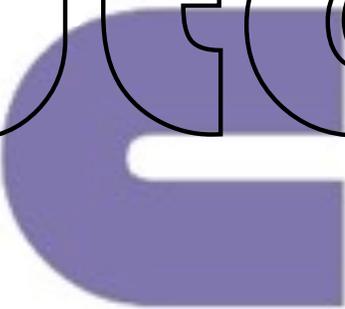


minutes



National Federation of Plus Areas

2nd Annual General Meeting (67th Annual National Conference) Saturday 23rd February 2008 at The Falstaff Hotel, Leamington Spa

Minutes

1. National Chairman welcomes delegates and observers and opens the meeting.

John Smith opens meeting at 10.33.

Welcome to the Falstaff hotel, quite cramped accommodation for the conference sorry about that. This is the 2nd AGM under the new structure, 67th Annual meeting of the federation. I hope this will be a positive and friendly meeting and that we make decisions that will move the federation forward.

Like last year I would like the AGM to be about looking to the future at the sort of Plus we like to see while make plans and decisions that will get us there. I would also like to see us recognise the good work that is being done to make Plus what it is today.

Plus is good now; there are a lot of good activities and events organised. You might not think its so good because we don't have many members but people do enjoy the events we put on.

But... what can we do to improve it? That's partly what this meeting is about. I also want to reassure everyone, as I did last year, that this is a general meeting for Groups to make decisions about how to run the federation. Its not for the NEC to run the meeting its for the Groups. There has been some discussion that we shouldn't have a meeting for Groups but I think, the number of members that have booked in, have disproved that.

As you know the quorum is 19 and we have 33 groups in attendance that is only 3 less than last year, which is pretty good so thank you.

May I remind everyone to turn their phones off as it interferes with the recording equipment.

I've got one of two amendments to make to the agenda.

Items 13.7 & 13.8 the Northern area motions I have been asked to do these in reverse order as it is more logical.

Most of what you have on the agenda is supporting documentation, arguments as to why the motion is being presented. The motion itself 13.7 is the first paragraph.

13.8 is the next to last paragraph without the word hence.

The year that is mentioned in 13.8 should be 2009 not 2011. That's a typing error.

Corrections have been sent out but only at the last minute so not everyone will have them.

Robert Jones read out the motion to Clarify: This conference instructs the NEC to set the full membership fee at £25 unless a material change in circumstance. This conference does not expect the membership fee to change again until 2009.

NB some of the documentation it says 2011, this is incorrect.

Item 9 Presentation and acceptance of the Federation's accounts for 2006.
Alteration 2006 Not 2007.

Item 10 Presentation of the financial report of the year ending 31st December 2007. This report does not require acceptance as it is an unaudited report, it is for information only. We are still a year behind I'm afraid.

Item 12.2 Election of Officers, the National Finance Officer has another year of her term to run that's why that post is not up for election at this AGM.

That is the amendments.

2. The Presidential address by Gerry Edwards Vice-president.

Sandra Brogran Vice-President

As you can see if I'm Gerry Edwards I've grown my hair and had a shave today! John has already said a lot of what I was going to say. So I won't keep you too long.

Welcome to the 2nd AGM in this format. Although a slow start to the booking it was good to see 35 delegates here. Its good to see Gary (Schwimmer) finally made a decision and arrived. I had about 10 e-mails from Gary trying to make up his mind if he was coming today!

The one thing that I want to say about this AGM is its about giving you the members the opportunity to take part in the discussions about the Federation, its future and also a chance to initiate discussions for future changes.

John has already said that there has been some discussion about whether this is the right forum for the Federation but it is a platform for the members to have a direct involvement to keep the Federation alive and to encourage its growth as well.

Please Please get up and join in the discussion don't just sit back and wait for someone else to say it because they might not. More importantly there are a lot on constitutional changes on the agenda and people get very emotive about those. Remember its just about trying to make things a little easier don't get too bogged down with it. Remember it's a debate and not a personal attack on anyone. It's a chance to have fun and enjoy yourselves as well.

3. Election of Tellers

3.1 Nomination of two volunteers from the body of observers

Can I have nominations from the floor from the observers. Traditionally we have 4 but I will accept 2.

I have had a suggestion for Mark Hewson and Kathy Morris proposed by Solihull and seconded by Thatcham.

Carried.

3.2 Determination of Voting Strength

As I said previously 19 delegates are required. 33 delegates were counted by the tellers. 2 delegates aren't here yet.

4. Election of ballot paper counters

4.1 Nomination of two volunteers from the body of observers

Robert Kripp and Sandra Brogran. Proposed Thatcham Seconded Leamington

Carried

5. Apologies for Absence

For this I will hand over to the HGS Emma Dunning.

Received Apologies Leeds, Rothwell and Lincs Quest, Vice President Gerry Edwards and Ian Crawshaw.

6. Acceptance of the Minutes of the 1st Annual General Meeting 66th Annual National Conference held at the Warwickshire County Council Staff Club on Saturday 24th February 2007

Lots of people said that they didn't have minutes. They have been distributed. Area Chairs have had them. Do you want us to defer these minutes to another meeting or go through them now.

Can we have a show of hands as to who has seen or got a copy of the minutes. One or two people.

Shall we agree to get them photocopied by the hotel and defer this until after lunch. It won't cost too much!

Proposed Barkingside
Seconded Solihull

Carried nem com

7. Matters arising thereon

No matters arising

8. Presentation and Acceptance of the Federations NEC Report for the year 2007 (en bloc).

We've got 2 updates to the reports.

London and South East section of the report is quite glowing but we are told that the Area have decided to close. The NEC are investigating and we will give you an update as soon as we have the information.

Northern Area update. No Administrator was elected at their Conference. Otherwise the committee was elected as stated.

