



**National Federation of plus Areas**

**12<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting**  
**77<sup>th</sup> Annual National Conference**

**Held at the Jacobean Hotel, Coventry on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2018**

**Present**

Erica Knight (National Chairman)

Ian Crawshaw (Honorary General Secretary)

Nick Grant (National Finance Officer)

Gerry Edwards (Vice President)

Adrian Barnard (Vice President / NAO)

Jeff Rea (National Internet Co-ordinator)

Ben Allen (Publicity Officer)

Joan Clifford (NEC Administrator)

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 12<sup>th</sup> NAGM / 77<sup>th</sup> National Conference. She hoped we would have a productive conference and asked for mobile phones to be put on silent.

**2 The Presidential Address by Vice President Gerry Edwards**

Gerry Edwards (VP, Presiding) said it's a nice sunny day outside and nice to see everyone here and I hope we will get a lot out of today. There should be interesting debate and a good heated debate. This keeps people awake and lets people discuss things BUT please keep personal issues out of it, there has been a tendency for it to become a bit personal in the last few years. Discuss views but not people, although I know Erica will jump on anyone who does otherwise! I am reminded of a song we sing at the pub annually, it goes "Here we come again, Happy as can be, All good pals, And jolly good company". This is how we should be as we discuss today's business. We don't have to race against the clock today so take your time to debate and to think. Nice to see you all and over to Erica to start the NAGM off.

### **3 Election of Tellers**

#### **Nomination of Two Volunteers from the Observers**

Francis Wallington and Richard Thomas, proposed en bloc by South Bucks and seconded by Barnet.

The tellers were voted in by the conference.

#### **3.1 Determining Voting Strength**

The voting strength is currently at 19.

### **4 Election of Ballot Counters**

#### **Nomination of Two Volunteers from the Observers**

Erica pointed out that these can be delegates.

Richard Thomas and Francis Wallington.

The ballot counters were voted in by the conference.

### **5 Apologies for Absence**

No formal apologies were recorded.

### **6 Acceptance of Minutes of the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting at The Jacobean Hotel, Coventry, on 26<sup>th</sup> Feb 2017**

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 (HGS) 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**

Gerry Edwards (VP) said that the minutes had wrongly stated that he was standing down as VP – this is not the case.

Lis Buller (Quest Delegate) said she was incorrectly recorded as a ballot counter, this had actually been Liz Gormley.

The minutes were accepted.

## **7 Matters arising thereon**

Erica called for a moment's silence for Plussers who had passed away in the past year.

### **7.1 Question to the NEC from Francis Wallington:**

*At the Midland Area Conference HLM Mark Hewson, stated that the web hosting company SUNMAIA has been dissolved as a business. Thus, the routing to the website that Mark Hewson operates, by [www.plusgroups.org.uk](http://www.plusgroups.org.uk) does not work. This gives the impression that this website is not functioning and cannot be accessed. Please can we be advised of any actions taken concerning the web address and recovery of data held by this company?*

Jeff Rea (NIC) said this is complicated. SUNMAIA went out of business but became transformed into Hosted Developments under the same person! Strangely the new prototype website disappeared around that time, but Mark Hewson's site hosted in same place remained there. So they have been hosting that site for the last several years and they still are. The problem with the domain name is that that was pointing at the new site which is currently not there. This is awkward because of change of name and not having contract with the new company, but what we have in hand is to move Mark's site to a new hosting platform (he has agreed) and Jeff's new site will probably also be hosted in the same place. In the process of doing that, Mark will be able to redirect the name that Francis has picked up so it points in the right place. But the National Website is still there and if you use that website with a /plus after it, it works. Our other domains point to the same place. So we are not invisible, things are not quite perfect but this will be rectified in the coming weeks.

Francis thanked Jeff for this response and asked if any data had been lost in the process. Jeff replied we have not lost anything of significance as the prototype has very little data anyway and it was old and is probably not worth bothering with.

