and finally we have outlined our vision for a healthy and vibrant Labour Party.

### *1.1 The approach of Refounding Labour*

Firstly we welcome and are enthused by the Refounding Labour project. It is an important step, reflecting political maturity in the Party and an appreciation that we must reflect and learn from the successes and failures in our recent history. **It is an essential step.**

As the paper sets out, the challenges facing the Party are substantial. A series of poor electoral results have dispirited a membership already in persistent decline. The opposition has improved its performance whilst it seeks to make changes to the constituency boundaries that threaten further electoral difficulties in circumstances where even Scotland cannot be relied upon to vote Labour. Furthermore the Party faces serious financial problems just at a time when the rules on party funding may be changed in such a way prohibit union financing. The broad context is also unhelpful – engagement in mainstream party politics is declining, the left is generally doing badly across Europe whilst the UK press remains largely right-wing and hostile to Labour.

Therefore the very survival of the Party is at stake. **Cosmetic change will not be enough.** To those who persist in the belief that we must not spend time looking inwards if we are to seriously compete at the next election, the response must be that we cannot seriously hope to persuade people of who we are and what we believe in if we don't really know ourselves anymore. Ever more cautious positioning on current affairs will not return the Party government. A more profound reassertion of our identity is vital.

The Refounding Labour document has a clear focus on the level and nature of the Party membership and the need to shift to a more outward looking model that engages with the other, increasingly dominant, forms of political and social activism vibrant in Britain today that are currently happening outside the Party. The challenge identified, quite rightly, is how do we in the Party respond to these modern ways of doing politics, and harness people's evident desire to exert greater influence over the world in which they live and work. The document understands that this

is not just a matter of tinkering, but requires a fundamental reorganisation of the Party, not just of its structures, policies and incentives, but perhaps most of all, of its culture.

We believe the project would benefit from a clear statement of the objectives and goals of reform. Whilst implicit, it should be explicitly stated that one important aim is to expand the network of supporters, members and activists associated with the Party. After all, a party does not become a “movement again” by simply changing its name, its composition must change first.

To this end we have set out what we envisage a healthy, functional Party might look like and what the experience of being part of it might feel like.

## ***1.2 What would a Refounded Labour Party look like?***

There is wide spread recognition of the need to shift way from command and control mechanisms to a more ‘network-based’ organisation. A **strong centre is imperative**, but its goal must be to protect and nurture the roots if the Party is to have a successful future. As the roots grow as does the Party’s exposure to potential supporters and the motors of renewal. Conversely when insufficient attention is paid to the roots no amount of electoral success or time in Government will help the party survive when times get tough.

The reforms of the 1990s were essential and very much of their time. In many ways what is set out below is designed to continue the modernising of the Party. It also however seeks to capture some of what we may have lost from the past, when the party had closer and more meaningful relationships, both with sympathetic institutions and amongst its members and supporters.

**The ‘hub and spoke’, or network model, has as its primary purpose the facilitating of local political activism and innovation as a way for people to impact and change their communities at the local or national level.** This is emphatically not a recipe for parochialism. A national campaign is best advanced by effective local campaigning, as the successes in Barking and Dagenham, Bethnal Green and Bow, Edgbaston and Oxford East illustrate.

**Therefore the ‘Party as a movement’ approach is both an end in itself and a means to an end.** A healthy, functional Labour Party could and should be in power for many more than 23 of the next 100 years of its existence.

A successful Party would therefore have the following characteristics/attributes:

### ***1.2.1 Membership and activism***

- A **large number of supporters, members and activists** with levels measured in percentages of the population rather than the low hundreds of thousands. It would also be more demographically representative in its composition.
- **Being active everywhere**, even in areas where electoral success is unlikely. Building a Labour presence would be possible and worthwhile if community campaigning were incorporated into the Party's functions. Presently we leave largely untapped the commitment and enthusiasm of left-leaning people living in the South of England and other areas where the party cannot win and therefore seemingly has no purpose or anything to offer local residents.
- **'Professional' volunteer management at constituency level**, with trained, skilled organisers incentivised to mobilise and support activism as well as developing the skills and knowledge of members/supporters.
- **Members and supporters engaged in ways that work for *them*** (text, email, meetings near work or home, with friends) and also in their vocational or expert capacity – as nurses, lawyers, teachers and entrepreneurs, and not just in terms of their post-code or leafleting skills.
- **Members, supporters and activists are seen as the greatest asset of the Party**, both for winning elections, achieving change in their communities and for their wealth of knowledge and expertise. Continuously improving the experience of membership is a clear focus of staff.
- **New people and new ideas are welcomed and nurtured** within the Party, providing a deepening pool of talented, committed and skilled officers and volunteers. The quality of the Party's policy making reflecting the quality of its people and its processes.
- **Strong alliances with affiliate and non- affiliate organisations** (on particular issues and campaigns or otherwise) spawned of a greater flexibility in the Parties means of engagement with other organisations.

### ***1.2.2 Policy making and monitoring of delivery and impact***

- Supporters and members of the Labour Party are used as a resource for development and quality of policies and better quality delivery. This avoids an over emphasis on think-tanks and focus groups (both of which would continue to have a role). Rather than solely based on their geographical location such as the current NPF structure, **this would be done through specific policy fora that access the professional skills and experience of members**. This is just as

relevant in government as opposition, and in the design and testing as well as the implementation and impact of public.