Claire Coles - Bradford delegate

I understand that the levies to National were due on the 1st Jan I just wanted to ask why the Accounts show that London and south East Area have got £1,000 and they have still not paid the full levies.

The report is actually for the year 2007 they were at that point all paid up they were let off one quarter by the NEC to help then through a difficult patch. This year they have been invoiced but don't know what will happen as we're investigating the possible closure of the Area.

We will move to the vote.

Proposed Barnet
Seconded Romford

Carried unanimously.

9 Presentation and acceptance of the federation's accounts for the year ending 31st December 2006.

I'll hand over to Alison Jones National Finance Officer who will be assisted by one of the auditors Katie Hawkins.

Questions

Dave Filer - Coventry Chair

On page 2 there is an entry to printing money can you print some for me please.

That actually relates to Newent giving money to the staff to get their printing done.

Gary Schwimmer - Hillingdon delegate
Do we actually fund WASH

No, it's a Group event they fund it themselves so it goes through their own account.

James Oliver Solihull delegate
Can you tell me what the £150 on holiday levies is (Note 14)

We had 3 levies come in at £50 each and £37 got paid out so that makes in £115 income.

Acceptance of Federation Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2006

Proposed Thatcham
Seconded Solihull

One abstention
Carried nem com

10 Presentation of the Federation financial report year ending December 31st 2007

For information only – not an audited account.

Questions

Mike Coles - Bradford Delegate
Can I ask why the levies are £2,770.56 when they are supposed to be £3,000.

That relates to the VAT element, at one point the levies were £106 because we paid VAT on it.

Mike Coles Bradford Delegate
You have said that its because of the VAT but then why have you got VAT as an expense? Is that a different VAT?

The amount was paid to the VAT man because the amount of purchasing that we had wasn't enough to cover the amount we took in for VAT so we had to pay more VAT back. We didn't get to claim for VAT we had to pay it back. It will be clear when we get them audited for next year.

Voting strength increased by 1 to 34

11. Election of the National Chairman to serve from 1st March 2008

I'll now had over to the Deputy National Chairman

Speech by John Smith

Hopefully you have all read my nomination that went out with the other AGM documentation.

If you vote for me as National Chairman for the coming year what will you be getting. An old git! Next birthday I will be 50.

To be a bit more serious than that I believe that Plus is a friendly social organisation and we should be working to keep it that way and should be thinking what activities we want to do for ourselves and potential members who come along. Its also the point to get new members in, that's partly what focus and the National plan are about.

You'll also be getting a National Chairman who believes that Plus should be run as a democracy. The AGM should be the Groups' AGM. The 2006 ANC that voted to include the AGM rules in the constitution, which I'm told, had a 93% majority tells me that the Groups want an AGM. The Groups should be telling us what you want to do.

I'm not a particular fan of politics in Plus. To me it's a fun organisation and the politics that some people do to get their own way can be destructive. This meeting for example to me has been quite an enjoyable meeting, we've had a bit of fun but that's how it should be.

If we have a problem in Plus we need to look into it and try to resolve it in a reasonable way not let the constitution get in the way, its there to guide us into how to run Plus.

When I first joined Plus I got onto the Committee straight away but I didn't see the constitution for 3 years but we ran quite a good, active Group, we knew what we were doing. I only had to read the constitution when we had a bit of a dispute with our Area at the time over when an associate membership kicks in and we sorted it out by looking at the rules and sorting it out in a pragmatic way.

When you vote for me you'll be giving me the mandate to try and use the constitution to help us and not hinder us to be friendly and social, active and promote new members.

The other mission I have is to find a replacement to take over next year. Next year, there is a possibly that you will have a contested position.

Gary Schwimmer – Hillingdon Delegate

That was a really good speech really down to earth and I wish people were a lot more like that and not take things too seriously. When you joined Plus you said the Groups issued the membership cards, why can't we issue them now?

I don't really know the answer to that we've just got a different procedure nowadays. I think the memberships system works and don't really want to change it.

Tracy Thorn – Dunstable delegate

What do you foresee will be the changes that you will implement this year?

One thing really I am going to implement are the Platinum Standard Awards. I hope that will instigate other changes. I think, along the lines of what I've said, we get bogged down too much with the rules and we should be concentrating on activities and recruitment. Focus day was one of my ambitions from two years ago; I think it will go a long way to move the Federation in that direction. Changes will just happen in what you might call an evolutionary way, hopefully following Focus day, if people do discuss in a frank and open way what changes they want to make.

James Oliver – Solihull delegate

Are you disappointed with what has happened in London and South East Area?

Yes.

Do you plan to appoint someone to re-energise that Area?

It's a bit up in the air at the moment. The information we have at the moment is not complete but we will be doing something!

I've been asked to remind you at lunch time to collect your ballot papers from the ballot paper counter.

12. Election of National Officers to serve from 1st March 2008

12.1 Election of Officers

One nomination for internet co-ordinator

The NEC co-opted an Internet Co-ordinator at the November meeting with big plans about the National website. If it's agreeable to the conference we would like to vote on that person in his absence. The candidate is Richard Morton - Southampton Friends Group.

If anyone has any questions, Emma Dunning is willing to answer them. Richard did give a lengthy presentation at the November NEC meeting.

Janet Rintoul - Reading delegate

Can I ask why Richard didn't put a nomination speech on the internet like you did? He is not here today he hasn't given us a nomination speech as to why we should vote for him. Personally I think we should have a vote but why hasn't he given any information to the groups?

I'm told that he ran out of time.

Janet Rintoul - Reading delegate

If he ran out of time, has he got enough time to do the job that he is volunteering to do

Emma Dunning will answer that.

Richard e-mailed me to say that he wanted to continue as Internet Co-ordinator, I said fine get me a nomination speech and that was supposed to have come last week. It was very short notice but he was concentrating on the presentation that we will see later on; what the web-site is going to do. He is on holiday now.

