



National Federation of plus Areas

11th Annual General Meeting
76th Annual National Conference

Held at the Jacobean Hotel, Coventry on Saturday 25th February 2017

Present

Erica Knight (National Chairman)

Joan Clifford (Honorary General Secretary)

Nick Grant (National Finance Officer)

Gerry Edwards (Vice President)

Francis Wallington (Vice President)

Matthew Dickinson (NTAC Chairman / Deputy National Chairman)

Nicky Rolfe (SA Chairman)

Martin Posner (ASEA Chairman)

James Oliver (MA Chairman)

Delegates and Observers of the Federation

1 Chairman's Welcome to Delegates

National Chairman Erica Knight opened the NAGM. She welcomed everybody to the 11th NAGM / 76th National Conference. She hoped we would have a productive conference.

2 The Presidential Address by Vice President Gerry Edwards

Gerry Edwards (VP, Presiding) welcomed everybody to the NAGM. He said there is a lot of interesting stuff to discuss and hopes everybody has a good day. He wanted to acknowledge how much work has gone into setting this up, especially from Adrian Barnard. He also thanked the hotel staff. He continued we are here to discuss the business and governance issues and how we might move forward. There is a fantastic motivational speaker this afternoon. If anyone has any questions at any time then come and talk to any of

us, we are here to help. We are ordinary people here just like you. Lovely to see you all here today and over to Erica to start the meeting off.

3 Election of Tellers

Nomination of Two Volunteers from the Observers

Bexi Cooke, Chris Tillyard, proposed en bloc by Stevenage and seconded by Leeds.

The tellers were voted in by the conference.

3.1 Determining Voting Strength

The voting strength is currently at 22.

4 Election of Ballot Counters

Nomination of Two Volunteers from the Observers

Katie Hawkins and Liz Buller, proposed en bloc by Rothwell and seconded by Lincs Quest.

The ballot counters were voted in by the conference.

5 Apologies for Absence

Richard Thomas, Adam Redshaw.

Erica asked the conference to pause to remember those Plussers who have passed away in the last year.

6 Acceptance of Minutes of the 10th Annual General Meeting at The Jacobean Hotel, Coventry, on 27th Feb 2016

Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) gave a point of information that you can vote on the minutes if your group was here last year, you don't have to have been here personally.

Ian Crawshaw (Chiswick Delegate) asked that people speak clearly into the microphones as he would be minuting today's Conference and wanted proceedings to be recorded accurately.

6.1 Points of Accuracy

None

The minutes were proposed by Didcot and seconded by South Bucks.

The minutes were accepted.

Voting strength re-established at 21.

7 Matters arising thereon

Francis Wallington (HLM Lichfield) said that last year a motion was carried for the Federation to invest in a 2 day event, and asked what has happened about it. Erica Knight (National Chairman) said we had looked into the locations and had arrived at a motivational speaker this afternoon and a training session tomorrow to try and build framework of how we want to proceed.

There were no other matters arising.

8 Presentation and Acceptance of the Federation's Reports for the year 2016

Erica Knight (National Chairman) said all the reports were available on the website.

National Chairman's Report – No questions

Honorary General Secretary – Katie Hawkins (Barnet Observer) asked Joan Clifford for her present email address.

NEC Admin Report – No questions

Anglia and South East Area Report – No questions

Midland Area Report – James Oliver (MA Chairman) said that there were 3 extra Area members he had not included so his membership figure is actually 129.

North Thames And Chiltern Area Report – No questions

Erica Knight (National Chairman) said that reports from Nicky Rolfe (SA Chair) and Jeff Rea (National Internet Co-ordinator) had been sent late last night so was the NAGM happy to vote on them? Geoff Buller (Lincs Quest Delegate) said we can't vote on something we have not even read, so are you going to tell us about it? Erica said we would.

Southern Area Report – Report read by Erica. Four groups – Abingdon (4 members), Andover & Newbury (1), Oxford (4) and South Bucks (5) – totalling 14 members. Area net worth £1,899.59. Activities included an Xmas meal at the Beefeater in Abingdon enjoyed by all. The Committee has attended the NTAC, MA, and ASEA Area Conferences as the Area are considering a merge. No training. Publicity – we are promoting our Centre Parcs weekend, most groups do their own publicity and make notifications using the SA website. Recruitment – ongoing. We have not been able to pursue with our new group Caversham but intend to in the future. The Area Committee are intending to discuss a merger with another Area but as a group within such. In the meantime it is business as usual. Report by Nicky Rolfe (SA Chairman).