### ***1.2.3 Party structure, systems, behaviour and incentives***

- The Party sees its **primary purpose as developing its members and supporters** in order to win elections, run campaigns, engage with their communities and maintain a healthy, vibrant and sustainable Party.
- **Clear, efficient, supportive and respectful relationships** within the Party, across all levels, between the centre and local party units, and with and between affiliates and grouping such as Young Labour, various 'Friends of Labour', Women and BAE groups etc. The scope for damaging factionalism is greatly reduced. How we treat each other is clearly also part of this and mechanisms for resolving disputes or tensions at every level need to be place.
- An **efficient and dynamic centre party geared towards supporting local units**. This means a decentralised structure in which the majority of human and financial resources are located at and dedicated to constituency/field level.
- **Devolution of authority** and decision making as individuals and local units develop and learn the necessary skills.
- **Excellent, networked/cloud based IT systems** with great user interfaces that are designed to facilitate user experience and are open-sourced and so can be cheaply and rapidly enhanced and adapted including using hack-days and harnessing the power of professionals and volunteers to innovate and adapts.
- **Excellent voter, membership and supporter data management** used as a cornerstone for effectively and efficiently relating to people, linking them with specific interests and/or activities as well as other members and activists.
- World class, robust **"Get Out The Vote"**, contacts systems and training that support effective and efficient elections operations.

### ***1.2.4 Resource management and fundraising***

- **Sustainable and sufficient financing** levels and robust resources management systems both in terms of revenue and expenditures.
- A **diversified base of funding sources**, from large, medium and small sized donators
- Fundraising and donating seen by members and staff as **part of and not the cost of** volunteering for and supporting the Party.

- Where local units are capable, increased authority over revenue and expenditure.

### ***1.3 What is missing?***

There are a number of areas where we think the project could benefit from greater development and emphasis. Recommendations for specific areas that could be further developed include:

- 1) **Setting out a stronger vision** of what an effective, functional and healthy Labour Party would be, building on the excellent problem identification set out in the document, this gives the basis for clear identification, prioritisation and sequencing of specific reform measures.
- 2) **More focus on the experience of membership** and engagement with the party, what the party offers members and supporters but also the paths, opportunities and ways of recruiting, retaining and activating supporters and members.
- 3) A more specific and developed set of structural changes needed to deliver the membership and field focused approach, particularly the details of devolution of human resources to CLPs, cutting out regional offices, devolving resources and decision making where parties have proven capacity and skills.
- 4) Greater emphasis on the finance and fundraising issues faced by the party

## 2 Section 2: Refounding Labour themes and suggestions

### 2.1 *Activists, members and supporters*

Different people become involved in political parties or movements for different reasons. The more ways of getting involved, the broader the Party's appeal, the greater number reached people, the better we campaign.

- **People are our greatest asset** and we need to facilitate people's contribution in as many different ways as possible, all of which can be valuable if properly contextualized. We should engage with people whether as activists (someone who actively campaigns on behalf of the party whether or not a member), a member (someone who has registered as a member of the party), or supporters (someone who identifies strongly with Labour but is not a paid up member).
- Supporters and activists who are not yet members could be allowed to attend all Labour events as guests, though perhaps without voting rights. **Specially arranged events for supporters** to encourage them to become paying members rather than going to a branch meetings might net better results. It is important that these events are not only about fundraising - they should also be about increasing the Party's social capital.
- **Learning more about our people** is crucial in order to cater for the interests, needs and backgrounds of potential supporters as well as new and existing members. This can be collected through phone banks, online and hard copy surveying and one-to-one interviews. Randomise polling of members should be considered and could be done by a polling company for a few thousand pounds.
- We recommend the review culminates in the creation of a new **Members' Service Unit** in Party HQ, whose task it is to ensure members are valued and involved, and which routinely reviews the member experience in different areas/contexts.
- **Better data** and information management is clearly central to this and is discussed further in the IT section below (ADD REF)
- New Members should be given an **enthusiastic and warm welcome**. New members should also be afforded personal contact, maybe during a phone call or even over a cup of tea or in the pub. In addition an electronic and/or hard copy welcome pack should be sent including information such as how the party works locally and nationally, who is responsible for what

and how they can be contacted and the different ways they can contribute (they should also be sent an aforementioned “skills and interests” survey).

- **Organise beyond geography.** For example, people should be able to engage with the party where they work, as well as where they live. They could also be involved through thematic networks such as health, education, environment, the economy. These could be organised at a level between constituencies and regions. These fora would have clear functions in terms of policy formulation, campaigns and elections.
- **Allow responsibility to devolve.** The party should encourage and facilitate the sharing of responsibility with those who want to become more active within the party. As their skills are developed there should be clear paths to greater activism and responsibility.
- **Use members’ skills.** Individual members' particular skills and connections outside the party need to be drawn on. First the party needs to find out what those are. The use of online "skills and interests" surveys is one simple and cheap means of doing this.
- Provide opportunities for **training**, particularly training which increases members' confidence and skills to engage with people outside the party, needs to be **central to the ordinary membership experience**. Active encouragement of women and minority engagement, mentoring and information sharing are all vital methods of expanding Party members’ capacity.
- Respect people’s lives not only in terms of logistics, the timings and accessibility of activities and meetings for example, but also in terms language used etc. For example it would help to set up support of groups currently under-represented, such as babysitting clubs for people with young children.