Janet Rintoul - Reading delegate

Can we have a web-site address so we can see what he has done?

Not yet as it is not live, what he is concentrating on at the minute is a potential new members portal.

Janet has made a good suggestion there, can we hold the vote until after the conference has seen the presentation on the web-site? I'm willing to do that. Since Richard was appointed in November he has worked very hard in setting up the website. He has appointed a few testers for it who have already seen the web-site and we have had quite positive feedback from them. While it may look as if he is not as committed as he should be, He has been working on it.

Any questions you have can be put after the presentation.

Steve Geary – Reading delegate

I know that past is the past but following previous glitches with the web-site designs and the web-site crashing, are these areas going to be sorted out?

Yes! The question of errors has been resolved by appointing a new server provider. We believe that it was a server error last time, there was a suggestion of sabotage but we have found no evidence of that. We are being a lot more careful about design this time!

I'd like to re-iterate that I'd like to get these posts filled. If any of them strike an interest with any of you, please think about standing. We can co-opt you at the next NEC meeting which is in May. Please talk to Emma or myself or any of the NEC about the posts, we'll be glad to hear from anyone who is interested.

Janet Rintoul - Reading delegate

What happens if no-one is elected to the committee positions?

The NEC has to cover the tasks of those positions and try to find someone.

We must have a HGS (Honorary General Secretary) otherwise we become unconstitutional.

Returning from tea break.

Voting Strength 35

13 Motions for debate

Motions tabled for debate in order of submission – Items 13.1 – 13.6 to be presented by Emma Dunning – Constitutional Committee Chairman and Honorary General Secretary.

This is business carried forward from the 2007 conference. It could be voted on at an NEC meeting. Under current article 12.1 the NEC has the authority to add/amend/revoke the constitutions by simple majority except for article 2 (The purpose of the federation). I would rather be democratic so that the delegates can vote on the changes to the constitution/Federation instead of 3-4 people.

I was elected at the 2007 pre AGM meeting to be the Constitution Sub-committee Chair and as such amend the documents in line with comments made both at the AGM and during my term of office and suggestions from normal members who have read something and said things needed to be changed.

I will introduce the changes one by one with a brief explanation as to why the changes have been proposed then we will ask delegate/observers for your comments.

The proposed changes are by no means all that is required rather a starting point. These documents are moving documents, which will change as the Federation moves forward.

Martin Ponser- Romford delegate

Article 7.9.1 says motions can only be made by members Areas.

This is another contradiction with the constitution. As it is business carried forward, we are allowed to propose the changes.

Corinna Teale – Sutton Coldfield

If the Area chairs bring the proposals forward then they should be allowed. These motions are before you, if you don't like them you can challenge them.

13.1 Acceptance of the change in terms of office for committee positions within the National constitution, standing orders and Area constitution

In the old constitution the terms of office were a year, in the Area constitution they were a year but for some reason it was written as two years. As you can see we don't have anyone standing on the new committee, two years is a long time.

As for the change of date, Erica Knight is the new Midland Area Chair (sorry to pick on you Erica!) She should not be here as Area Chair, she did not write the report. Its just to make it easier for the Area Chairs, the outgoing Chair will do the AGM and the incoming Chair will be at the May NEC meeting.

Claire and Mike Coles – Bradford delegates

Being members of such a flawed organisation to the point where Area Chairs choose to ignore certain rules, makes us feel uneasy. We think we should strip the overly worded constitution back to the fundamental rules that we need with other rules just being guidelines to adapt/ignore to suit our business. Please join us in seeing these changes are made.

Andy Campbell – Barkingside

Emma has worked really hard to set out the changes that need to be made. Please vote for this motion so that the federation can concentrate on activities etc and not be worrying about constitutions.

Emma summed up

I totally agree with the Bradford delegates that it is a flawed constitution that is why they have to be cleared up so the Federation can move forward.

Votes against 2

Abstentions 1

In favour 32

Carried

13.2 Acceptance of the change in Quoracy within the National Constitution, National Standing Orders and Area Constitution

A quorum is formed when at least half the delegate Groups are representing the Federation which is easier to understand than the current constitution of quorum being 19 people. I believe from reading Citrine's "ABC of Chairmanship" that this is not a majority. So in line with the new constitution, 30 groups would be quorate. We have 35 groups here today which is a fairer representation. If we have more Groups that figure will go up.

If we go by the current rules the 60 Groups will be represented by a majority of 11 people: 11 people making your decisions for you is not a majority. You said you wanted your say; you wanted an AGM so, we should increase the quoracy so that any motions passed will be a representation of the Federation.

Corrina Teale – Sutton Delegate

Can I just ask the delegates, its really daunting getting up here in front of 35 people please give the speaker the courtesy by listening to them.

Adrian Barnard – Oxford Delegate

I am broadly in favour of this. The more people who vote for a change; the more it is going to be accepted. It does open up that you may come to watch an NEC meeting if conferences are not quorate but that doesn't matter, there meetings are important and the numbers here will grow.

Emma summed up the motion.

Please accept this motion, its your Federation, its your say.

Against 0

Abstentions 4

For 32

Carried

13.3 Acceptance of the generic changes within the National Constitution, National Standing Orders, Area Constitution, Group Constitution and Quest Constitution.

Broken down into Area/Group/National constitution - sorry there wasn't time to look into the Quest constitution.

Term of Non Executive committee (National Chairman/ National Finance officer and HGS). This gets confusing so I propose we go back to the old term of GPC General Purposes Committee.

Article 7 National Constitution

There were some references to ANC, National conference; these have been changed to AGM.

Mandating Groups to the AGM.

When it was accepted that groups could come to the AGM the pre 2006 constitution goes back to inviting. If Groups are mandated to come they know that changes are going to be made. If they decide not to come, they are waving their right to be involved in the decisions.