There were no other matters arising.

## **8 Presentation and Acceptance of the Federation's Reports for the year 2017**

**National Chairman's Report** – Erica gave a verbal report. She liked her time as Chair, she has a good committee, here's to the future whatever that may be. There were no questions.

**Honorary General Secretary** – Ian gave a written report and there were no questions.

**NEC Admin Report** – No questions for Joan.

**Midland Area Report** – a written report from James, no questions.

**Anglia and South East Area Report** – Martin gave a written report, no questions for him.

**Southern Area Report** – A written report by Nicky. Francis Wallington (HLM, Lichfield) asked for an update on the informal discussions about a potential new group in Winchester. Nicky has had no update and believes that was Bexi Cooke's idea as she is at university there, but nothing material has happened. Matt Dickinson (NTAC Chair) said he had advised Bexi to construct a business plan / feasibility study, after that we can see where we are. Katie Hawkins (Barnet Delegate) observed Oxford have only 1 member and asked what's happening with this group? Nicky said difficult to say, their pub venue was renovated so now they meet at someone's house. It's a gaming group so the arrangement is working better but they chose not to renew their memberships. She does not know if they are still meeting or not.

**North Thames And Chiltern Area Report** – A written report from Matt; No questions.

**Activities Officer's Report** – A written report from Adrian, no questions

**Internet Co-ordinator's Report** – Jeff Rea (National Internet Co-ordinator) said he will cover his topics later in the agenda. There were no questions for Jeff.

**Publicity Officer's Report** – Ben submitted a written report and there were no questions for him.

The reports will be voted en bloc. The reports were proposed by Barnet and seconded by Hillingdon. They were accepted.

## **9 Presentation and Acceptance of the Federations Accounts for the year 2017**

Nick Grant (NFO) had a written report and said it has not been an easy year. There have been problems with the bank account. Hopefully we are going to improve that situation but I can still give you some figures from last year. We started off the 2017 year with net worth of £21,105.78 and finished it with £22,424, a net profit of £1,318. This is partly due to less expenditure claimed by the NEC. Membership not changed that much overall.

Katie Hawkins (Barnet Delegate) asked what is meant by "You've recovered income from accounts not now fit for purpose". Nick replied the SADY account is now for the walking weekend. The Spring Holiday

account had money that was sitting there and we wanted to change that to be more appropriate for what was needed. Opened account for Plus AGM, this will help with figures (accounts being more clearly named and autonomous). Katie asked why open a Spring Holiday account when we have one already with £4K in it. Nick replied he had had problems with Natwest, so felt it would be easier to transfer monies between accounts himself. Natwest would not let him open another account with same name "National Federation Of Plus Areas". They did not offer him that much in help for sorting out the signatories. He got a message back saying he is now a signatory on the account, but he did not receive the welcome pack. Eventually the bank said he filled in the wrong form (because not previously a signatory) and we actually need 6 signatories. Eventually he found out who these were, most are here today and 1 coming tonight, should be able to complete the paperwork and solve the problem. Katie thanked Nick and said she can audit the accounts once he produces them.

James Oliver (MAC) asks who is getting the bank statements for the National account? Nick said he does and is still getting the NatWest statements but he did not receive March-June. He added that having all the comings and goings on one statement is confusing and that is why he is trying to split out the transactions by having different accounts, once the opening legwork has been done it should be a lot easier.

Richard Thomas (Midland Area HLM) said the membership numbers had been 348 in 2016 and "you said this year was similar to last year". Richard said the membership figures are actually 7.5% less than 2 years ago and you are back to the position in 2015 which was 316 members. Richard detects a certain complacency in allowing the membership figures to drop. He is concerned that one Area has just 9 members. He went on the website yesterday and noted no Chairman's report and not a single item of finance. He said this is a pretty poor display for an observer / new member / investor etc.