## ***2.2 Election and Community Campaigning***

Our principle for reform is that if Labour really is to be the party of the many not the few, the 'many' need to be at the centre of it. This means a more plural, social movement which acts as a **‘permanent campaign’** at the centre of activity in local communities. We need to expand the number of local groups engaged in our movement, and to increase and diversify the pool of people that Labour can draw on at every level. Labour needs to be about community campaigning first and foremost– **helping deliver change at the local and national level whether or not in power.**

- Community organising versus winning elections is a **false choice**. Some of the greatest concerns about the community organising comes from those who want the party to prioritise winning elections. This is understandable but misplaced. The notable examples of success in recent times have come from areas where many of the lessons of community organising and local campaigning have been adopted by the local Party.
- When properly organised and coordinated community campaigning will **benefit Labour electorally**. Community or issues-based campaigning by political parties has been shown to be the most effective way of significantly increasing the number of activists for elections.
- The current reliance on a **campaigning model** made up of councillors, officers and a tiny number of die-hards doing the vast bulk of electioneering is **dangerously narrow**. There are effective, friendly local parties with respectable membership numbers and good elected representatives where the level of activism remains low. Where activist levels are low the more experienced hard-core activists can more fruitfully use their time by temporarily taking a break from Voter ID in order to recruit and build their volunteer base. Such campaigns need to be consciously designed to ensure Labour has capacity to do more next time. All too often the goodwill created in a good campaign is allowed to dissipate.
- The **volunteers** delivering the campaign need to be afforded a **sense of ownership** and not made to feel that they are simply a resource to be expended by the candidate or leader of the campaign concerned. Where possible building up residents capacity to organize themselves into bodies like TRAs and Neighbourhood Watches are great opportunities to develop leaders and support for the Party. Doing more issues-based campaigning may ask more of our volunteers in terms of communicating with the public, but it is also much more **rewarding and motivating** for many. It builds people's confidence and commitment to speak with people about a specific issue rather than simple Voter ID.
- **Face-to-face contact** is the most effective way of getting both volunteer recruitment and electoral results. Leaflets are valuable tool but are better used to reinforce the campaigns than as a substitute for them.
- Providing **quality social space and activities**, that are not just seen as fundraisers but as reward for volunteers can also help increase their sense of camaraderie and belonging for further campaigning. It is also an opportunity for those people who may be reluctant to go to a formal meeting to meet existing activists in a more relaxed environment.

- **Community campaigns will not always benefit from being combined with Voter ID**, which can risk putting people off in the early stages. Creating a positive engagement with new people, building trust with them and then inviting them to Voter ID sessions can be a more beneficial approach.
- **London Citizens-style community organising** has a set of methods and practices than can be integrated/ adapted into such campaigns, for example one-to-one meetings, house meetings, public introductions, story-telling, reflections, approach to meetings, listening properly and community walks etc.
- Further, **once an activist base has been built a lot more becomes possible**, for example:
  - Joint-campaigning with other community groups on common issues.
  - Serious Voter ID work can be resumed, ideally with a issue-related link
  - As an election approaches those who have benefitted from and participated in the campaigns will hopefully help with the elections, in particular with efforts regarding those hardest to reach and "**Get Out The Vote**".
- **Decentralise financing** – fundraising and expenditure controls can allow local activists more autonomy and freedom to pursue effective methods.
- This whole approach represents a **big culture shift** from existing practice and would benefit from strong central support and guidance. Self-starting activists can come up against resistance to reform or new ideas within their local parties and incumbents do not always see the influx of new, unknown members as a good thing. This needs to be acknowledged and managed.

### ***2.3 Party structure and functions***

The **basic structure** of the ward and constituency Party **remains relevant and important**. However, the current arrangements are not ideally suited to the sort of campaign required of the party for the next decades. Key issues in terms of the central Party include:

- Reorientation of the central functions towards **servicing and supporting constituency and local activism rather than "command and control"**.

- **Flattening of the Party structure** by reducing layers of hierarchy. Particularly the permanent regional level. During a general election it may be a useful coordinating structure but otherwise there are real disadvantages both in terms of the duplication of resources and the absence of any direct communication between the field and HQ. Moving more resources to the constituencies or equivalent with paid local organisers combined with a strengthened central field team is the key to success in the future.
- The central field function should be to support and coordinate the paid organisers and ensure that a **feedback loop** is set-up that harnesses lessons learnt from the field and seeks to extend best practice across the country.
- As local parties prove their capability **responsibilities ought to be devolved**, but alongside strong centralised systems that make it easy to share and implement best practice.
- Bi-elections currently result in the vast majority of central resources being redirected there. Of course a surge in capacity and deployment of resources is needed to these high profile campaigns, but they should be boosting and complementing **a strong pre-existing local Party**.
- **Major role for training** and learning, accessible for both volunteers and staff.
- Other core HQ functions that are absent or depleted should be rebuilt including:
  - **Members Service Unit** specifically tasked to work on the needs and experience of members and supporters
  - an **attack and rebuttal** unit
  - a **highly skilled policy unit** which develops relationships with left leaning think tanks and the Party's own policy forums.
  - **electoral compliance advice** should be delegated to specialist lawyers to increase the reliability and accuracy as well as efficiency of response times
  - Small and major donor fundraising capacity needs to greatly enhanced, including to **support local parties to raise and manage their funds**
  - **Moving the leaders office to party HQ when in opposition**
  - The HQ should support and coordinate activities for the PLP, particularly when in opposition. This would include everything from **training new MPs**, helping with recruitment and HR issues, supporting office management, staff training and the circulation of best practice.

- **Structural reform alone rarely challenges values and behaviour effectively.** Management and cultural changes are needed to support and deliver reforms. Staff recruitment is central. While trust and commitment will always be important in staffing of political parties and offices, there should still fair, open and transparent recruitment processes. Given the need for a shift in the skills and location of staff and substantial restructuring, a process of re-applications by all staff should be seriously considered. Senior management practice may also need to be addressed.