Time frames for submission of reports

Change of gender, where it used to say him/his it has been changed to they or their the reason being that at last conference there were comments that the constitution was sexist.

Area constitution

Article 4 Area Committee

4.3 changed because of ease of understanding and not over wordy.

5.3.4 New item added to say Area Chair needs to provide membership details to National Finance Officer.

5.5 has been re-worded to include Area conference, e.g. vote of no confidence in the Area Chair.

Group constitution

Terminology AGM not ANC They/their instead of him. Time frames for submission of reports.

Adrian Barnard – Oxford delegate

Thanks very much for all the hard work put in to doing this, however I do still have a question. I have an objection against one word mandating the Groups. The NEC has no power to do so.

Emma Dunning – HGS

Feel free to raise an amendment.

Tracy Thorne – Dunstable delegate

8.3.3.2 Area constitution says that people over 36 need to renew immediately on expiry I don't think it's a good idea to have immediate expiry.

10.1.3 Transferring of membership

An individual who transfers their membership with the article membership fee will not be charged until expiry. The Area has the right to charge a reasonable levy for administration costs.

This hasn't been changed.

10.2.4 Transferring – It sounds like you have to apply to your own Area and the Area you are moving to and the Group you want to move to. It seems very complicated.

Good points but not within the scope of this motion.

Perhaps that's an issue to be brought to your next Area conference.

Gary Schwimmer – Hillingdon

Why do we need a constitution how many 18 year olds are interested in constitutions.

Andy Campbell – Barkingside

The main reason we need it is to protect members and the people running the Federation. Invite/mandate question, the intention was to get people here to have a discussion to move the Federation forward.

Emma summed up the motion

In response to Gary's question of why do we need a constitution; It clears up abnormalities
Every organization has a constitution scouts etc have rules so that it is known who is dealing with what and what to do if it goes wrong or if you need advice. Please vote for this motion.

Adrian Barnard – Oxford

I wish to propose an amendment to article 9 of the changes. The amendment would be to drop the word mandate and re-insert the word invite.

Seconder Lichfield

Strictly speaking Adrian was too late however it was the feeling of the conference that the amendment be accepted.

Adrian Barnard – Oxford

Thank you to the Chairman for allowing me to put the amendment. The NEC can't mandate the Groups to attend the AGM - the Groups can mandate the NEC to invite them, therefore its best left as invite as the NEC doesn't actually have the power to mandate Groups to attend.

Philip Bettis - Lichfield

In the Midland Area we had a debate about this, we decided that the Area could mandate the Groups to attend, Midland Area does this and pays the Groups' delegate fees. I agree with Adrian, the NEC does not have the power, we're a Federation of Areas and it should be the Areas that mandate their Groups or encourage their Groups to come to the AGM and in the Area Lead document the word was invite not mandate.

My other concern is that if Groups are mandated then all Groups could be charged a levy regardless of whether they have delegates.

Dave Filer - Chelmsford Chairman - sorry Coventry Chairman - delegate

I prefer the word mandate, the major problem I foresee is that I've heard comments "we were invited, we weren't compelled to go, therefore any decisions made aren't binding!" I would accept invite if there was a further clause accepting decisions made. Groups need to be aware that if they don't attend then they can't moan about decisions made.

Andy Campbell

To further Dave's point, Phil spoke about the Areas encouraging their Groups to attend, my concern is that Areas do different things, one Area may invite their Groups and delegates another may decide not to. What happens? That would be a disaster, the whole point of the AGM is that we get everybody here, we can discuss and thrash things out and come up with sensible solutions. I don't want one word to get in the way of democracy and moving things forward.

Janet Rintoul - Reading delegate

I agree that one word shouldn't ruin the whole thing, I just have an issue with the word mandate because it implies force. we're a voluntary organisation.

You can't be forced to do anything and if you're invited and you don't choose to take the invitation then it will encourage you to come next year if things were voted on that you don't like you'll certainly come next year and actually do something about it. It will encourage democracy. If you're forced to come you may not read the documentation and prepare, I don't think that's helpful. It should be volunteers who want to vote and do something, who make the effort. Being forced is not helpful. I don't like the word mandate.

Now we vote on the amendment - the word invite shall replace mandate

For 25

Against 6

Abstentions 5

Carried

Now we vote on the amended motion

For 29

Against 5

Abstentions 2

Carried

13.4 Acceptance of the code of conduct

The idea was raised in 2006 as to what behaviour is acceptable and what isn't acceptable. We currently do not have a facility to deal with them. It's not meant to be a dictatorship it's based on common sense.

Gary Schwimmer – Hillingdon Delegate

It is important not to formalise things too much as it encourages challenges from people who want to cause trouble. Please vote against.

Andy Campbell – Barkingside

I urge you to vote for this motion people have been dealt with before but we haven't been able to tell people why. We expect certain behaviour and this is about tackling people about inappropriate behaviour and not palming it off on some other reason. It's to protect the members.

Matthew Riley – Sheffield delegate

I propose to make an amendment to make the Code of conduct a policy document

Seconded Bradford

The area can make their own decisions. Every Area should decide whether to accept or decline the code of conduct. There are procedures already in place to deal with complaints

Mike Coles – Bradford delegate

I would like to second Matthews amendment, guidelines should be there but not a rigid set of rules its up to the Area committee to decide what is acceptable behaviour.

Andy Campbell – Barkingside

There was a member who caused a lot of problems in one Area and we found that there wasn't anything stopping them from joining another Area even though he had been suspended from the Federation in that Area. If we don't formalise it in some way, there is the possibility for it to be abused.

Dave Filer – Coventry delegate

I would like to vote against this amendment we would have disputes if both Areas were running by different sets of rules. By all means put it into the constitution but I don't think Areas should be able to modify it.

Summing up the motion

In reality, the code of conduct won't be used that often but I believe it is necessary.