Nick referred those present to Agenda Item 15 – National Guarantee Scheme – that might answer some of Richard's points.

Joan Clifford (Lichfield Delegate) asked if Nick could complain to the bank for messing him about. Nick said he could approach the Ombudsman.

Francis Wallington (HLM) asked Nick to confirm we still have Public Liability Insurance and to what value? Nick said there is a new insurer set up that is a third cheaper and is more suitable for the streamlined Federation (no employees etc). His phone has no internet at present so will have to confirm numbers later. Francis asked can the insurer be made aware of our capabilities (eg employing someone) by showing them the Constitution. Nick clarified that he has made the insurer aware of what we are as of now, and if circumstances change (eg employing someone) he would look for an insurance policy to reflect this. The insurance policy details would be placed on Mark Hewson's website. The current insurance policy is currently on the website and updating this is ongoing.

Erica asked for a vote on the NFO's report. Francis said how can we vote without published statements? Nick said all the figures would be available for the May NEC meeting so the vote can be taken then, or via an EGM. Francis and Gerry Edwards suggested we verbally ratify the report today and ratify it at the May NEC meeting. Gerry acknowledged how difficult it is to change signatories because of money laundering concerns and he also said the Ombudsman cannot do anything about it because it is caused by government legislation (we do not have a case unless negligence can be proved).

Erica could not find a proposer for the NFO's report. There was concern over whether the NAGM can continue without such, but a proposal to continue was proposed by Hillingdon and seconded by Leeds and voted.

John Smith (Leeds delegate) – we have made the right decision but the solution seems simple. We have an area structure for dealing with National issues. When the report is put together it should be sent to the

Areas, voted on by the Groups at the Area Conferences, sent back to NEC, and ratified properly. This is just a procedure and is not meant as any criticism of Nick or the NEC.

## **10 Election of National Chairman to serve from 1st March 2018**

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 2018**

**And**

## **17 Announcement of Election Results of National Officers to service from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018**

### **11.1 / 17.1 Honorary General Secretary**

Ian Crawshaw (HGS) stood for the position.

Proposed by Lichfield and seconded by Leeds

Ian was asked by Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) about updating the Constitutions and said although he hadn't done it this year he hopes to do it for next time. Joan Clifford (NEC Admin) asked that reports do be submitted on time as it is very hard to keep chasing for this.

Ian was elected to the position.

After a coffee break, the voting strength was established at 18.

### **11.2 / 17.2 National Finance Officer**

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

Nick feels the job will get easier with the reorganising of the accounts, and his main goal is to deliver the National Guarantee Scheme.

Proposed by Leeds and seconded by Abingdon.

Voting Strength re-established at 19.

Nick was elected to the position.

### **11.3 / 17.3 National Training Officer**

Nobody stood for this position.

### **11.4 / 17.4 National Activities Officer**

Ben Allen (National Publicity Officer) stood for the position.

Ben is enjoying helping Adrian with some of the national activities.

Ben was asked what activities would he like to run other than National Spring Holiday. Ben said give him ideas and he will see what he can do!

Proposed by Stevenage and seconded by Lichfield

Ben was elected to the position.

### **11.5/17.5 National Public Relations Officer**

Nobody stood for the position.

### **11.6/17.6 National Internet Co-Ordinator**

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) stood for the position.

Proposed by Slough and seconded by Leeds.

Katie Hawkins (Barnet Delegate) asked Jeff if we would get a website this year, and Jeff replied we are starting anew following Sunmaia problems and something will arise soon.

Jeff was elected to the position.

### **11.7/17.7 National Publications Officer / Plus News Editor**

Nobody stood for the position.

Jeff said he was happy to take on elements of this role as well as his own

### **11.8/17.8 NEC Administrator**

Joan Clifford (NEC Admin) stood for the position.

Proposed by Lichfield and Seconded by Stevenage

Voting strength re-established at 18.

Joan was elected to the position.

