

# Introduction from Gordon Brown Leader of the Labour Party

photo: C. Smith



On the 24th June I was elected Leader of the Labour Party. I want to thank you as a member of our party for this great honour and responsibility.

Immediately, I want to begin a dialogue about how together we can renew and rebuild our party.

All of us joined the Labour Party because we see it as the vehicle to give expression to our values - and our vision of a good society.

We know and value the fact that political parties are an integral part of a thriving democracy.

But we know that while the British people are increasingly politically interested, joining pressure groups and campaigning on local and global issues, traditional party political activity has never been so low.

So just as in the past we renewed our party in preparation for government, now the new circumstances we face mean we must reform our party again.

I want a policy making process that honours the fact that all of us have joined the Labour Party to make a contribution.

We must be clearer about the importance of party membership, and recognise more explicitly the responsibility it brings for shaping the future direction of our party.

So I propose new rights for members to be consulted on policy and a new duty on the National Policy Forum to involve and engage the widest possible audience in policy discussions. This will mean an obligation on the National Policy Forum to consult members on policy issues.

Because I want every member to have the opportunity to take part in policy debate we will provide more support to local Labour parties so that policy forums can be held in every constituency. There will be wider use

of local policy forums on key issues regularly throughout the year and we will make better use of technology to allow for regular consultations on contemporary issues.

I also want to strengthen Annual Conference's role in directing the National Policy Forum by giving Annual Conference representation on the National Policy Forum. Where issues of policy arise at Annual Conference we will oblige the National Policy Forum to consult the membership including the individual and affiliated membership and the public so that our decision-making can be informed by the widest possible cross section of opinion.

And because there will be a new duty on the party as a whole to involve and engage members in the making of our policy programme, the programme will be voted on by the whole membership in the future.

We need to turn outwards and draw those who share our values but not our party into our work. We must become a focal point for community concerns and action, listening to and working with residents in every locality in pursuit of social justice.

So alongside these new rights for members to be consulted and involved, we will provide more support for local Labour Parties to do what the best Labour parties do locally now: to involve the public in the widest possible way.

Local parties will be empowered to consult, involve and engage their local communities in debate and dialogue about future policy.

So this time of change must also be a time for renewal.

I believe that it is time to fundamentally reform the way we the Labour Party, listen to the British people, and involve them and engage with their needs and aspirations.

By seeking as party members to engage more with the public and by placing the membership in the driving seat of doing so and of shaping our policies for the future, we can usher in a new era of participation where Labour is renewed, speaking to and reflecting the concerns and aspirations of the British people.

Throughout the summer we will consult on these reforms - reforms which make the Labour Party the listening party and show the whole of Britain that involving and engaging people is at the heart of our desire and determination to serve the public best.

I look forward to discussing these ideas with you in the future.



**Gordon Brown MP**  
**Leader of the Labour Party**

# Overview

There should be a duty on the Labour Party itself to consult, involve and engage the membership of the party as we make our policies. And there should be a duty on local Labour parties to forge connections with all local community groups in their area.

To fulfill these duties, we need to modernise and adapt the roles and responsibilities of the National Policy Forum (NPF) and Annual Conference to ensure they function more effectively and facilitate the widest possible engagement of our membership.

This document sets a path forward to meet these challenges through:

1. Involving every member in policy making with a commitment to give greater support to local Labour Parties in holding Policy Forums and creating a duty on the NPF to better consult, engage and involve party members in policy discussions.
2. A strengthening of local policy forums and the NPF: including strengthening the NPF with a regular workplan and meeting schedule, an open and constant dialogue with ministers and a greater ability to provide feedback to party members and stakeholders.
3. Strengthening the role of Annual Conference in directing the work of the

NPF. The Joint Policy Committee (JPC) will take on an enhanced executive function in relation to the operation of the NPF and the Partnership in Power (PiP) process, meeting every two months. A new group of JPC Officers will lead the committee and have regular meetings with government ministers to ensure ongoing dialogue. Annual Conference will be given a more substantial role in directing and monitoring the work of the NPF. Twelve NPF representatives will be directly elected by Conference in order to reinforce the links between the two institutions in light of a new contemporary issues process.