Voting on the amendment

For 10

Against 24

Abstentions 2

Rejected

Tracy Thorne – Dunstable delegate

This document will assist the Area Chair in dealing with disputes that could lead to the involvement of external bodies such as the police.

Corinna Teale – Sutton Delegate

I'm against this code of conduct because there are things in there that I would do e.g. deliberately excluding people from conversations/events we do that all the time as we only like to socialise with people that we like and want to spend time with. The other thing about it [what constitutes harassment, one Area might consider what you do appropriate for example Francis came in and kissed me because he knows me, he wouldn't do that with someone he didn't know, in our Area we kiss everybody all the time, it doesn't mean its appropriate behaviour in some other Area.

Adrian Barnard - Oxford delegate

The concern that things might turn into litigation or how are things going to work out etc with all this kissing! - How often would this document get invoked? I can think of hundreds wh have joine this organisation but only two that have been chucked out. Its something that you need, my work place has such documentation, nobody ever reads it, not even the Union reps, but it is there just in case you need it. This is the sort of document to get put in the archives but its there to cover you, its the same reason we have insurance, a constitution. Its there to cover your arse. It doesn't look like a lot but its necessary. I urge you to vote for this

Vote on the original motion

For 19

Against 12

Abstentions 4

Motion lost, a constitutional motion requires a 75% majority - 52% for

13.5 Acceptance of Equalities Statement

An equality and diversity policy statement is an important statement for any organisations attitudes towards rights and equality in the services offered. By drawing up a policy the organisation makes a commitment to show that all service users receive fair and equal treatment. There was an item at last years AGM presented by Steve Browning regarding disabilities and equalities. The outcome of that debate suggested that Plus needed an equalities policy. The importance is that the Federation will not discriminate but will judge individuals on a case by case basis. It will be a positive selling point for Plus. Part of it is not to discriminate against people with disabilities. The policy is quite general but legal but its not the be all and end all its down to common sense.

Adrian Barnard – Oxford delegate

Point of information: It states on there not age discrimination whereas the Area lead document state someone over the age of 36 will be sidelined if someone under 36 stands for election.

Adrian is talking about the original document, age does not appear on this document anymore.

Steven Browning - Bishop Stortford

I urge you to vote for this statement. It's important we embrace it. Make sure people are trained into putting it into practice; the law is quite vague.

Steve Geary – Reading

Please vote against this, its just another piece of paper!

Matthew Riley – Sheffield

I would like to propose an amendment to make this a policy document

Seconded Bradford

Mike Coles Bradford

If we vote it in as a policy document at least we will have it in at a starting point and then we can change it from there!

Andy Campbell – Barkingside

This is a strange one as we have already voted against the Code of conduct and the two should go together I would rather see this go through than just be lost because we don't have a 75% majority. Its better to have this as a policy document than not at all.

Adrian Barnard – Oxford

Can the top table confirm for me if this is lost today, can Areas vote them in at a later date?

John Smith National Chairman - Yes one Area already has!

Corinna Teale - Sutton Coldfield delegate

If this is a legal requirement why are we voting on it? Just because of the wording?

Its not a legal obligation to include the policy in the standing orders, it is a legal requirement to have an equalities policy.

Voting on the amendment

For 10

Against 21

Abstentions 5

Rejected

Dave Filer Coventry delegate

Would I fall foul of this if I organise an activity which by default discriminates, for example last weeks badminton competition

No because disability covers so many things, reasonable adjustments have to be made.

Vote on the original motion

For 24

Against 12

The motion was lost.

13.6 Acceptance of the area Constitution for Areas to set Quest Groups directly

In the Southern Area report last year, it said that the Area was going to set up a Quest Group. Currently only a Group can set up a Quest Group not the Area. Technically those Areas acting constitutionally. By allowing an Area committee to say we have got interest from people over 36 in the Area to set up a Quest Group it makes it a lot easier.

Philip Bettis - Lichfield delegate

Isn't this just a way of increasing the age range for the Federation? Quest groups should be based on a town not geographical area. I urge you to vote against this motion.

Tracy Thorne – Dunstable delegate

I'm for this motion. We are not utilising ourselves in the lower age range of the Federation. this will enable us to open more Groups not just Quest Groups.

Gary Schwimmer - Hillingdon

Are these people going to be full members and it'll weaken Hillingdon Quest because we take people from all over!

Steven Browning – Bishop Stortford

When Haverhill Plus died. Some members joined Kings Lynn so we set up a 2nd tier Group. We should not need to attach Quest Groups directly to a full Group you may end up getting a full Group later on.

Emma Dunning Summed up

It is not about Quest Groups being for an Area; it allows Groups or an Area to be able to set up Quest Groups. They are still associates, not full members. It allows Area committees to open Quest Groups. This also allows quest Groups to continue where their Plus Group has closed.

Move to the vote

For 30

Against 1

Abstentions 5

Carried

Emma has worked very hard to put these motions together, the conference spontaneously applauded.

Corinna Teale – Sutton

Since the Equalities Statement and Code of Conduct were lost earlier are they going to be reworded and presented again since they are a legal requirement?

We can leave the meeting without it as long as it is voted in at a later date.

13.8 Presented by Robert Jones Northern Area Chairman

This conference instructs the NEC to set the full membership fee to £25 and unless there is a material change in circumstances, this conference does not expect the membership to change again before 2009.

Section 9.1.1 of the Standard Area Constitution states that "the annual membership fees for Full and Associate Members shall be determined by the NEC of the Federation from time to time".

This conference notes that, as part of the Area lead restructuring motion previously agreed by Plus, the membership fee for full members was set at £25. This conference believes that £25 per full member is sufficient to fund the reasonable expenditure of Areas and is sufficient to enable Areas to contribute sufficient funding for those functions which are funded nationally.

This change of the membership fee to £25 to take effect from Monday 25th February 2008.

