

Draft minutes of the National Co-ordinating Group on 15/06/2013

Attendance WM (Barnet LU), SM (Birmingham LU), MH(Bradford LU), CS (Bristol LU), JY(Cambridge LU) SC (Camden LU) K BM (Cardiff LU) LC (Crouch End LU) LH (Doncaster LU) JM (Glasgow LU) TA (Greenwich and Lewisham LU), PG (Hackney LU) BN(Haringey LU), JK (Hull LU), RM (Huddersfield LU), VJ (Islington LU) DS (Lambeth LU), LC (Leeds LU), SM (Leicester LU), LC (Liverpool LU), CS (Manchester Central), JR (Manchester East LU) TB (Manchester South) DM (Manchester North), DI (Milton Keynes LU), MS (Nottingham LU), JH (Northampton LU), PM (Rugby LU) MH (Sheffield LU), NB (Wakefield LU), NW(Southwark LU) PH(Waltham Forrest LU), DC (Walsall LU), KS (Wandsworth LU), NW (West London LU), GR (York LU) AB (Directly elected section of NCG – DES NCG) TC (DES NCG) GH (DES NCG) KH (DES NCG) CH(DES NCG) BT (DES NCG) TW (DES NCG) plus observers from Hull and Sheffield LU

Apologies : Birkenhead LU, Brighton LU, Deptford LU Exeter LU, Leamington Spa LU, Lewes LU, Medway LU, Peterborough LU, Pontypridd LU, Portsmouth LU, Reading LU, Rotherham LU, Wimbledon LU, West Cheshire LU, MC, FD, SS.

The meeting was asked to endorse BT and TW in the chair. This was agreed.

Points of procedure were raised. It was agreed to come back to these after the welcome

LH from Doncaster LU welcomed us to the meeting and spoke about how LU was developing in Doncaster and the area more generally.

Those present introduced themselves.

NC from Doncaster FBU addressed the meeting about the struggles they were currently involved in

An observer raised the question of whether observers could speak. TC proposed that observers should not be able to speak, This was **agreed** 19 For (F) 13 Against (A)

WM (Barnet LU) moved a procedural motion that the motions on transparency be taken first. After 4 speakers in debate the motion was put to the vote.

The motion was **not carried** 12F 20A

Time Line to November conference

KH introduced the following paper from the directly elected section of the NCG which reads:

Timeline to November Founding Conference:

Proposals: From 15th June: establish Policy Commissions (dates are all suggestions) Each led by one/two NCG members, drawing in interested/expert members from the local groups/supporters of Left Unity to meet over next two/three months in person or electronically

- To produce initial draft policy papers for discussion at September non-voting policy conference (7th or 28th September)
- To refine policy papers in light of conference discussion and circulate policy resolutions to local groups for amendment by 11th October
- Discussion and amendment in local groups: deadline for amendments: 1st November
- Compositing if necessary
- Circulation of resolutions and amendments to local groups: 15th November

Founding Conference 23rd November

September Policy Discussion Conference: 7th or 28th September

- An open, workshop-based discussion conference themed around policy commission areas
- It will aim to encourage the widest open discussion on policy
- Policy papers will be presented by the policy commissions for feedback in workshop formats
- There will be no voting
- Ideas and feedback will be integrated by the policy commissions into their resolutions as they deem appropriate which they will then circulate to groups for amendment

Policy Commission Areas: how to group them? Wider or narrower subjects? Additions?

- Economy, environment, energy
- Housing, agriculture, transport, arts and culture
- Rights, equalities, immigration
- Welfare, education, health, crime and justice, constitutional
- Foreign policy, war and intervention, nuclear disarmament, arms trade
- Solidarity, development, international relations
- Party structures and internal democracy

November Founding Conference

- Policy resolution based
- Participation basis: It cannot be an open conference but how do we define membership and entitlement to participate?
- Proposed Founding membership: to sign people up to a 'founding membership' on a modest fee scale which is an indication of commitment. Only they would be allowed to participate at the founding conference. People have direct debits or standing orders can be converted to FM status. This can remain in place for the first year then require renewal.