Richard Thomas (HLM) said we have elected some team leaders. Help them and don't leave them high and dry, it's up to all of you.

## **12 Presentation on New Website / Marketing**

Jeff Rea (National Internet Co-ordinator): I'd like to talk about where we are on the website and link it in with marketing and development and what Wendy (the Inspirational Speaker from 2017 NAGM) and what we might do on that. Just to summarise where we are, we were going to have stopgap, but that didn't happen as discussed. This is not a disaster though, I have been doing some research, what we need to have, looking at our competitors, looking at what people are looking for, so we can build something that is effective, and it seems most people are accessing our website on mobile rather than desktop. So we need a website that works well on mobile. This is not just about a new website, this is about the bigger picture which encompasses what Wendy highlighted last year. Something that was picked up on was our marketing image and our name as an organisation, which is in some senses confused as groups are doing varying amounts of publicity and this is inconsistent. We have a problem with our name and Plus doesn't really mean anything. We have used Eighteen Plus in the past – obvious connotation problems. We have used Active Plus which is an established organisation that helps elderly people do more! National Federation of Plus Areas – not an inspiring name! We need a new marketing identity and this is exactly what Wendy told us we needed. We need to think about our name and the name people are searching for, and get a logo and publicity that are consistent across the organisation so we can present as one National organisation / Movement. I propose that we spend some money on this (£1000 or maybe less) to get something done properly and make us look like a serious organisation. This will start with our website but link through to all our publicity. In terms of the new website, we are looking for something that delivers results and at a national level, this means getting enquiries in about people joining us, and that's something we can measure. It does not really matter whether us lot in this room like the designs or not, because we are not the target audience. We need to do something different for those not yet in our organisation. We can make changes as we go along. I believe once we start getting enquiries in, we can look at where these are coming from (geographically) and analyse this. We can determine the priority areas for opening new groups. We know that some groups are very successful so why not replicate what they do across the country? Because it's very difficult to copy these groups as not all groups have the required numbers of really dedicated people. I think we really need to push the idea of volunteering with Plus rather than just being a member. A lot of committee work is like real jobs so we can support people in that and in gaining real life experience, and I hope we can provide training and see how people are getting on and make recommendations. So as well as new site and where are enquiries coming from, I suggest that we go down this track and get organisers on to where there is potential for new groups. I am hoping these ideas will be supported within this room, can we have a show of hands as to whether these ideas are supported and whether the possible expenditure would be supported in theory. We would have to take volunteering seriously but this is nothing new, this is just trying to formalise it. We probably need to organise a new national event for our volunteers. Wendy believes we can do it, so let's try.

Steve Rolfe (South Bucks Delegate) said we have had this sort of discussion before, including an Erik Bean discussion about rebranding a couple of years ago, and also he looks at Mark's website for information rather than any new website. Are we going to make Mark's website redundant, or run the two websites in parallel? Jeff replied that we operate the same way as companies do, with an outward facing site (identity, marketing, sell the product), whereas Mark's brilliant site has the purpose of providing information for existing members, he does not plan to change that. Regarding branding, that's why he is suggesting we get this done by a marketing / branding / expert in a way that will deal with the target audience. He wants to avoid ongoing internal debate among the existing members about the logos and designs and just get something done. Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) likes what Jeff is proposing and has acted as a referee in the past. The big problem is about two thirds of our existing members are in 5 groups and there are many groups out there that are just not doing that much. It's just as well that Plus is a non-specific name as all our groups are going to go off in different directions regarding their publicity. The dual website idea is a