Areas have money so why do we need to increase the membership fee.

Andy Campbell – Barkingside

I disagree with this. I think we have struggled within the organisation on different levels. One of the problems at National level is that there has been no money for a bulk posting hence no one got the minutes for today's meeting. This sounds really simple but I think people would have appreciated the minutes before the meeting but there is no money at National level for this.

Unfortunately there isn't a representative from London and South East Area but they are struggling. They came to the NEC meeting and asked for a bit of a let off because they didn't have enough money for what they wanted to do. I think we are being very short sighted thinking we are going to get something for nothing. You have to put effort in to the Federation to get anything out of it. If effort isn't put into the Federation then it is going to fall flat on its face and very quickly.

Adrian Barnard - Oxford

Actually it's a wonderful opportunity to be able to answer a couple of those statements.

National does not do bulk posting full stop, your Area does. Things come down via e-mail and it's up to them to distribute it.

Reference London and South East, they would be the reason that I would consider that it is not a good idea to lower it back down to base level. They are not here today; it may well be they will not be here again. This is also the Area after it was let off who pointed out that it actually had more money than three other Areas so I'm not too sure about that!

I don't see by looking at the finances why the membership fee has to be going up and up it was just left alone in the Area lead option so it carried on as it was which was voted in by the delegates at a previous ANC! It's always open to change, I think at this conference it should because it's rising and I can't justify it myself allowing it to. So I would actually urge you to vote for Northern Areas motion.

Gary Schwimmer – Hillingdon

I have an amendment and I don't think it will go through! I want to change to £25 to be £20.

No Secunder!

Mike Coles – Bradford delegate

I set the budget for Northern Area and the membership fee does keep going up and it's hard to find where to spend the money. As members we are happy to have a lower membership fee and we are happy with the events we are running at the moment. So why aren't we encouraging new members by having a lower membership fee? It is your money that you are giving out. We are losing members. Is that due to costs going up?

In Northern Area we don't need the money, we have a system where the Groups pay the full member to the Area and Area gives a refund back to the Group and the Group gives a refund back to its members

Tracy Thorn – Dunstable delegate

Please vote against this motion. Nothing does down in life that's the reason. Organisation outside our perimeters are charging more, people tend to view that you get what you pay for. If you put money downwards in the long run the organisation will suffer. For the majority of you here £28 is nothing.

Matthew Riley Sheffield delegate

I would like clarification that National does not benefit from the membership fee increase

That is correct.

James Oliver – Solihull delegate

I don't think this motion will work to recruit new members, I think its down to the quality of events rather than how much it costs to join the organisation.

Robert Jones – Northern Area Chairmen

Summing up National have money to spare, we used slightly less than £3,000. Our budget for next year is lower as we were able to cut a few corners. Things may increase in price, at the minute National do not get an increase when the membership fee increase, all that happens is the money keep gets topped up in your Area. We don't see the point of banking your money we try and use it. You have not joined a savings club you have joined a social organisation.

Move to the vote

For 30

Against 5

Motion carried

Mark Hewson – Solihull observer

At least two people in Midland Area have paid £28 this year, are they entitled to a refund?

That would be up to the Area. Strictly speaking I would say no but the Area decides how it uses its funds.

13.7 Presented by Robert Jones Northern Area Chairman

"That the National Membership fee will be subject to an automatic raise of £1 at the beginning of the National Federations Financial year, without referral to the NEC."

This is because we believe that removing the automatic raise in the membership fee could make life very difficult for NEC's in the future to raise membership fees as costs increase without having to fight through opposition as traditionally when a membership raise is required one third of the organisation will be in favour, one third would want to spend time finding cost savings and will be against and one third would abstain rather than upset the cost savers who are not sure either way.

This scenario would mean not being able to raise the membership when required whereas, an automatic raise is a simple way of guaranteeing a raise if necessary and the current wording of this automatic raise causes great confusion and complication and your average member are unsure how much the raise will be if not countermanded each January therefore a simpler raise of £1 a year seems appropriate.

The reason for the rise is because things do go up in value. The way the membership increase is calculated is complicated. That's why there was confusion as to what the membership fee was going to be.

The article currently read 9.1.13 in the area constitution is ... The full membership fee shall incur an percentage adjustment linked directly to the retail price index and this will be rounded up to the nearer pound sterling this will continue automatically without referral to the NEC that means January 1st. It seems to be more appropriate to go with our motion. The membership fee will be subject to an automatic rise of £1 at the beginning of the federations financial year without referral to the NEC.

Steve Geary – Reading

I thought we have just agreed to keep the membership fee at £25 and its not going to go up anymore, is that not the motion we just opted in?

That is for this year, because in the constitution there is a clause that says it should go up with the rate of inflation on 1st Jan. The motion is that it goes up by £1 instead of by the rate of inflation.

Janet Rintoul – Reading

I think we need to have a way of increasing the membership fee because everyone is eager to decrease the membership fee. You just had a vote and it gets reduced but to ask people to vote for increase in the membership fee is a lot harder. You end up going for several years and then you are in a crisis situation but it is too late then. An automatic increase is a good idea because it is clear and useful.

Steven Browning – Bishop Stortford delegate

I am in favour because it is a step in the right direction, I would have liked to see the automatic membership increase reduced, we actually do have a means of adjusting the membership fee, the NEC has the right to set the fee.

Summing up. Please vote for this motion.

Move to the vote

In favour 31

Against 0

Abstentions 4

Carried

14. Facility for National Debate – only items submitted by the advertised date will be debated – 5 Minutes per item

National and Area funding of membership fees and events – Gary Schwimmer

Firstly I'll talk about membership, I'm wondering why it needs to be so high and why can't Areas support the member by paying something towards the membership fee.