PG introduced the following motion from **Hackney Left Unity** :

Hackney Left Unity group endorses the proposal for a November founding conference and the setting up of policy commissions to maximise participation. However we are concerned that the timetable as proposed is too tight and that the commissions will need more time to do the serious work required and involve a wider layer of supporters with relevant expertise. We therefore suggest that whilst workshops should be part of the founding conference final policy statements and votes should be deferred to a later (possibly weekend long) delegate based policy conference. The founding conference should discuss and vote on a broad policy statement (such as the East London draft), on democratic structure and membership issues, and on issues relating to ongoing anti-austerity campaigns and the 2014 European elections.

There were 17 contributions from other participants in the meeting.
PG and KH replied.

There was a short break for access reasons

The following votes were taken

Hackney LU resolution as above: **Agreed** unanimously

That policy commissions should be formed now: **Agreed** unanimously

That local groups should be able to put resolutions to the founding conference: (proposed by NW, Southwark LU) **Agreed** unanimously

That platforms of at least 10 people should be able to put resolutions to the founding conference (proposed by NW, Southwark LU) **Agreed** 27F 14A

Procedural motion to refer back proposal from CS (Manchester Central LU) to local groups **Agreed** 27F 14A The proposal is to *Invite trade unions, anti-cuts groups and left organisations to participate as observers in the policy commissions.*

To create a working group on social media **Agreed** 38F 2 Abstentions (Abs)

To vote on a draft statement at the September meeting (proposed DS, Lambeth LU) **Not Agreed** 7F 29 A 1Abs

To set up a constitutional commission **Agreed** 30F 4 A 7Abs (proposed by JY Cambridge LU)

The timeline to November as amended by all the points above which had been agreed was **agreed** by 37F 0A 3 Abs

The film proposal was explained by ED Questions were asked. The meeting unanimously agreed to the proposal.

A lunchbreak was taken

A motion from **Cambridge Left Unity** was moved by JY. The motion reads:

[Agreed unanimously that] All National Committee members are to be treated as equal and that all national committee meetings should have their agenda circulated in advance and the minutes circulated after the meeting.

A motion from **Southwark Left Unity** was moved by NW. The motion reads: All minutes and documents from national meetings and committees to be posted on the Left Unity website so that everyone can have access to the articles discussed, amended and passed, and see the decisions made.

10 speakers were taken in common debate on the two motions. NW and JY replied

The Cambridge LU motion was **agreed** 39F 1A 0Abs

Amendments to the Southwark LU motion that this should also apply to working group minutes (GH DES) and that minutes should also be circulated to local groups (TC DES) were accepted by the mover.

An amendment was moved that this section of the website should be password protected was **not agreed** 2F 34Ag 4Abs

The Southwark LU motion as amended was agreed 38F 1A

The following two resolutions from **Islington LU** were moved by TC:

Anti-racism, Islamophobia and the role of Left Unity

1. Since the Woolwich killing there has been a dangerous upsurge in racism. This includes a rise in racist attacks on Muslim, growing support from the far right English Defence League, and a discernable increase in the low-level racism of name calling and abuse that blights the lives of racially oppressed groups.

2. These recent events are all the more worrying given the longer-term trend towards a rise in racist sentiment and support for far right and xenophobic parties. The electoral breakthrough of UKIP

illustrates how the right can benefit from joblessness by diverting anger into attacks on immigrants and minorities, and away from the real causes of the crisis. It shows the need for a new party of the left that actively campaigns against racism. This has to involve more than simply anti-fascist activity and mobilisation, important as this is. In addition to this work, we need to tackle the “received wisdoms” of the new racism about Muslims and migrants that have become socially acceptable. In fighting the BNP and EDL it is therefore important to recognise the *mainstream racism* of the media and major parties, which provides implicit legitimacy for the violent actions of the far right. Positive arguments against mainstream British racism are therefore equally important as anti-fascist protests against the EDL and BNP. 3. A new party of the left worthy of the name must go on the offensive against racism in all its forms. Recognising the central role of anti-racist politics to a new political formation on the left, the steering group meeting in Doncaster resolves:

- To establish an open working group of volunteers to bring proposals for anti-racist policies, campaigns, and events to the founding conference.
- To immediately commission the working group to produce a factsheet, ‘RACE AND RELIGION IN BRITAIN TODAY: THE FACTS’, which carefully picks apart the most popular racist arguments.
- To organise a major series of local/national events around Black History Month in autumn 2013.