4. Giving all members a say on the policy programme. The final policy documents agreed by the National Policy Forum will be the subject of an One Member One Vote OMOV ballot.
5. Support for local parties to better engage local communities.

**All party members are invited to have their say on the reforms set out in this document.**

**The closing date for receipt of submissions is noon, Friday 14 September 2007.**

# 1. Involving every party member in policy-making

Our policy-making process must honour the fact that we have all joined the Labour Party to make a contribution.

Under new proposals we will ensure that every member has the opportunity to contribute and engage in policy discussions.

We will provide support so that policy forums can be held in every constituency and every member will be invited to take part in our policy discussions.

The NPF will be strengthened to better involve and engage party members in policy formation.

There will be a new duty on the Labour Party to more widely engage and consult all members in policy discussions. This duty would include:

- Greater support for CLPs to hold local policy forums in each constituency.
- Regional Policy Forums every year.
- An invitation to every member to take part in policy discussions.
- More support for stakeholder representatives on the NPF including

providing NPF members with up-to-date briefings on government policy.

- More opportunities for party members and the NPF to debate current as well as future policy.
- More feedback on policy submissions so that members can follow the debates and see how their concerns have been discussed by the NPF and the policy commissions.
- A new requirement that all party members are consulted on the final policy programme.

**Proposal 1:** Creating a duty on the NPF to better consult, engage and involve all party members in policy discussions.

## 2. Strengthening the NPF

### The role of the NPF

Over the last ten years, PiP has demonstrated that party members and affiliates are keen to engage in positive, wide-ranging policy discussions.

The final policy programme agreed at Warwick in 2004 demonstrated the strength of the NPF in formulating a party programme which all members can unite around.

However, despite the successes of the NPF, party members want to be more involved in discussing long-term policy challenges, and to see the results of that involvement better reflected in policy outcomes.

In 2005 the NEC and NPF reviewed the working of the PiP process and recommended a number of improvements, including increased opportunity for real time discussions of policy issues, greater ministerial engagement with the NPF's institutions, and more structured and deliberative work plans for the NPF's policy commissions.

But there is still more that could be done to address the main concerns raised by party members - in particular what happens to submissions that are made and how members are informed of the discussions

and decisions taking place within the policy commissions and at the NPF. There is still a feeling among some members that submissions just disappear into a 'black hole' and that the commissions do not provide enough feedback.

Specifically, the NPF would be strengthened by:

- More regular meetings of the PiP institutions, including the NPF and a new executive of the NPF, to ensure greater governmental accountability and an open and constant dialogue on key policy issues.
- A clear timetable of consultation on documents and greater visibility for the NPF's policy commissions.
- More opportunities for party members and the NPF to debate current as well as future policy.
- Using new technology there will be better communication with members on the discussions of the NPF and policy commissions. There will be more communication between NPF reps and CLPs.
- A new PiP Secretariat should be established to provide greater support to Local Policy

Forums and more feedback on policy submissions so that members can follow the debates and see how their concerns have been discussed by the NPF and the policy commissions.

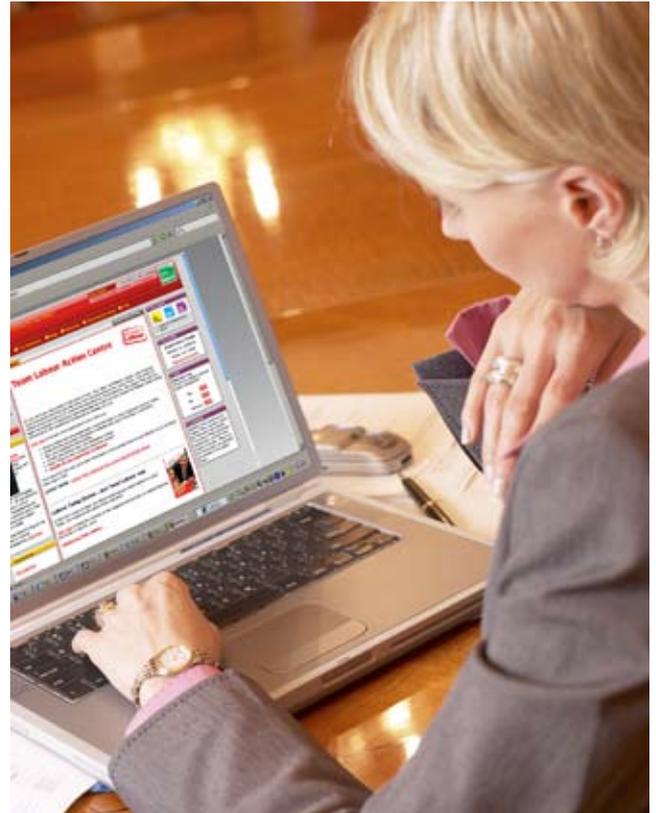
- Through new technology, such as MpURLs, members will be given direct access to their NPF representatives.
- Annual Conference will have a voice on the NPF and a new power to direct the priority issues for the NPF.