## ***2.4 Local Party structure and role***

- Again, the basic CLP and local party structures are probably still the most appropriate organisational unit in most contexts, depending of course on the levels of activism/support, population density etc. Although the outline approach suggested above, of paid constituency level organisers and structured incremental devolution to local parties would of course benefit from increased resources this is not a pre-requisite as the model is prefaced on a redirection of existing resources. That said the model ought to be better equipped at raising social and financial capital through campaigning.
- Key aspects of local party functioning are addressed in "membership and elections" above and "the role of officials and representatives" and "meetings, events and fundraising" below. However the basis recommendation is:
  - Capacity and track record-based devolution of responsibility and authority, and better management of the relationships between Labour Groups and CLPs which are at times less effective and clear than they should be.
  - Foster and support responsibility and accountability at every level of the Party allow people to relate to different local parties as they choose. For example someone could be a member in one area but a supporter and activist in another. This should be acknowledged, accepted and facilitated.
  - A loosening up of how people can relate to the Party requires really effective data management systems so people can be directed to areas and places of interest.

## ***2.5 Meetings and events***

Much of what follows here seems to be statements of the obvious, but we have all sat through meetings that didn't follow these basic principles:

- **Focus on relationships** and activities as clear outcomes of meetings – be **friendly and inclusive to all**.
- Be clear from the beginning on the **purpose of the meeting/event** and how long it will last.
- Start with an introduction and use 'going round the table' to help develop relationships and given confidence to others.
- **Collectively agree some rules** at the beginning of the meeting and then stick to them (no phones, start/finish on time, allow other to speak, no speeches etc)
- Consider limiting/**separating formalities**, do them quickly or have them contained in less frequent meetings.
- **Ensure all are invited/can come along** (even if they don't have voting rights).
- **Consider all members/supporters meetings with good speakers** and on issue of interest/local relevance and consider combining with other wards, branches and organisations – both affiliates but things such as residents groups etc
- **End with action/recapping actions**
- Meet outside of meetings – that is how we generally learn to get on a trust each other.  
**Some socials should be set up as purely socials and not as fund raisers.**

## ***2.6 Print materials and literature***

Currently there is too much emphasis on print materials and literature when we know **their impact is limited and in fact declining**. Often centrally designed literature is left unused and undelivered. Face to face contact, as set out in the campaigning section, is clearly superior in terms of impact and efficiency of resources. However beyond rebalancing the time, money and effort invested in print and literature, there are also improvements to be made.

- Many CLPs are producing **clear, strong and locally relevant materials** which are integrated into broader campaigns and activities and from which others can learn and benefit.

- There are a number of **central tools for print production but uptake is very low**. This needs to be understood and the necessary changes made to increase uptake.
- A large number of **our members and activists have design, drafting and proof reading skills** that should be used to greater effect.
- The inclusion of **contact details** (that will be responded to) and those of local councillors, officers and MPs on literature should be automatic and clearly discernible.

## ***2.7 IT, new media tools and activities***

Like print and leaflets, neither technology nor new media are sufficient alone. Rather they need to be part of broader set of tools and activities for engaging and communicating with people in and outside the Party. **Generally as a party we are not 'early adopters' of new technology** and this has left current online approaches and systems not fit for purpose and their use unduly limited.

However, with the reductions in cost of cloud computing and open-sources approaches, there is an opportunity to **'leapfrog'** and learn from success (and limitations) of other campaigns such as the Australian Labour Party, the Obama campaign, Blue State Digital, Catalist, as well as campaigning and engagement techniques from for example 38 Degrees, Manchester United, Avaaz as well as experience in Trade Unions and local parties. **The Conservative party is investing heavily** in this area and we are at major risk of being left with legacy systems and legacy contracting that will help us lose elections. This 'leapfrog' should include:

- **Election and data management tools.** Major improvements are clearly possible in both the back and front ends here. Old fashioned user interfaces that separate volunteer databases, contact and membership lists etc are all too common whilst Voter ID and particularly volunteering information is often not retained. For example:
  - MembersNet should be the primary entry point for members, supporters and activists. It needs to be much easier to access and use (both for supporters and members of the public). **The risks of online access are outweighed by the potential for increased effectiveness.**

- **Contact Creator** should be overhauled so it is more stable and crash proof and usable on Macs and all browsers. More intuitive front ends and building voter ID APIs that work on peoples smart phones would be clear and simple improvements.
  - Really good and robust “electronic reading” and **Get Out the Vote systems** and tools are an absolute necessity.
  - These are also key tools for the collection of small donations, campaigns such as 38 Degrees raise £100,000 a month online.
- **Online communications** – while use of text, twitter, facebook, email, phone, mail are all part of the current mix, greater coordination (people choose how they want to be contacted) and more effective integration should be prioritised.
- **Specific suggestions** include:
    - learning from best practice email formats and practice (pithier and brighter)
    - use of quick fire rebuttal by twitter, mail and blog
    - focus on questions and creating interaction
    - up to date flicker pages, with daily updates
    - use of web-chats/conference calls with activists and supporters
    - set piece speeches, events, launches made available in real time online across twitter, facebook etc.
    - mini-docs/you tube clips of leader, at events, etc
    - use of info-graphics and data visualisations

## ***2.8 Office and role holders – volunteer officers, MPs, MEPs, AMs, Councillors and Candidates and selections***

Beyond the need to improve the pool of people who are interested and can be selected as candidates (for more on selections see below), there a number of areas that could help get the most out of peoples’ time and energy.