good one – but can we put Mark’s website behind a login? Jeff said that Erik has outlined two choices: do we revitalise as a National organisation. The corporate branding should not stop groups continuing to run as they are, if they wish, it just puts the groups under a national identity. The alternative is just to accept that we are small and doing ok and we might as well continue as we are. Kath Good (Abingdon Delegate) said that Wendy has impressed her with the idea of a social movement and we are selling a safe place to socialise which covers all groups. Adrian Barnard (VP) would like to explore the successful groups and consider how to present what they do (teamwork, inclusivity etc). It’s not good if outsiders come into groups that are not running under the model that they have been sold. We need to collate the ideas that work and form what we are. John Smith (Leeds Delegate) and former Yorkshire Publicity Officer / National Development Officer – he agrees with Adrian and says this voluntary organisation runs on enthusiasm and Jeff’s presentation was clearly enthusiastic and this is infectious judging by how this discussion is going. Publicity campaigns generate enthusiasm so they work. John told the story of the Lion logo from the 80s, groups got behind that and so did an external publicity officer. National then brought in the tower logo which was very unpopular. However everybody pushed it and it worked. This happened again with the compass logo which followed it, the principle being that pushing it does work even if you don’t like the logo yourself! John said he has always tried to promote enthusiasm, do back Jeff’s ideas.

Richard Thomas (HLM) gave his background; Doncaster 18 Plus, young innocent, saw a local advert, met his wife and became Vice Chairman. The group grew and grew and got to 90 members. They had a great night out going to support the opening of Stafford group. He thinks that it’s rubbish if anyone would say Lincs Quest is too far to go to to see how they are doing, transport has never been so easy. Doncaster won most of the regional competitions. Richard then moved to Stafford which also grew with a good rivalry with Doncaster. He eventually became Mid West Area Chairman. Then, Plus had >10000 members and they did so much including the only exclusive booking of the Radio One Roadshow and raising £10K a year for the nominated charities. It was all about pride leading to enthusiasm and more pride, a virtuous circle and a story to tell. There is still a need for our organisation or it would have died 10 years ago, but we have to do something about it. Richard then asked us why we were here? Was it out of duty, because nobody else was bothered, pride, wanting to make a difference, or to meet up with old friends and then forget about it for a year. Please consider why you bothered to come. Richard says he came out of pride and outlined several other areas in his life where he has started small, stayed the course and helped it grow into something big. Eighteen Plus has helped him gain the skills he has used to make success in his professional life. So, volunteering is nothing new, it is there to be grasped. Plus needs a reboot, you are the people to do it. He has not seen much evidence of change since the Inspirational Speaker of last year, or the debate 2 years ago about the Guide to 18 Plus, and he passionately urged the conference to embrace the change and do it, rather than forget about it for another year. Be proud and enthusiastic not just for what you are, but for what you can be.

Jeff thanked Richard for his speech. He said he joined in the 80s and at that time, Young Farmers was the main competition and both organisations had around 10000 members. What do you think has happened to Young Farmers. Actually they have 23,500 members, so if you think you can’t do it, there is some evidence. Gerry (HLM) also recalled the days when we had 10000 members. There are still some groups that are doing exceptionally well and some groups have an event every day of the week. Young Farmers are doing well because they engage, we don’t do that so well because we are not big enough. Gerry would like some people from the successful groups to come up to the microphones and talk about their successes. Some Areas are starting to improve again so with the right enthusiasm it can happen. Branding is important and has to be got right, look at Adam [Redshaw and his Geo-cache magazine]. Get doing events that generate enthusiasm and people will come back.

Lis Buller (Lincs Quest) never intended to be Chair of biggest group in the country, she used to be nervous yet had 44 at their AGM which is double what we have today! Lis is here today because she cares about

Plus. A member since the 70s, she has seen lots of change in the good old days and in the now, has become more outgoing, and committee advancements have helped her become more confident. She's very proud of Lincs Quest in particular the charity fundraising, being involved directly sparks continuity. The most important part is having a program, we need to have a product to sell before we publicise ourselves. We started with a small number of events but they would happen with reliability. LQ started in 2002 with 5 members and grew to 43 five years later. Since 2010 they've had 70-80. It becomes self-perpetuating after 20 members. It's hard with small numbers because it's hard for a potential new member to break into the clique. Growing from 5 to the 20s is the hardest but it can come with hard work and luck. Traditional events are their core; meals out, theatre trips, quizzes and speakers on group nights. They have finally broken on to social media (Facebook) and do publicity in local papers – week in week out, it needs to be continuous. Results may not be immediate but can come in time.