**Proposal 2:** Strengthen the NPF with a regular workplan and meeting schedule, an open and constant dialogue with ministers and a greater ability to provide feedback to party members and stakeholders.

## The role of the JPC – an executive committee for the NPF

The JPC was established as the steering body for the whole PiP process. It is composed of the NEC and government co-convenors of policy commissions, the Leader and Deputy Leader and additional representatives from the NPF. It is proposed that the role of the JPC be improved so as to take on an executive day-to-day function in respect of the NPF and PiP, able to take decisions as necessary, similar to the role performed by the NEC.

To address contemporary concerns and ensure the party is kept informed of



government policy developments, the JPC would meet every two months, on a model similar to the NEC. As appropriate, the JPC would receive reports from the JPC officers, from government and NEC co-convenors on the work of their commissions, and on policy discussions held in response to party submissions.

**Proposal 3:** The JPC will take on an enhanced executive function in relation to the operation of the NPF and the PiP process, meeting every two months.

## 3. Annual Conference

Annual Conference plays an important role in the life of the Labour Party. Under these proposals Annual Conference will take on a more substantial role in directing and monitoring the work of the NPF.

Annual Conference, through a new and improved contemporary issues process, would be able to identify particular issues of concern or interest to the party that would benefit from further debate.

Conference would have the authority to instruct the NPF to examine these issues in detail through a new process which is set out below.

### A new contemporary issues process

Party units are currently entitled to submit a 'contemporary resolution' to each Annual Conference on an issue of interest to them. This issue must have arisen in the period immediately prior to Conference and not had the opportunity to be discussed by the policy commissions and NPF that year.

However, there is widespread acceptance of the limitations of a resolution based policy making process - this was the reason we established PiP in the first place. Since its introduction a decade ago, the contemporary

resolutions process has however had a mixed record. There is feeling across the party that on one hand, the process has been used to bypass the deliberative and consensual platform carefully agreed by the NPF over the year, and on the other hand, the process has also left many members feeling that issues of interest or concern to them have not been listened to. In both instances this process has failed to resolve these issues satisfactorily.

So under these proposals each Constituency Labour Party and Affiliate would still be able to submit one contemporary issue, rather than a resolution, for inclusion in a priorities ballot that takes place at the beginning of Annual Conference. The issues would still be debated on Conference floor throughout Conference week.

In voting for the contemporary issue to be looked at in more detail, Conference is obliging the NPF and the JPC to ensure that a detailed investigation into specific areas of policy, agreed by Conference, is carried out - where stakeholders will be invited to provide detailed evidence and engage in ongoing debate.

There are instances where such an approach has been undertaken by the NPF. For example the Sustainable Communities

Commission established a sub group on social housing after the debate at Annual Conference 2005. This sub-group has made substantial progress in exploring the future role and funding of social housing, and the part that affordable housing in creating sustainable, mixed communities. The group has taken written and verbal evidence from a number of sources, representing a full range priorities and viewpoints, on the problems that exist and potential directions which policy can take in order to solve them. This has proved a very constructive approach, and there is broad consensus in the group on the core aims of policy. The group intends to report back to the policy commission and wider NPF in the near future. This approach offers an excellent example of how contemporary issues could be managed in the future.

With the new relationship between Annual Conference and the NPF and the new contemporary issues process, it is important to reinforce the links between these institutions.