I look at the events and the best event, WASH and wonder why don't National put more into it so that we get more out because last year was one of the highest. Also why don't guests pay more to attend an event because they are not members. They only have to pay about £15 more, maybe it should be £25 and that would force them to be a member.

I take it we can't get lottery funding, no its already been tired.

I was wondering about Quest, they are associates and only pay £21 why don't they pay the same. It should be about sustaining a young peoples organisation.

I wonder if we can call ourselves 19 Plus? and can we have morre people with beards?

Lastly about the AGM, we've cut costs and its very good, very well organised, I was just wondering why you need the dance, why can't we just go down to Chicagos or Wetherspoons? it would be a lot cheaper.

That was the Gary rant!

Adrian Barnard – Oxford

Its up to Areas to give back money to the Groups, you do really all have to charge the same though for insurance purposes which is one of the reasons we have a constitution. National isn't there to facilitate the Areas nor to subsidise. Having said that, there is money still out there for specific events but at some stage that will end up being recovered.

Tracy Thorne – Dunstable delegate

Have you looked at the price of buying things outside the Federation recently? If you haven't, I advise you to do so, I don't mean something where you fly abroad something where you buy a package, they are far more expensive. The reason Plus is cheaper is because members give up their time to research events. Not everything is about money we are asking people to give up a lot of time for these events. There are less of us and we have more money.

Robert Jones – Northern Area Chair

Northern Area already subsidise events, last year we put £600 in to NEAT and didn't expect a return for the money.

Andy Cambell – Barkingside

We are saying that we have all this money at all levels of the organisation but how much of it is actually going on Publicity I don't think we do nearly enough. We must spend more on publicity.

Katie Hawkins – Barnet - North Thames & Chilterns Area Treasurer

I would love to spend the money, we were talking about a return to the Groups based on how many members a Group has at the end of the year. We now have an active Area Activities Officer. Gary, if you have ideas, come to the Area meeting.

15 Presentation on the Federations Business Plan – John Smith, Gerry Edwards and Sandra Brogan

15.1 The Business Plan - presented by John Smith

In 2006 following the structural and other changes at the ANC the first NEC meeting raised the subject of the business plan. The previous business plan was a hefty document and mainly was about the restructure and that was achieved.

The new business plan with Plus changing needed to be more fluid and open so no hefty document has been created. However the NEC have done certain things towards the plan, particularly the re-launch with the new name and the Back to School campaign, the new web-site that sadly fell down and Areas concentrating on publicity in the following year, and lastly setting up the Focus day for tomorrow.

Last year we had a brainstorming on the plan on where you would like Plus to be in 2011 the Federations Platinum Jubilee year and we came up with a list of aims.

So that is the business plan; every Group, every Area and National should be working towards meeting those aims.

A big part of Focus day will be about what you want to do to more Plus forward on a practical level at all levels of the Federation. This will lead to more input into the plan.

15.2 The Web-Site - presented by Sandra Brogan

Hello my name is Richard Morton, I'm here to present the web-site to you. As you can see I-m a much prettier version than Richard! I'm not sure he'll agree.

As you'll be aware Richard has taken on the role of Internet Co-ordinator and is standing for election. He has been working really hard and has a good vision for the web-site which he presented to the NEC in November, a very lengthy presentation.

I have a thirty page document from Richard and I've pulled out a couple of pages to get the main points across.

The main vision is to have one web-site and you will click on aspects of that to get the information you want - Group, Area, event. It will be full of news.

It will be a profile web-site, you can put your picture on there.

All the events will be on a calendar. It will be easy to search for events that are going on in your Area or other Areas. Event reviews is an important aspect, currently we show what events are coming up but what about reviews saying how wonderful it was, this is an excellent selling oint to get new members in.

There will be sub-sites for each Area and each Group.

Possibly the most controversial part of the web-site will be its own forums to replace the ONElist.

The web-site will have central subscription management, automatic joining, auto marketing of events. Maybe one thing we can consider for the future is a central membership database, password protected.

Its an open source software system.

Richard doesn't believe his role is webmaster, his role is to co-ordinate, there should be Area webmasters and Group webmasters, Richard is prepared to provide training and support. It makes sense as you are the people that know what content needs to be on the web-site you don't need someone else to put the content on the site when many of you already have the skills. Content is put on facebook and things like that, why not put it on our web-site.

Richard wants to encourage more use so that the web-site becomes a better web-site. Use it to plug everything you do.

Richard has put a great deal of thought into this, I know he's a bit of a talker (don't put that in the minutes!)

If you don't like what he has done question it, make suggestions for improvement, it is your web-site.

An important thing to remember is Mark Hewson has done an excellent job with the web-site to date. Mark is still the contact while we get the new site up and running.

Please give it your all and support Richard.

Questions

Mark Hawkins – Barnet observer, sorry delegate

Do you log in to the web-site as in you see what you are registered to see?

There are different things for members and non-members.

Tracy Thorn – Dunstable

I have seen the web-site, it is very good, the only query I have; if you are a non-member you can't post is that correct?

Robert Jones Northern Area Chairman

It would be left up to Groups/NEC that decision hasn't been made yet.

Steve Geary – Reading

We've tried this before and the web-site was lost, how are we going to stop that happening again.

Sandra Brogan - Vice-President

That was a fault with that web-site, Richard learnt a very bitter lesson from that and done a lot of research, we now have a very secure site, backups will be done. There are procedures in place to ensure that won't happen again.

Mike Clarkson – Solihull Chairman

Why can't we just continue with the old web-site and re-jig it.

Mark Hewson - Solihull observer - current web-site webmaster

This is a totally different way of thinking its more interactive where as mine is static. It will be used by yourselves, it will be everyones effort not just one persons effort. It is fully interactive.

Richard Morton was elected as internet co-ordinator

15.3 The Platinum Standard Awards presented by John Smith

It is a Group standard based on the 2011 aims compiled at last years Annual General Meeting.