- Given the huge scope of variety in local parties, top down definitions of roles need to be handled cautiously. However there is a need for **clarity around job descriptions**, expectations and roles which are shared with supporters and member and made public at all levels.
- Ensuring information and contact are **publicly available and up to date**, including those of all officers, candidates etc (e.g. finding your branch officers should be easy as a member of the party, and this could and should be done centrally on the Labour website).
- **Much greater provision of support, resources and training for local officials** as well as paid elected officials, with a particular emphasis on fundraising and community organising functions.
- We would urge caution towards simplistic approaches to contracting and targeting and urge greater focus on incentives and support. If contracts and targets are not clearly enforceable and meaningful to those who hold individuals to account they will have little positive effect and become simply another box to tick.
- **Incentive based approaches** might include benchmarking such as making available aggregate or ranked levels of Voter ID/contact rates for local councillors and wards/branches to increase activity.
- However a **focus on cultural change** is likely to have much more sustainable impact on official's activity levels and behaviour than performance contracts.

Of course leadership of the party matters, but crucial to improving the impact of our officers and role holders is improving quality of candidates and selection processes across the board. The need to increase the **diversity of our candidates** is widely acknowledged, but the lack of activists to draw on has made this unnecessarily difficult. The following applies to all levels of selection, but the emphasis here particularly on parliamentary processes.

- While there are always one or two last minute and exceptional situations, the **scope for imposed or parachuted candidates** should be limited to those 1 or 2 seats rather than being the established means of promoting centrally favoured candidates.
- Greater investment and emphasis on supporting and training candidates prior to parliamentary selections including through reviving and extending organisations such as Emily's list.

- Shorter parliamentary selection timetables and the introduction of spending caps on selections in order to reduce the cost and therefore need for significant levels of personal resources to become a candidate.
- For future Party leadership elections we would suggest a move to equality – one member one vote.

## ***2.9 Annual Party Conference, National Policy Forum & Policy Making***

On the one hand, both Conference and the NPF are often regarded as 'talking shops' that need to be managed to avoid embarrassing news headlines or the emergence of policy proposals that are neither politically or economically viable. On the other hand, some see the changing of the rules and the full re-enfranchisement of the membership as the 'solution' to a perceived democratic crisis in the Party. Clearly we need to find a way through this tension.

- Ultimately **increasing activism** and the participation of a broad range of people is the way to address this. A large, vibrant, active Party is much harder to infiltrate and capture and attempts to do so are much easier to manage. However, this also needs to be accompanied by central party prepared to trust the membership and allow debate and processes to run their course.
- An important practical step is the **reform of the Conference Arrangements Committee** as the current rules deliberately disallow much debate, especially on contemporary issues. The committee needs to become much more open and transparent and respectful in its operations.
- **We have enormous public policy expertise and public service experience in the Party and our affiliates.** This clearly differentiates us from the other political parties and is a resource we are not currently exploiting. Building subject and policy area networks are a clear way of using this enormous advantage, as a way of both developing and testing policy.
- **Alternative approaches to policy and manifesto development need to be explored.** If the NFP were the place where the leader and the central party coordinated professional and policy expertise it could draw up policy options and a preferred manifesto to be offered to members and supporters to debate, at annual and other conferences. Even in opposition

the leadership is ultimately responsible for setting out a policy programme, and the primacy of this function needs to be preserved. However, serious and considered concerns need to be heard. It is surely possible to develop a system and understanding that thoughtful and serious concerns are accommodated unless (the leadership) can put very strong case for not doing so. This would also manage the issue of raised expectations regarding engagement and influence that cannot then be fulfilled and results in resentment and factionalism.

- The **purpose of conference** should be more explicitly about **peer networking** and lesson learning, rather than set-piece events or lengthy floor debates.
- The structure of multiple conferences such as women's and local government conferences should also be **revitalised and broadened out**, allowing both more routes and opportunities for people to engage with each other and the formal party structures and staff.

## ***2.10 Fundraising***

Primarily a **much greater emphasis** is needed on this as an important and mainstream activity of the Party at every level. There are a series of practical but also cultural barriers that need to be examined:

- **Diversification** – The Party remains vulnerable with an excessive reliance on a small number of large donors. Clearly the major fundraising function could benefit from investment and prioritising (the Lib-Dems have out-fundraised us in the post-2010 election period), as well as a renewed focus on small donors and online contributions.
- **Culture of best practice** in fundraising – it is not always seen as an absolutely central function of the Party. This needs to change at all levels from HQ, constituency level organisers to MPs and local officers. This is perhaps initially a matter of training in techniques that would give people confidence to focus more on this and be successful and a signalling from the leadership of the Party that fundraising is crucial and acceptable part of being a member or supporter.
- Fundraising needs to be integrated with the focus on local and community campaigning. Donations to a locally based Labour campaign on a particular issue should be encouraged and not seen as 'taking money from the centre'. **There have also been examples where local businesses and community groups have been keen to partner on such campaigns.** This is

about developing a habit and culture of financial contribution from which core functions will in turn benefit.

- One approach worth exploring might be formalised **financial twinning/redistribution** between wealthier and less wealthy constituencies. Wealthy CLP's (often, non-Labour seats) could explicitly financially support key seats. Structured well this would give a sense of ownership and facilitate engagement and as sense that money is well spent, in turn increasing fundraising.

### **3 Section 3: Annexes**

#### **3.1 Original document Labour Values**

##### **In defence of politics**

Politics is under fire. The expenses scandal has badly damaged public confidence in the political class. There is a widespread belief that politics doesn't matter, that parties are all the same, and that the business of government, whether local or national, is a matter for a detached political elite, not ordinary people.