It is therefore proposed that every year Annual Conference shall directly elect, twelve representatives to the NPF, increasing the total membership of that body to 205. Six representatives will be elected from the affiliates section and six from the CLP section, and a 50 per cent quota for women shall apply. The representatives will serve for one year and will complement the work of the other NPF representatives in ensuring a cohesive, consultative and consensual approach to Labour's policy-making process.

**Proposal 4:** Annual Conference to be given a more substantial role in directing and monitoring the work of the NPF. Twelve NPF representatives will be directly elected by Conference in order to reinforce the links between the two institutions in light of the new contemporary issues process.

**Proposal 5:** A new contemporary issues process through which party units would be able to submit issues, following proper consultation, for consideration in the priorities ballot at Annual Conference. Each issue that succeeds in the ballot will be debated at Conference and be included in a work programme in the relevant policy commission.

## 4. Giving all members a say on the policy programme

As presently structured, at the conclusion of the final year of the Partnership in Power cycle the final policy documents - which contribute to the subsequent general election manifesto - are put to Annual Conference for approval. At the final stage, the wider party is therefore prevented from having input and an opportunity to indicate its view on the policy documents that contribute to the party's general election platform, upon which party members will campaign.

In 1993 the Labour Party agreed the principle of OMOV for the election of Party Leader. In 1996 the 'Road to the Manifesto' document was put to the whole membership in an OMOV ballot.

It is therefore proposed that the policy programme be subject to an OMOV ballot once a Parliament. So the final policy document that has been agreed through a proper process of consultation at the final NPF will therefore be made the subject of an OMOV ballot.

As a result of these changes, the party membership as a whole would assume responsibility for the agreement and adoption of the manifesto programme. In order for the final policy documents to be ready for consideration by party members,

outstanding policy issues for decision will be resolved at the final NPF that considers the documents.

The existing Clause V stakeholder meeting to agree the final wording of the manifesto will continue to take place according to the existing timetable.

**Proposal 6:** The final policy documents agreed by the NPF will be the subject of an OMOV ballot.

## 5. Support for local parties to better engage local communities

As well as a new duty on the party to actively engage, consult and involve members in policy, we will provide greater support for local parties to build stronger connections with local communities.

The Constitution of the Labour Party places an obligation on us to work in pursuit of our aims with trade unions and co-operatives societies as well as voluntary groups and other bodies.

We should expand this obligation so that the Labour Party not only has a duty to consult its members in policy making but also that local parties make stronger contact and stronger connection with all our communities.

- This duty on local parties, Labour Groups and other party stakeholders would require them to consult their members and the communities in which they are based. This was the original principle behind PiP
- Local parties should work to foster greater community engagement in Labour's policy discussions through the holding of local policy forums, ensuring the views and priorities of local people and organisations are reflected in policy submissions.



- Local parties should ensure individual party members are able to make a contribution to policy discussions.

**Proposal 7:** Support for local parties and Labour Groups to consult and engage their communities.

# Summary of proposals

**Proposal 1:** A commitment to give greater support to local Labour Parties in holding Policy Forums and creating a duty on the NPF to better consult, engage and involve party members in policy discussions.

**Proposal 2:** Strengthen the NPF with a regular workplan and meeting schedule, an open and constant dialogue with ministers and a greater ability to provide feedback to party members and stakeholders.

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by Gordon Brown  
Leader of the Labour Party

# Extending and renewing party democracy

**new Labour**  
for Britain

## Have your say

**Below are some issues for further consideration. I want to hear from as many people as possible about how they think these changes can most effectively be implemented.**

### Issues to consider:

1. What is the best way for local parties to engage with and reach out to local communities?
2. We want to share best practice - how has your constituency engaged with its local community and local activist; how has your affiliated organisation consulted with its members?
3. How do we reinforce the links between Conference and the National Policy Forum?
4. How do we ensure all members have a say on the final documents agreed by the National Policy Forum?

## new Labour for Britain

For more information,  
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The closing date for receipt of  
submissions is noon,  
Friday 14 September.

Comments should be made  
online via your MpURL,  
Labour members' net at  
**labour.org.uk/membersnet**