Proposal [2] for discussion from Islington Left Unity

Proposal for an all-London Left Unity meeting

1. The People’s Assembly against Austerity is a major opportunity to raise the profile of Left Unity. Given that it is in London it is particularly important for London groups to engage with it and help promote Left Unity on the day. 2. Islington Left Unity will propose to all the other London organisers that we organise a major public meeting in central London in ten days to two weeks following the assembly that can be advertised on the day. To this end, it will email all of the London organisers and seek to convene an organising meeting.

It was proposed that the meeting had no authority to agree the second motion. This was **agreed** unanimously.

It was ruled by the chair that the meeting only had authority to agree the bullet points in the first motion. This was **agreed**

It was proposed that the motion be amended to say that the working group should involve those directly affected by the issues (JR Manchester East LU), that the Fact Sheet should be in plain English (SM Leicester LU) and that the exact title should be agreed by the working party (issues were raised about the issue of the term Race which is not a scientific term whereas ethnicity is). These amendments were accepted by the mover.

The bullet points as amended were agreed 36F 0A 2 Abs

It was clarified that paper from Nottingham was for circulation not voting.

TC reported on the existing working groups. It was **agreed** to note these and ask for further volunteers from the meeting and subsequently through the newsletter. It was also agreed to create a working group on Scotland and Wales. A list was circulated which resulted in the following members so far:

AB reported on the developments around the People’s Assembly and the proposal to produce a Left Unity broadsheet at a cost of £550 to distribute. This was **agreed** by 37F 0A 1Abs

JH proposed that there be youth-led workshops at the September and November conferences. This was **agreed** unanimously

AB reported on the exchange of letters from TUSC. It was proposed that we have an early meeting with them at which no commitments are made. This was **agreed** 26F 6A 1 Abs
The delegation will be composed of AB, LH, KH, CS and BT

Left Unity National Coordinating Group (Directly-elected section) Planning meeting

17:00 to 20:00 10th June 2013

Present: AB, TC, MC, FD, GH, KH, SS, BT, TW

Apologies: CH

Political context

BT presented a summary of the context of the current political situation, both nationally and internationally.

Minutes and Matters Arising:

Broadsheet: In production for PAA. 5,000 copies for £490.

New leaflet: no progress yet as we still have some fliers in stock

Group rep elections: TC reported on good response so far.

Safe Space Policy: In progress and to be circulated on Saturday.

Draft timetable to November: Agreed following discussion and to be circulated for Saturday

Working groups: List agreed correct and require additional Conference WG and Organisation/Membership WG

Funding for Accessible venues: Agreed that Meetings and Access WG (MC, FD and TC) to advise and make proposals. Agreed to have signers at November founding conference.

Media Strategy inc. Film Proposal: SS proposed open letter to press – agreed. Press release process now operating – good coverage as a result. Discussion on film proposal – agreed that director can put proposal to NCG and expert opinion sought.

Trade Union report: BT, CH and NW had met to discuss work. BT and NW to run stall at Tolpuddle. Agreed TU item in each newsletter; TU flier to be prepared. Conference and fringe coverage being planned for next year as well as support for strikes e.g. NUT and PCS and meetings with TU contacts.

Complaint process: Agreed that a formal process be adopted for dealing with complaints – referred to organisation/membership WG.

Proposed agenda for NCG meeting:

Agreed to include: Welcome and Intro from Doncaster LU; remit and ratification; timetable and process to November founding conference; working groups; Film Director's proposal;

Group Development report; Press report; Trade Union report; Transparency resolutions; other Group Resolutions; People's Assembly participation 22nd June.

Agreed: short breaks approx every hour for access reasons.

Agreed: To propose TW and BT to chair.