Iain Parkes (Andover & Newbury Delegate) asked where was his invite for the Christmas meal? He was disappointed as he had not found the information anywhere. Brian Whittaker (Rothwell Delegate) asked for a clarification on the total number of members in SA. Erica Knight (National Chairman) replied 14.

Activities Officer's Report – No questions

Internet Co-ordinator's Report – Jeff Rea (National Internet Co-ordinator) read out his report. He was co-opted on to the NEC during the year. He feels that Plus needs 2 things from the web: an internal information site for existing members, and a marketing shop window to attract people. We don't really have the latter at the moment and that is what he wants to focus on. He has been investigating the plethora of Plus websites on the internet and says getting all the information is quite difficult. He has also researched what needs to be on a marketing website. If re-elected he will continue in this vein.

There were no questions for Jeff.

The reports will be voted en bloc. The reports were proposed by Didcot and seconded by Rothwell. They were accepted.

9 Presentation and Acceptance of the Federations Accounts for the year 2016

There were no questions for the NFO regarding his accounts.

Presentation and Acceptance of the Auditor's Report

There were no questions for Katie Hawkins (Barnet Observer and External Auditor) regarding her audit.

Proposed by Didcot. Seconded by Coventry

The accounts and Auditor's report were accepted unanimously.

Erica Knight (National Chairman) said we would now move to vote on the motions.

12 Motions for Debate

12.1 National Lite motion for 2017

This conference instructs the National body to restructure the organisation as follows :-

National should consist of a figurehead and deputy.

Their duties are to ensure that the National website(s) and insurance are paid for the organisation as one body.

They are to ensure membership cards are issued centrally to Areas annually (or as required if higher frequency required).

They are to ensure a directory is collated centrally for distribution to Areas and thence down annually.

They are a contact point for the National Organisation.

They ensure an annual meeting for election of the new National body, facilitating the meeting of Groups from across the Organisation.

They will present audited accounts for the Annual Meeting.

This will be funded as justified at the Annual Meeting equally by the member Areas, National funds, bar a contingency of a year's running costs, will be divided equally among the Areas.

Areas are relieved of quarterly national meeting representation at National.

Groups see no change.

This requires that the National Constitution be amended thus :-

All reference to "National Chairman" to read "National Co-ordinator"

Article 3.2.2 to be deleted

Article 3.3.7 to be deleted

Article 3.3.8 to be deleted

Article 4.2 to be deleted

Article 4.3.3 to be deleted

Article 4.3.4 to be deleted

Article 4.3.5 to be deleted

Article 4.3.10 to be deleted

Article 5.1.3 to be deleted

Article 5.6 to be deleted

Article 6.1 to be amended to read:

6.1 In furtherance of the Purpose but not otherwise the National Executive Committee may exercise the following powers.

i. to ensure that the National website(s) and insurance are paid for the organisation as one body.

ii. to ensure membership cards are issued centrally to Areas annually (or as required if higher frequency required)

iii. to ensure a directory is collated centrally for distribution to Areas and thence down annually.

Articles 6.2 to 6.4 to be deleted

Articles 8.1 to 8.7 to be deleted

Article 8.8.3 to be amended to read “The running of the Extraordinary General NEC Meeting will be the same as the Annual General Meetings and will follow all necessary procedures”.

Article 9 to be deleted

Article 10 to be deleted

Article 11 to be deleted

Article 12.1 to be amended to read “There shall be an appeals panel of the Federation, which shall consist of the National Co-ordinator and the Area Chairman and that it requires that the Model Area Constitution be amended thus:

Article 4.4 to read: Meeting of the Area Committee shall be held at least once every quarter and at such additional times as the Area Chairman in their discretion may direct.

Proposed by Stevenage

Seconded by Didcot

This motion will require a 75% majority.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) proposing, said fundamentally the National tier costs quite a lot of money. What they do could be done by a couple of people at much less cost, just to maintain the website and National Directory. This would free up money and energies to get behind groups to make them greater and stronger. Please vote for the motion so we can streamline the Federation and make it run more efficiently, save some money, and allow the good people on the National tier to support their groups and make the Federation stronger.

Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) – seconding – said the motion is there as an option. He thought that Jeff Rea would have a motion that would reduce the monies coming to the NEC [as has happened in past years by altering the levies] but this has not been submitted as a motion. Therefore more money will be coming to the NEC anyway, and this motion will enable the NEC to get on with more than they can afford at present. Please vote for the motion.

Erica Knight (National Chairman) said this motion would require 75% majority to pass.

She said the NEC is neutral on this motion.

Francis Wallington (Lichfield HLM) spoke against the motion. He said it seeks to revolutionise the Federation by stealth without engaging you, the members. However it is the worst kind of revolution. It prevents the organisation from recovering from its issues and problems. It denies them the mechanisms and procedures to operate on a national scale. It denies the organisation the opportunity to fundraise. It denies being able to respond to changes in legislation. It denies the opportunity to seek assistance from external organisations, and to employ people. It will not encourage innovation and development of skills. Remember, this organisation is about realising potential and skills. We cannot as a consequence be able to present or co-ordinate national events. We cannot agree or set national business because that has to happen at the NAGM. Francis said while we need changes, this is not the correct way. He wondered why this motion was even on the Agenda when he could see from last year’s minutes that it was discussed at the 2016 NAGM.

Iain Parkes (Andover & Newbury Delegate) says he hates to agree with Francis but Francis is absolutely right! The organisation has to focus on tomorrow and as it stands, the motion would totally destroy it. Vote against it.

Geoff Buller (Lincs Quest Delegate) said he wasn't really for or against it, but wanted to say he only found out 5 days ago what the motions were, he should have known at least a fortnight ago as then he could have known how his group would want to vote. John Smith (Leeds Delegate) was against the motion. He feels it would create a confederation which would not be good for us as it would create a split. We should stay unified, as is represented in this meeting. Also the NAGM Agenda would become full of humdrum business as opposed to now, where such business is sorted out by the NEC. Also the idea that the organisation can be run by 2 people is ludicrous as tasks such as maintaining the website should not be under-estimated. Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) said he felt neutral because you can have the best of both worlds. We will be discussing the Area Levy later today but not as a formal motion and the NEC will be guided by the wishes of this Conference. Jeff then said his proposals point to a minimal level of funding but nothing says there cannot be more funding! If the NEC has specific projects they can request more funds for such. It is therefore about accountability rather than restriction. Jeff said that we should have clarity as to the accounts more than before (where larger sums of money seemed not to be accounted for) but not at the expense of stopping things from happening. Jeff also would like a move away from so many formal meetings and (if elected) would like to move the NEC to more electronic communication methods. Brian Whittaker (Rothwell delegate) said he would vote against this motion because it came to him late and he has not had the chance to discuss it with his group. He asked the Conference how many have discussed this with group members, and counted 5 raised hands.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) in summing up, agreed with the last speaker and said his motion was submitted in time. He said the workload would not be restricted to just those elected but also could be delegated to volunteers. There would still be an NAGM where the meeting could give direction to the 2 people elected at National level. We need to remember that we have 333 members not thousands so the idea of sub-Committees etc is a little bit grand for what we are now. We just need to get on with it. We would remain a single organisation not a confederation. Mainly that the 2 people would not do all the work but see that it gets done. Please vote for this motion.

Voting on the motion:

For 4. Against 13. Abstain 4.

Motion lost.

12.2 Seconding Motion to 2017 NAGM

Conference agrees that, until amended, the existing clause 7.2.2 of the constitution be seen as sufficient proof that a motion proposed by one member group must have another member group seconding that motion.

7.2.2 Groups that are members of the Areas federated to the National Federation of Plus Areas are permitted to submit motions for debate and items for discussion to the National Annual General Meeting providing that they are able to submit a fully formed motion which has a seconder which must be another member group with the National Federation.

This motion is not proposing any change to the existing constitution.

*Proposed: Stevenage
Seconded: Didcot*

Erica Knight (National Chairman) said the NEC regard this as a point of information only as this is just what's done.

12.3 Proportional Motion to 2017 NAGM

Democracy has always been at the heart of the way that Plus has been run. Sadly the decline in the scale of the organisation has had a negative impact on the practicality of this democratic ethos.

For example: One group may have a hundred members and these hundred members would have two votes to represent their views. A dozen groups may each have one member and these twelve members would have twelve votes representing their views.

Beyond the democratic deficit, the real effect of the current arrangement is that decisions on the future of the Federation are disproportionately made by members who do not know how to run a successful group in today's market.