Any Group that meets or achieves a certain quality towards the level will be able to apply for the award.

The awards lasts one year and there will be bronze, silver, gold and platinum awards depending on the level of achievement.

Any Group wishing to apply need only send an e-mail to myself.

To apply you will need to provide samples of posters, press releases, press cuttings, programmes any publicity, any web-sites you use and newsletters. Also information about recruitment, Area and National involvement, charity fundraising and community involvement.

Any Group that wants to work towards these standards may also apply, they will be awarded a Going for Platinum Standard award.

We will do a similar assessment and any financial, manpower or training needs identified will be forwarded to your Area and we will try to arrange the required support.

The aim is not only to try to improve the Groups but to recognise Groups achievements.

The awards will be judged by myself and the two Vice-presidents.

The assessment may take some time, we will try to present the awards at the next Area or National event following the award. It is not an annual award but an ongoing award given as and when. The award lasts one year and then the Group may re-apply. For example you may get the bronze award, improve and wish to re-apply to get a higher award.

When a Group applies we will also try to make some publicity out of it.

Guidelines will be available later.

16. Announcement of election results of the National Chairman to serve from 1st March 2008 by Honorary General Secretary.

John Smith was elected!

18 National Chairmans address

I would like to say thank you to everyone who has come here today as a delegate or observer, I think we have had or are having a very positive general meeting.

I hope the point has been proved that a Groups general meeting is how the Federation should be run as a national organisation. As I said earlier I am a democrat and I believe in this.

I would also like to say thank you to everyone who got up to speak, especially those who have got up and spoken for the first time. It takes a lot of guts to do that, when I used to attend National Conferences as a delegate it took me about ten years to pluck up the courage to speak at one. I do really appreciate people who make that effort.

I hope that some of the things said about having a fun, friendly organisation with perhaps less politics than we do indulge in does have some effect and that we'll carry on going from strength to strength.

Last year we definitely turned the corner in the sense of the membership starting to increase and people recognising that Plus is a fun organisation, lets start to promote it and keep doing it.

As Andy Campbell said earlier we do put very little resources into publicity and therefore recruitment is low. I agree strongly with him that if Areas have got all this money then lets spend some of it on publicity rather than be self indulgent and spend it all on activities.

Thank you for a very good conference and for electing me.

Lets have a great year to come!

19 Election of Vice Presidents

The NEC would like to propose Sandra Brogan and Gerry Edwards as Vice Presidents for the coming year.

Elected

20 Any other Urgent Business (not promotion of events)

Adrian Barnard

Sorry I can't plug Brean in 6 weeks time! The thing I would like to say is if you are running a classy event charge non-members more than they may as well join.

Mark Hewson – Solihull Observer

Just very concerned about the lack of NEC being elected what is the way forward because it seems ridiculous at the moment.

We can elect at the next NEC meeting so please go back to your Groups and say that you can be elected then if they wish to stand.

Tracy Thorne – Dunstable

Clarification as to when the £25 membership fee starts, as I have to take that back to my Group.

Starts Monday

Erica Knight Midland Area Chair

Midland Area have purchased Trolley tokens if anyone wants one £1 each.

21 Announcement of the date for the Annual General Meeting 2009

Will be announced after the Next NEC meeting - February 2009.

If anyone wishes to organise the event then the post of AGM co-ordinator can be appointed at the next NEC meeting

22 Presidential closing address by Sandra Brogan - Vice President

I think this has been an excellent conference, I'm sure you'll agree, considering there was some comments as to whether this should be a forum that should actually happen or not. The debate has been very positive and proactive, I think John has been quite please by that and you should be as well.

I thought I would pick out some of the highlights of the day, you might think what highlights could we possibly have? I've been carefully noting them down all day long.

We argued about "mandate" and "invite" - two little words we argued about

We decreased the membership fee and then agreed to put it up £1 every year

Philip Bettis decided that everyone should cut to their cloth to his or their width

Dave Filer regressed and became the Chelmsford Chairman again.

Philip Bettis wasn't far behind him when he couldn't remember if he was Bradford or Lichfield

We had a lovely speech from the husband and wife team Claire and Mike Coles, that's never been done before. Lets see more of that!

Our Princess took over the agenda and decided to change the agenda during this as well. Not only did she take over but her trusty servant Andy was there to back her up all the way!

Mark and Kathy were the evil ballot paper counters and made you keep your hands up longer than you really wanted to

Rob Cripps carefully added up the ballot papers out there in the back very carefully into piles of ten and we got confused when one didn't quite add up to ten

Tracy Thorn liked attention grabbing but then called everyone dirty bastards!

Rob Jones was so surprised when nobody argued against his motion that he didn't know how to sum up!

Corinna Teale was the moving voter moving around the room with her hand up

and I have decided the National facility for debate should be renamed "The Gary Rant"

But last but not least we should remember Katie Hawkins' offer, she has loads of money and wants to give it away, the drinks are on you!

Seriously, thank you very much, I think its been an excellent conference, lets have a jolly good night tonight, lets have a good dance, lets have a few drinks, lets have a lovely time.

23 Closure of Meeting by National Chairman

Thanks very much for a really enjoyable conference. The conference is now closed.

Awards – Presented during the evening

Presidents Trophy (Best Group)	Barking & Dagenham Group
Cobb Dual-Purpose Jug Mug (Best Area)	North Thames & Chiltern Area
Treasurers Trophy	North Thames & Chiltern Area
Charities Trophy	Lincs Quest
Gold Trail Trophy	Slough, Windsor and Eton
The Charles Padgham Training Trophy	East Anglia Area
Norbury Trophy (Best Magazine)	Midland Area (Gazette by James Oliver)
Linda Street Spirit Of Plus Award	Emma Dunning

***National Federation of Plus Areas
Plus Groups U K***



www.plusgroups.org.uk