We do believe in politics. It is the way we act together, as communities, as a nation. It is a choice to use words rather than weapons to resolve our disputes. Politics is not just about finding the best managers for public services or the right balance for fiscal policy. It is not, in the end, about technical fixes. Even 'perfect' policy remains instrumental – we still need politics to work out what policy is *for*. In a democracy, there is no alternative: we have to make politics work.

We understand why the public has become cynical and disengaged. Some of us have felt pretty cynical and disengaged ourselves. But we think it is now time to take action, to forge a new kind of politics in the UK. Politics must be about values, and about people. Cynicism only works for the privileged few who benefit from the status quo. The majority of people want to see progress – a more stable and sustainable economy, improved public services, and greater levels of equality and fairness.

We believe that the Labour party is the primary, but not only, vehicle for the progressive cause in the UK. If it remains true to its values – equality, fairness, community, internationalism – it should be the natural party of government, because it is Labour that shares and represents the interests and values of the majority of British people.

But Labour also has to change. We need a fundamental debate on how to put our values back at the heart of our politics. And we need a fundamental debate about the future of the party to ensure that our activists and supporters are valued, for their views as well as their effort. Labour needs to focus less on policy and personality, and more on politics and people.

This short paper is an appeal for the party to have these debates. We do not wish to prejudice the outcome of either debate but set out here some thoughts, particularly on the latter, on the principles for moving towards a more inclusive party.

##### **The last 13 years**

Labour has achieved much in the last 13 years. Unparalleled investment in public services, the introduction of the minimum wage, support for the poorest families through the tax credit system – these have been the result of Labour values put into practice through policy.

But, in other ways, Labour has failed to live its values. Inequality has grown. Most fundamentally, Labour has failed to change the terms of the political debate. Too often, Labour policymakers have suggested that there is an objective, 'correct' answer that can be reached, if only we could gather

enough evidence. But politics is an art, not a science – as much storytelling as statistics. The result of this technocratic approach to politics has been the failure to create a movement which converts the progress we have made into solid electoral support. At every election since 1997, Labour has lost votes. From 13.5 million at the high watermark to 10.7 million in 2001 and 9.6 million in 2005.

Over the same period, we have lost more than half our membership. As our party has reached the pinnacle of its short history with an unprecedented period in office, our movement has withered on the vine. Some members have left over irreconcilable policy differences, but many others have slipped away feeling unheard and unwanted. Labour has governed with head, rather than heart. We have now found the limits of this approach.

But the UK needs progressive politics now more than ever. The political watershed has coincided with an economic one. The economic model of the last two decades has been shown to be fundamentally flawed. The UK needs a new economy that is fit for the future. The state has the capacity to affect this economy, not simply be subject to it. And yet, on this, the great question of our times, politics has been largely silent.

### **Time for renewal**

We want to build a new, positive politics in the Labour party. A politics that rejects fear and self-interest as a starting point for policy. A hopeful, optimistic politics based on the common interests and bonds between people, and on the values of fairness and equality that most British people share.

If this is going to happen, the party now needs fundamental reform in two key areas: putting our values at the heart of our politics, and changing our culture and structures to ensure that we truly value our activists and supporters.

We recognise that we are not the best-placed group for a detailed discussion of Labour's political priorities. New ideas should come from the bottom up, aided by the work of membership organisations such as Compass, the Fabian Society, and Progress. But we are clear that this discussion needs to take place. We need to make a different case for our policies, a case which draws on our values and beliefs. A political case, rather than a technocratic one.

But, as a diverse, non-factional group of activists with a belief in progressive politics and a love for the Labour party, we believe we are as well placed as anyone to set out the problems the party faces, the principles to apply in addressing them, and what this might feel like in practice.

We do not pretend to have all the answers, but we do know that we want to be part of a party that is very different to the one we have today.

### **Our party and our people**

There is much that is good about Labour's party organisation at the moment – in many parts of the country our local branch network is still strong, active, and sustained by passionate and committed

party members. But the party is also troubled in significant ways. We have lost touch with our local communities, and, as a result, we have lost talent, members, and cash.

In order to deliver the new politics that the UK needs, Labour needs radically to change its role in the local community and to re-imagine the way it relates to its activists and supporters.

This paper briefly examines three areas for reform. We believe the party needs to reorient itself around three key principles:

- A local, diverse movement for change
- A valued network of activists and supporters
- A more open party

In each area, we set out what we currently see as the problem, a principled reason for reform, and some ideas for what the future might look like.

#### *A local, diverse movement for change*

The average local Constituency Labour Party has a membership of just under 300, far lower in many rural areas. Local activity is normally organised around regular meetings – at the constituency or branch level – and canvassing or leafleting operations around election time.

Where there is council representation, elected officials engage in the local community through casework. But, aside from exceptional circumstances, there is little Party engagement in the local community on an ongoing basis.

Our principle for reform is that if Labour really is to be the party of the many not the few, the 'many' need to be at the centre of it. This means a more plural, social movement which acts as a 'permanent campaign' at the centre of activity in local communities. We need to expand the number of local groups engaged in our movement, and to increase and diversify the pool of people that Labour can draw on at every level. Labour needs to be about community campaigning first and foremost – the party should be delivering change at the local and national level, whether or not it is in power.