It is proposed to add the following clauses to the constitution to resolve this inequality:

7.2.1.4 Each delegation will be empowered to cast one vote for each member of the group that they represent, with the votes evenly split between the delegates. The membership headcount will be definitively defined as the number of members at the end of the previous calendar year, as reported to the National Annual General Meeting by the Group's Area Membership Officer.

7.2.1.5. An individual Group Delegate's vote allocation may not be split between outcomes of any one decision.

13.2.1 Each Area Chairman (or their representative) will be empowered to cast one vote for each member of the area that they represent. The membership headcount will be definitively defined as the number of members at the end of the previous calendar year, as reported by the Group's Area Membership Officer to the last National Annual General Meeting before the NEC meeting.

13.2.2 Any resolution passed by a simple majority valid votes (as empowered in 13.2.1) concerning the running of the NEC, General Purpose sub-committee, National sub-committee or the Federation shall be incorporated into National Standing Orders.

The existing 13.2.1 will be removed and replaced with the above version.

*Proposed: Stevenage
Seconded: Didcot*

This motion will require a 75% majority.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) proposing, said this motion would have complemented a Jeff Rea motion relating to funding in proportion to the membership, and is about voting strength being proportional to

numbers of members. Apart from being democratic, members of larger groups would know more about how a successful group is run in today's market, and the views of those members might be more valid than those of a one member group who refuses to shut it down. Please vote for this motion.

Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) seconding, said this motion was added in anticipation of Jeff's usual motion being on the table which would have been No Representation Without Taxation. He said that without Jeff's motion we would revert back to an Annual Levy of £600 per Area. Gerry Edwards (VP) clarified that Jeff's 'motion' would be addressed under the Facility for National Debate and any straw poll taken would guide the NEC. Adrian continued that it would have been fair for the votes of an Area to be proportional since the charges would have been proportional. Anticipating how the straw poll and NEC's direction would proceed, Adrian urged the floor to vote for the motion.

Ian Crawshaw (Chiswick Delegate) said that he did not like the proposed new clause 7.2.1.5 as to make delegates vote en bloc would be unworkable. Francis Wallington (HLM) asks is the present system acceptable? If so, please use it as we are a federation of Groups who are able to settle on a point of view and whose representatives will debate and come to a decision. Therefore, vote against.

Steve Rolfe (South Bucks Delegate) has come to like this motion and says it works at the branch he runs where delegates can vote proportionally or en bloc using a card. He also proposed an **Amendment** to remove the proposed new clause 7.2.1.5 from the motion. This was seconded by Chiswick.

Voting on the amendment – was not needed as Stevenage (proposers of the motion) were happy to accept it.

John Smith (Leeds Delegate) spoke against the motion, saying it asks are we a federation of groups or of members. As a federation of groups the system we have now works, so we should keep it. Iain Parkes (Andover & Newbury Delegate) spoke against the motion as it destroys the notion of groups discussing a motion in advance and directing their delegates on how to vote. It is also open to abuse. Keep what has worked for 76 years. Geoff Buller (Lincs Quest Delegate) said his group alone with 77 members would have nearly 25% of the total vote if this motion went through. It could be capped at 1 vote per 5 members up to a maximum of 8 votes but even so he thought it was silly and is against the motion. Chris Malloy (Lichfield Delegate) felt it was unfair to assume that smaller groups have less experience in these matters and therefore he will vote against the motion.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) in summing up, said that the current system is not working OK with reduced membership compared to the past, and we disproportionately listen to the smaller groups that have not kept their membership up. He believes Lincs Quest are worth more votes due to their success and large membership. Both these systems as well as others are democratic although some may seem unfair! He was annoyed that the motions were released late as he had submitted them on time; please don't let that sway you. Many of the against speakers made the same point and he thinks it is still a good idea, please vote for the motion.

Erica Knight (National Chairman) said that the NEC were against this motion.

Votes on the motion – with 15 votes against the motion was **lost**. [Number of votes for was inaudible]

Nobody stood for the position of National Chairman (but see later) so Erica moved on to:

11 Election of National Officers to serve from 1st March 2017

And

15 Announcement of Election Results of National Officers to service from 1st March 17

11.1 / 15.1 Honorary General Secretary

Ian Crawshaw (NEC Admin) stood for the position.