Left Unity National Coordinating Group (Directly-elected section)

Planning meeting

12:00-15:00 Sunday 19 May 2013

Present: AB, TC, MC, FD, GH, CH, KH, SS, BT, TW

Political context

FD presented a summary of the context of the current political situation, both nationally and internationally.

Publicity materials

Agreed to produce a 4-sided A2 folded broadsheet for distribution at the People's Assembly - production: AB, FD, BT, TW. Agreed to look into producing a new leaflet with one common side and one side adaptable by local groups. Agreed to look into the possibility of a wallet-sized card with a template section that could be used to write local group contact details.

Media Strategy

SS reported back from the media working group and various outlets for publication were discussed. Agreed that a press release template and media guidance should be drafted and circulated to local groups to increase exposure from local press.

Agreed to set up contact page on website with email address for press enquiries to be forwarded to the media working group. Agreed to set up press release mechanism.

Local Groups Issues

Reported that 4 reps elected with majority of groups having meetings in the next 2-3 weeks. Agreed that the local group development working group should produce a guidance document with suggested ideas for building groups (to include support for isolated individuals). Agreed to support regional group support/liaison. FD & BT agreed to facilitate regional liaison for their respective regions (NW & Midlands).

Agreed that election methods should be left to the groups to decide, with guidance from the electoral procedure that was agreed at the national meeting on 11 May.

Agreed that support should be given to local groups by way of a 'Safe Space Policy' that would enable groups to intervene in cases of a toxic atmosphere being created by people making racist/homophobic/sexist/ablist etc. remarks. MC & FD to lead on this. Agreed that once a Safe Space Policy had been agreed that this could be circulated to other organisations.

Data & Questionnaire

GH reported on progress in making location data from signatories to the appeal available to local group organisers. This information would be circulated shortly.

Agreed that there should be a limit to the amount of information we ask for from our supporters, but that this should be revisited when membership structures were being considered. The question of accessibility was raised and the proposal that information on

access needs could be taken so that this could be flagged automatically to meeting organisers (local and national). GH to look into this .

Online issues

The possibility of setting up online discussion forums was discussed. Agreed that a private forum be set up for local organisers to replace the mailing list that was currently set up for such discussion. Agreed that the website and any forums being set up should operate under the Safe Space Policy to be drafted.

National Coordinating Group

Agreed that the first meeting of the NCG should take place in Doncaster on 15th June. Agreed that reps with access needs should have their accommodation paid for on a case-by-case basis. MC to coordinate accessibility. A pooled fare will operate. Agreed that local groups should be encouraged to collect money to cover their rep's travel.

November conference

The preparations for a founding conference in November were discussed, including a draft timetable to allow for full discussion prior to event including policy commissions, resolutions, compositing and amending. Agreed that KH would draft a proposed timeline based on the above, to go to the meeting on 15 June.

Finance and organisation

An experienced Treasurer has volunteered to fill the role. Agreed that they should be approached and that a bookkeeper should be sought to provide support. Suggested that the interim treasurer could also provide support in terms of a handover period.

Miscellaneous

Working group functioning

Agreed that an audit of the current working groups should be made and this information be made available for reasons of transparency. Agreed that this information be appended to the minutes of this meeting. Agreed that the working groups should be extended to spread the workload and improve geographical representation. Suggested that this could take place at the 15 June NCG meeting and that supporters could also be co-opted onto groups where appropriate.

Speaker requests and process

Agreed that a process should be set up within LU of responding to speaker requests and sending speakers to events and that an email address be set up for this purpose. Agreed that a briefing should be drawn up for speakers for both guidance on speaking and on organisational matters. Agreed that expenses should be paid by the group asking for a speaker to attend. Agreed that a list of speakers should be drawn up, not limited to people in the NCG and that we should ask prominent supporters to volunteer to be part of this, ensuring a political balance. Agreed that BT speak at an event in Sheffield on 29 June.

Greeting to Alter Summit

It was agreed that LU should send a message of greeting to the Alter Summit in Athens on 7 June. This greeting would be sent by either FD (if going) or by another supporter who would be attending.

Membership of working groups was noted