We need to remember that it is face-to-face contact with our neighbours that makes for successful politics and delivers results. That means re-connecting with them, not just leafleting them. It means being visible and alive in our communities, not just gathering 'Voter ID'. It means knowing what we have to offer – what's in it for them – when we knock on somebody's door. Building authentic relationships directly with people ensures that the party remains relevant, cuts through the media noise, and can withstand the attacks of those who would see us fail. Person-to-person contact is also the most effective tool we have to win elections.

As such, the party's precious financial resources should be poured into field organising. The recent emphasis on contact rates rather than billboard advertising signposts the way ahead for the party. Local parties need to be supported to improve their communities directly, as well as to campaign for Labour at election times. There should be no false choice between these two tasks – they are mutually reinforcing. The party should see a key part of its role as supporting local members to deliver high-quality community campaigns that achieve real change.

The roots of the party are in community organising and social networks. The future needs to be about re-discovering those roots, and mixing them in with new techniques and technology.

#### *A valued network of activists and supporters*

From the point of view of individual members, it can be hard to get involved in the Labour party. A new member, or an existing member recently arrived in an area, can find that their local party does not reach out to them. Even active and successful local parties are often not proactive enough about getting new people involved. At the other end of the spectrum, some new members can find themselves overwhelmed with meetings to attend and leaflets to deliver.

Our principle for reform is that the party should value all its members and see them as its future. This means more and better engagement with our activists and supporters so they feel valued and empowered to make change locally.

A new approach should be more centred on the interests, needs and backgrounds of potential supporters and members. That means providing a much greater variety of ways for people to engage with the party on their own terms, and in the ways that suit and work for them. For example, people should be able to engage with the party where they work, as well as where they live, and through thematic networks as well as geographic ones. There need to be clear routes towards more responsibility for those who want to become more active within the party.

Members need training and support – the party should see the creation of effective and committed campaigners as part of its core purpose, both so that they can be more effective for the party and so that they can deliver real change in their communities. Being a member of the Labour party should be rewarding and fun – we need to thank people for the work that they do, and provide spaces where people can become friends as well as colleagues.

A more engaged and active membership needs to be more involved in the party's decision-making at all levels. Our people need to feel they have a stake and a say. We should encourage more 'all member' meetings to take important decisions at local level. We should seriously explore changing how we select our candidates. We should give priority to proposals that are backed by strong community support. And we should ensure that the way we make decisions about policy, strategy and leadership is transparent and democratic.

#### *A more open party*

New Labour's success has been based on a command-and-control operation managed from the centre. Policies have often been produced, like a rabbit from a hat, with little consultation of the membership or its democratic bodies. Up and down the country, members feel that their voice has not been heard on wide range of issues.

The 2010 election campaign, with its emphasis on 'word of mouth' and the use of diffuse tools like the online phone bank, has ceded some control back to local parties and membership. But there is still a long way to go.

Our principle for reform is a more dispersed and open structure within the party to allow greater dissent and debate and provide incentives for innovative, locally-focused activism.

Although the centralisation of Labour party power was a logical response at the time to the chaos of the 1980s, the time has come to turn the page and create what has been called a 'cultural *Glasnost*'. In order to achieve this, the party must devolve both decision-making and funding to more local levels. This is not to say, however, that the party should simply hand over the sum of strategic decision-making and budgeting to the party at-large. The best modern campaigning organisations combine a mixture of local engagement with a centrally determined strategy.

Centrally written direct mail and leaflets should give way to a new party campaigning culture of local messaging, face-to-face contact and mass participation. There should be incentives for good local performance so that extra resources are given to those CLPs that increase membership, gain better than average swings, and achieve the objectives of local campaigns.

The party's approach to fundraising should also be improved. The party's previous fundraising record, reliant upon the good will of donors and the good luck of staffers, must be replaced with a modern and professional system which emphasises the science of fundraising in terms of donor identification, research, cultivation and solicitation. The party's financial future cannot be left to a handful of high value donors and union contributions, no matter how generous both may be. Putting the party's finances on a firm footing will require the active participation of the party's political and organisational leadership, and the implementation of a full-scale fundraising overhaul to re-weight party funding between high value individuals, mass membership, union support and funding from less traditional sources.

### **The task ahead**

The Labour party – like all collective organisations – is forced, in the twenty-first century, to cope with two profound shifts. The first is the rejection of the atomised, individualised world of the Thatcher era and a new understanding of the importance of social bonds and social networks. The second is the end of the top-down media world. Both provide great opportunities for vibrant, membership organisations, but they also require serious reform.

We believe that the challenges at the start of this century – global recession, climate change, and distrust in politics – demand a progressive response. But we will only ensure that the future is shaped by our values if our vehicle for change – the Labour party – itself responds and changes. We must reform the party if we want to transform politics.

Key to this, once again, is listening to and understanding the people we claim to represent. That means focusing our energy on local organisations that involve local people and build campaigns together for a collective goal; it means bringing diverse groups into our campaigns and organisations and keeping them there by valuing their contribution and effort; and it means ensuring that the funds and freedom to do this are given away by our central party, particularly to those who prove most adept at rising to the challenge.

Our politics will only change if our party does first.

The time has come for Labour to show what and whom it values.

### **3.2 Jon Wilsons submission**

#### **ORIGINAL LV SUBMISSION TO PETER HAIN**

**Labour Values. February 2011.**

**First Submission to Peter Hain's Review of Party Organisation**

##### **The Problem**

Labour will only renew itself if it becomes active and visible in every community. Labour needs to fight and win elections. But it will only do that if it builds connections to communities across Britain; not just running 'campaigns for the state to do things, but campaigns that achieve things themselves', as Ed Miliband puts it.