Ian said he enjoyed being NEC Admin and was ready for a change, and that one of the outstanding jobs to do was to update the Constitutions to reflect decisions made over the past 4 years.

Proposed by Hillingdon and seconded by Andover & Newbury

Voting strength re-established at 20.

Ian was elected to the position.

11.2 / 15.2 National Finance Officer

Nick Grant (South Bucks Delegate) stood for the position.

Nick said he has enjoyed the job so far but that it only feels like 6 months due to handovers etc. Please vote for him.

Proposed by Coventry and seconded by South Bucks.

Nick was elected to the position.

11.3 / 15.3 National Training Officer

Nobody stood for this position.

11.4 / 15.4 National Activities Officer

Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) asked if it was possible to stand for multiple roles and Erica told him yes.

Adrian Barnard (Didcot delegate) stood for the position.

Adrian said he has been NAO for 2 years and attends NEC meetings and puts on activities anyway. He asked for details for the National Directory and anyone who gives him their email address will get a copy by email. The National Spring Break is coming up and he is also involved in that. Please contact him if you want any help setting up activities.

Proposed by Chiswick and seconded by Coventry

Adrian was elected to the position.

11.5/15.5 National Public Relations Officer

Nobody stood for the position.

11.6/15.6 National Internet Co-Ordinator

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) stood for the position.

Jeff said he plans to produce a marketing website for Plus which will be externally focused rather than internally focused (which is what Mark Hewson's excellent website does). The incoming enquiries will help focus on where new groups might need to be opened.

Proposed by Didcot and seconded by Leeds.

Jeff was elected to the position.

11.7/15.7 National Publications Officer / Plus News Editor

Nobody stood for the position.

11.8/15.8 NEC Administrator

Joan Clifford (HGS) stood for the position.

Joan said she wanted to step down as HGS and become NEC Admin. She thanked Ian Crawshaw for his help over the year. She said it's worth coming to NEC meetings to see what goes on and to suggest ideas.

Proposed by Coventry and Seconded by Chiswick

Voting strength re-established at 21.

Joan was elected to the position.

13 Facility for National Debate

Diversity

Erica Knight (National Chairman) said we have had 1 item submitted for debate: Diversity. This was submitted by West Kent Group but as they are not here we would like to remove that from the Agenda.

Holidays and National Activities

James Oliver (Midland Area Chairman) said that as many of the groups were here today he'd like to ask them to give Adrian some pointers for what they would like to see in 2018 in terms of competitions and national activities. Alison Jones (Didcot Delegate) wondered if anyone would be interested in a trip to Dawlish for a sandcastle competition or other activities (disco, pool hall etc) if not interested in sandcastles. It has a lovely beach and she has found a reasonably priced caravan site. Adrian Barnard (NAO / Didcot Delegate) endorsed this and said this is planned for June. He also referred to his National Karting competition and asked would members be willing to pay £50 for an all day event including food. He will try and organise a National Karting competition later this year but needs at least 30 people for this to be a success.

Area Levies

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) wants a discussion as per the last couple of years where the Area levy is proportional to the number of members in the area (in the previous years) and be a quarter of the income derived from the membership. If the member paid a reduced rate the Area would collect 25% of the reduced rate, but Life members would not be included (as the income from such has already been collected). The NEC has the power to set the area levy and want to be guided by the will of the room. Katie Hawkins (Barnet Observer) said it was not fair for the area to continue to pay for Area Life Members as they were getting no income from them. Also what about National Life Members from which the Area has had no income. In her area she felt it cheeky to pay £2.50 (per member) to National for reduced rate members so was paying £5 for these. Besides there is no point in setting the figures if areas do not pay and she noticed that ASEA and Southern had not paid their levy. Martin Posner (ASEA Chairman) said they hadn't paid because they did not know what they had to pay and this has since been paid. Katie said the ASEA Treasurer should know based on knowing their area membership. Martin said he was waiting for the invoice. Katie said NTAC had paid proactively because they knew how much they had to pay but "That's our area for you" and thanked Martin.

Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) was disappointed that Jeff was late with his motion as it would have added consistency for the other motions. Adrian said he was initially against this motion but has changed his mind. It gives areas a chance to grow as they are not taxed to death. He was worried that this may yet happen this year because Jeff's "motion" was not submitted as a motion so did not go through. He feels this should lead to a One Member One Vote system as the taxation is about the member, not the group or the area. Adrian wants to see this as a motion next year requiring a 75% majority. John Smith (Leeds Delegate) agrees with the idea of a proportional levy system and also agrees with Katie's point about life members being exempt. John disagreed that areas can charge members reduced rates and pass on reduced rates to National as nothing in the Constitution provides for this but the Constitution refers to a fixed membership fee. He believes that if areas are going to do this then it should be agreed and voted on as a formal motion.

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) accepted that offering a reduced rate for new members is not a national policy but also said that areas should have the autonomy to make their own decisions regarding the membership fee. He liked the idea as he had originally put it, as it was a good incentive to have the reduced fee for new members, which must be completely new members as opposed to returning members. He felt that last time around the argument had been that it was unfair for an area not to pay anything for a Life Member – we can resolve this by saying we must pay levies for active life members although we need to discuss what would determine an active life member.

Erica Knight (National Chairman) asked for a straw poll on changing the Area levy in this way. 15 delegates supported this action with 2 against and 4 abstentions. Erica said we will take this to the next NEC meeting.

The Budget

Nick Grant (NFO) asked if everybody had a copy of the National Budget and said it had gone up on the website about 2 weeks ago. He then decided to go through it as not everyone had a copy. He said Insurance costs were similar and he was trying to broker a better deal with the insurance company. He wants to consider it from a groups liability point of view. He wants to avoid paying more insurance if it is based on the income (*) of the whole Federation. As an example ASEA attract a higher insurance charge as they put on larger events, and Nick wondered if they should budget for more of a surplus to make up for this. Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) asked if Nick meant turnover rather than income (*), and Nick said yes. Nick will look into this and come back to the areas and the NEC with some scenarios.

Nick has budgeted £150 for website hosting on Jeff's advice down from £250 last year which was not all used although that fee may have been bi-annual. NEC expenses are down to £300 as a provision. Training £100. Last year this was not used but tomorrow's food will likely take up last year's and this year's training budget. Then an item for Others / Contingency. This budget provides a surplus of £90.

Mark Hawkins (Barnet Observer) was pleased that the Insurance amount was not being whittled down as many larger events (eg WASH) don't just benefit the area but the whole organisation. Nick replied that he does not want activity organisers to feel constrained by insurance budgets and there is some flexibility in there. Example if there is an insurance surcharge of £50 for a hedgehop and we have 10 people, just charge them £5 each. Alison Jones (Didcot Delegate) asked if Public Liability insurance was covered. Nick replied the cover goes with the venue but anything extra such as a Treasure Hunt or an Indoor Olympics would attract extra charge.

Erica asked delegates to vote for the budget and with 19 votes for and 1 abstention, this was carried.

The conference then broke for lunch.

10 Election of National Chairman to serve from 1st March 2017

(re-visited)

Erica Knight (National Chairman) checked whether anybody wished to stand for Training Officer, Public Relations Officer, Publications Officer, or National Chairman.

Erica said she would like to stand for National Chairman.

The voting strength was re-established at 18.

Erica said she had done the National Chairman for 2 years, it isn't all bad, and she had a good team here.

Proposed by Stevenage and seconded by Andover & Newbury.

Erica decided to have a show of hands vote rather than a ballot.

Ian Crawshaw (Chiswick Delegate) was delighted that Erica had chosen to restand and asked her why she changed her mind. Erica said she had wanted to give others the chance to stand.

14 Announcement of Election Results of National Chairman to serve from 1st March 17

Erica was elected unanimously to the position of National Chair for 2017-18.

Erica thanked everyone and said here's to a good year.

16 National Chairman's Address

Erica Knight (National Chairman) acknowledged the lateness of the reports this year and said next year they would all be in on time. She thanked everyone for being here and said here's to a good year.

17 Election of Honorary Officials

Erica Knight (National Chairman) said that Francis Wallington would not be a VP next year but she said the NEC wanted to thank him for everything he has done. Francis got a standing ovation.

17.2 Vice Presidents

Gerry Edwards and Adrian Barnard

Ian Crawshaw (Chiswick Delegate) asked if Adrian would also continue as NAO and it was confirmed that he would.

The voting strength was re-established at 20.

The recommendation of the NEC to appoint Gerry and Adrian as VPs was voted en bloc, and was accepted nem com (1 abstention) by the conference.

Gerry thanked the Conference on behalf of both VPs and said they are always there to help.

17.1 Independent Examiner of the 2016 Accounts

The appointment of Katie Hawkins was unanimously accepted by the conference.