As it is now, the Labour party is not in a fit state to become this kind of nationwide community campaigning force. Nationally, the party has become a mechanism for broadcasting messages to the public rather than a means of mass community engagement. At their most active, local parties efficiently took on this role, delivering leaflets and organising GOTV. But the absence of a broader attempt to engage with the public – except in limited pockets - means our activist base has shrunk to the careerist and those old enough to remember when Labour was a vital part of community life. Many areas of party life are dominated by routine, purpose-less procedure, or have become nothing but a route to selection for local or national office.

##### **The Past and the Present**

To change, we need a radical re-founding of our party, in which the active role of members, and the connections they make to people outside the party are placed at the centre of all our activities from the local branch meeting to the operation of the leader's office.

We can, though, take heart from the fact that Labour's present is indebted to its past. The Labour party was not founded as a machine to manage state power. It grew from a network of organisations rooted in particular communities, including trade unions, socialist societies and co-operatives, all of which were concerned to protect the lives and livelihoods of ordinary people in a highly unequal, deeply class-ridden society. Labour's history of community organising is stitched into the fabric of the party through its relationship to affiliated organisations. Many of those organisations still work to further Labour's cause by organising in local communities and workplaces as well as campaigning for governmental change. Labour's revival will come as it renews these connections, and develops new links with groups of people putting Labour values into practice even if they aren't formal members.

Here, we can also take heart from the increase of issue-based organising and campaigning, whether the growth of park friends' groups, campaigns against coalition cuts to local services or for the Living Wage. The urge many people have to get together and make life better where they live and work demonstrates we don't live in a selfish, atomised society, but one in which Labour's values are dominant. Labour needs to respond by valuing its own members as people who can make a difference in their own communities, enabling them to team up with local activists and lead campaigns that make a difference.

##### **Community Organising vs Winning Elections: A False Choice**

The biggest opposition to the leadership's current emphasis on the importance of community organising comes from those who want the party to prioritise winning elections above community organising. We see this as a false choice.

Labour Values includes people who hold a range of different views about the purpose of community organising; some regard it primarily as a means for Labour to win governmental power. Others see it as a way of directly creating social change itself.

What both emphasise is the need for Labour to have a long-term, deep-rooted link to the communities it seeks to serve if it is going to possess any sort of power. Those connections come from the party being out there and active, being seen by local residents as a force that makes a difference. Labour will only have the volunteers it needs for canvassing and GOTV at election time if it has mobilised a network of activists in Labour campaigns at other moments in the electoral cycle.

### **Where will change come from?**

In a word, our members. We think the process of party renewal needs to focus on the experience of party membership, and consider particularly how we can ensure Labour members have a central place in the life of local communities.

Fundamentally that means members need to be valued. The individual member's experience of party membership needs to be a two-way process of interaction with the party. Party membership should be based on reciprocal relationships based on solidarity and trust, not instructions issued from party HQ and then cascaded down. Members shouldn't feel as if they're vehicles for delivering leaflets or voting fodder. Each individual members' particular skills and connections outside the party need to be drawn in to Labour activism, so the party needs a way to find out what those are. Training, particularly training which increases members' confidence to engage with people outside the party, needs to be central to the ordinary membership experience.

### **Review of Members' experience**

Labour Values will submit a detailed series of suggestions about how the party can both re-engage members and connect to communities when Peter's reform consultation document is published.

To begin with though, we recommend an independent survey of ordinary members' experience of the party be commissioned. The survey will gauge the nature and scale of the problem.

- The review needs to focus on the experience of new members and existing members who are not part of the party hierarchy. It cannot be conducted through the party's structures.
- Data can be collected a number of different ways
  - o a phone-bank run by volunteers after the May elections, targeting new and existing members at random
  - o a 'mystery shopper' exercise, to find out how someone who joins the party is treated in different constituencies
  - o Peter and his team sitting with a focus-group selected from new and long-standing members
  - o hiring an opinion poll company to do a survey of Labour members at random. YouGov can certainly do this at a cost of £4k
- We recommend the review culminates in the creation of a new Members' Service Unit in Party HQ, whose task it is to ensure members are valued and involved, and which routinely reviews the member experience in different areas.

## Questions

We propose the follow questions for Peter's review:

### *Members' Experience of the Party*

What should a new member's experience be? How can the national and local party improve the way it interacts with new members?

How should the national and local party interact with existing members?

What should a Labour activist spend their activist time doing? How could it be made more productive?

How can the party better support members to make sure the time they can volunteer for Labour is useful?

How should the party support activists in areas where there is little or no Labour representation?

### *Connection with the Public?*

How can we best put Labour values into practice in the places we live and work? How should the party be organised to best do that?

How can the local Labour party best engage with the public?

What should the party do to support people who live in areas without Labour representation?

How can elected representatives better involve the public in their role?

### *Structures, Rules and Hierarchies*

Do its rules and procedures get in the way of the party engaging better with members and the public?

What role should regional offices and national Labour HQ play?

Do we need different personnel to make this a reality?

## **3.3 Selected recent articles written by Labour Values members**

<http://labourvalues.org.uk/we-don%E2%80%99t-have-to-choose-between-the-party-and-community-organising/>

<http://labourvalues.org.uk/organising-to-win-how-does-labour-reconnect-with-communities/>

<http://www.labourlist.org/labour-values-how-to-reconnect-and-become-a-mass-participation-m>

<http://www.progressonline.org.uk/articles/article.asp?a=5989>

<http://www.leftfootforward.org/2010/09/community-campaigning-is-labour%E2%80%99s-messy-future/>