18 Any Other Urgent Business (Not Promotion of Events)

Geoff Buller (Lincs Quest Delegate) asked if the awards could be done after the meal rather than much later as he did not feel very well and wanted an early night! This was agreed.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) made a plea for the paperwork for the 2018 NAGM to be submitted much earlier than it had been this year. Ian Crawshaw said as incoming HGS he would be pushing for this to happen so reports could be read by the groups.

Francis Wallington (Lichfield HLM) asked if a projector could be purchased to guide members (without laptops etc) through the Agenda.

Joan Clifford (outgoing HGS), responding to Erik, apologised that the reports were late and said she had changed her email address and reminded everyone, although reports still had not come to her on time.

19 Announcement of the Date of the Annual General Meeting 2018

No date as yet but it will likely be in February 2018 on the equivalent weekend.

World Café Session – Francis Wallington (See Appendix A)

The conference broke for afternoon tea.

13.1 External Speaker – Wendy – “Inspire at AGM” (See Appendix B)

20 Presidential Closing Address by Vice President – Gerry Edwards

Gerry Edwards (VP) said he won't say much because today has been a really good conference with lots of agreement, and good debate on the motions. It has been the friendliest and best NAGM and we do have the passion. We got things done quickly because people were not that unhappy with the way things are going. Erica and the NEC are doing a good job and working together. Tomorrow some will work with Francis but others can take it away back to the groups. He hopes it was felt to be a good afternoon for learning. Both exercises had been good and complemented each other. Thank you all for coming, I hope you feel innovated, now take it back to the groups and come back next year having done some of these things. Let's show next year what positive change we have achieved. I think we can do it. Let's enjoy tonight then take the message back and start doing it. Don't switch off when we leave today, go and carry on. It has been a good day, now go and get ready for tonight when we can socialise. Goodnight!

21 Closure of the meeting by the National Chairman

Erica thanked Gerry and closed the meeting at 4.45pm.

Appendix A

World Café Session – Francis Wallington

This session was invited because there was lots of spare time left.

Francis Wallington drew attention to the question **“What do we the members need to do to encourage growth within the Federation”** and organised everybody (including observers) into groups of 5.

Attendees had 20 minutes to consider the question. Then Francis got 3 from each group to move to another group. There was then another 15 minutes in the new groups.

Attendees were then gathered to discuss the common themes. The themes and points raised were:

- Make a product (events etc) / Sell the product (publicity etc) / Keep doing it (even when successful)!
- Have a diverse product / programme / interest
- How to get enough members to put on a good product. Vicious circle
- Encourage friends
- Take ownership if in a rut → organise a programme planning
- Avoid being cliquey and unwelcoming to new members
- Be honest in appraising the weaknesses of the group and why
- Always be positive
- Don't look back, look forward
- Organise / do events
- Network
- Include
- Communicate (talk AND listen)
- Respond
- Advise
- Suggest
- Aid
- Operate a no blame culture
- Good hosting
- Focus on retention as well as prospective members
- Be realistic about who might join (demographics) (tend to not get enquirers below 30yo)
- Good range of publicity
- Why is Lincs Quest the largest group – what are they doing so well? Ditto Stevenage
- What can be done to help small groups grow
- Why are people only interested in big events such as WASH?
- Promote the use of your personal skills in Plus activity as a selling point on CV
- Realise the potential of people

Attendees were invited to send their thoughts to John Smith for circulation.

Francis thanked everyone for their participation.

Appendix B

External Speaker – “The Wendy Effect” – Wendy Garcarz

Wendy has studied our website etc. and thinks of us more as a ‘movement’ than an organisation. What does this mean? Movements drive awareness / create a buzz with people they are trying to reach. They create an impression, a sense of curiosity and interest in what they stand for.

Eg of movement – Greenpeace, CND, ramblers, voluntary groups on the canals
The movement has created a sense of voluntary canal work as an enjoyable pastime.

As a movement we have history and pedigree. But we need to change because “If we do what we have always done, we will get what we’ve always got”

We have to do things differently to get growth in our movement
We have to understand a bit about human nature / behaviour.

What attracted us to join Plus? Social life, friends, activities.
Can cut loose and be safe ← What a fab USB that was, said Wendy. Where can you go nowadays where you can walk through the door and be totally accepted because of like minds. This is unusual!

Wendy is short, blonde, a woman, overweight. But is not put off by putting her business about due to perception of image because she knows her strength is soft skills. Play to and sell our strength.

As members of this movement, what keeps us coming back? Is it just the discos etc or is there something more?

Movement goes through a lifecycle like humans. Youth – adolescence – maturity – decline.

Why join the movement?? We were asked to comment.

- Like minded people
- Part of a tribe (Wendy expanded on the status symbols within a tribe and how it adds to the psychology surrounding it)
- It’s fun (people will want to join if they see others having fun)
- Social acceptance
- Personal development eg public speaking (Wendy said this is very key as a safe environment breeds the confidence to build this)
- Romantic relationships
- Desire to change (Wendy said you cannot hold back the tide of change. Progress is astounding eg fridges that know you are low on foodstuffs, driverless cars etc. Danger of being left behind)

Summarising this list, Wendy said that people crave a sense of belonging.

People crave a higher purpose – greater good – leave a legacy. They want to make a difference. They want to know “What’s in it for me”

Wendy asked us to ask each other: what have I got out of Plus? We came up with:

- Sense of safety
- Non judgemental
- Relationships/friends (long term)
- Accepted for who I am

- Activities (with like-minded people)
- Increase confidence
- Having a laugh
- Satisfaction of seeing positive effects in other people
- Extended family
- Structured social life
- Help to overcome difficulties
- Practical support
- Combat loneliness
- Support through bad times
- Healing
- Developing trust
- Education

Wendy said: If you saw an ad for a movement that can give you all that... why would you not join??

Gives a sense of belonging like some religions might. We need to feel that we matter and being part of a movement can give you that.

Some tough love now. Wendy did not get any of the above from the website. We obviously do great things like activities, but she did not see the website selling any of the items listed above. We have to get this across to potential members.

Don't think what we do, think what we can make people feel.
 People forget what you look like or said but not how they made you feel.
 Touch people inside and they will join, don't and they won't

Wendy's challenge to us is how are we going to go out and integrate these messages into our pursuit of PNMs.

Some of us are long in the tooth – been members for decades!
 We start to slacken off out of habit
 It's normal for a movement
 View our long membership as expertise, not duty or experience. We are expert members of this organisation.
 If it is not working, stop doing it and try something else!

New people keep things exciting and give a fresh perspective to events (from floor)
 We have examples of good practice within - Stevenage, Didcot, Lincs Q. Erik (Stevenage) said we are successful because we never stopped doing the things that make us so.

Not enough people seem to be following these examples. Have a look at where it is working (go to the successful groups). OK geography makes this difficult, so instead use the technology (ipad / video) to pass it around (record and spread what we are doing successfully). If you try something new, it might not work but if you don't try, it never will!

Example – Pokemon
 7m people downloaded it in first 7 days!
 They created a (false) sense of scarcity. Scarcity sells
 It captured some of what we have on our board (doing something with like-minded people etc)

Grew Facebook support group etc

It has now bombed - because everyone was doing it! That stopped it being fun.

What went wrong?

No skills gained – no development / learning

No sense of personal satisfaction – no competition – no feeling of accomplishment

Too difficult eventually

People got bored

Brain needs stimulus

Biggest of all – it lacked human face to face-ness – lacked purpose

Wendy wants to leave us with four things:

1. Knowing your target audience

Common denominator of everybody in the room – a “target avatar”. Find the common things and pick “low hanging fruit”

2. A shared goal / focus

It's there.

3. Spread the passion! If we were to close tomorrow, leaving a gaping hole in our life, that's what we need to guard against and that's what we need to be spreading. This organisation has so many positives, we should be focusing on them. Acknowledge the passion ourselves

4. Celebrating success. Celebrate the little successes and learn from what does not work. Edison lightbulb – found 2100+ ways *not* to invent the lightbulb! Each one was a mini success. If things are not working you've just found a way not to do it. So keep going until find way that works for you

Anyone can be a critic. So a simple rule from here on in. If you come to me with a problem, offer a solution too. Stop listening to problems on their own.

Think overnight before tomorrow's session: How can I spread the word. Social media is the way people communicate nowadays. Talk to similarly minded people. What can I do to make a difference before next year's AGM. If you do just one thing you'll start to experience the sort of stuff you joined this organisation for.

[If you want a copy of the audio of Wendy's session contact ian_m_crawshaw@yahoo.co.uk]