Adrian Barnard (Didcot). His group is successful because of teamwork. People bring in new members. Continue to publicise and eventually maybe years down the line it pays off, it can take a year! Same with posters. Programme very important. Be positive about it, work as a team, listen to what people have to say. Always talk stuff up and interwork with people. What Wendy said last year does work so try and follow it.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) said Lis and Adrian had taken lots of what he had to say! We do it the old way, with a programme, on internet, blog, weekly email, tried the local newspaper but they are not interested. Erik has been the force behind Stevenage for 25 years. Speak to me and the other speakers, remember you're a member of the Federation so you can come along to the group night, come along and put the effort in. Make and sell and publicise the product.

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) said do whatever works for you as long as it's successful, it's about the bigger picture. Jame Oliver (Solihull) said you cannot now ignore social media, it's huge in this country and you need to have a presence on it to be competitive. Richard Thomas (HLM) said events are not too difficult to do, for instance pay a charity speaker £20 and give them a bottle to come along, suddenly you have raised £200 for their charity! Little steps, and that then can get in the paper when you give them the cheque!

Erica thanked all those who spoke about their groups.

Jeff Rea called for a straw poll on whether we are happy as we are (being small), or to support his ideas but he cannot do it all on his own and voting for his ideas implies you will be able to give some support and endorse spending of some money (image designs, volunteers' day). He hopes that the speakers just now could come to the volunteers' day and inspire the volunteers. The floor indicated overwhelming support for Jeff's proposals with nobody voting for the "stay as we are" option.

The conference then broke for lunch.

Voting Strength re-established at 19.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) proposed an emergency motion that we suspend Article 5.5.1 of the National Constitution in order that Erica can re-stand as National Chair. Seconded by Barnet.

Ian Crawshaw (HGS) read out the relevant article:

## 5.5. ELECTIONS TO NATIONAL POSITIONS

5.5.1. Any individual who is a member of a Member Area is eligible for election or re-election providing that they shall not serve for more than three consecutive terms.

The emergency motion was passed unanimously.

### **10 (Revisited) Election of National Chairman to serve from 1st March 2018**

Erica Knight stood for the position.

Proposed by Stevenage and seconded by Lichfield.

Matt Dickinson (Deputy National Chair) said the vote would be done by a show of hands as per the mood of the room.

Erica was elected to the position unanimously.

### **13 Motions for Debate**

#### **13.1 Motion to set Area Levies Proportional to Membership**

That the compulsory element of the area levy be set at 25% of the total income due from membership fees for each area in the preceding year and that this arrangement continues until altered by a subsequent motion.

Instead of all areas paying the same, areas would continue to pay a levy in proportion to their membership. The levy would be calculated at 25% of the standard membership fee multiplied by the number of Area members in the preceding year, excluding National HLMs.

This motion will require a simple majority to pass.

Proposed: NEC

#### **Preamble**

*Each year from 2015 and onwards, a motion has been raised to enable the setting of the Area Membership Levy to National to change from a fixed £600 to 25% of the total income from membership fees due in the previous year, which would then form the basis of the Area membership levy for the current calendar year.*

*As an example, assume an Area has 60 members (new or renewed) in 2017, and the membership fee for an ordinary member is £20. Excluding life members and the like:*

*Under the current system the Area will owe £600 levy in 2018*

*Under the proposed system the Area will owe £300 (25% of £20 multiplied by 60) levy in 2018*

*The upshot of this is that an Area with 120 members would pay the same under the new system as it currently does under the existing system. An area with fewer than 120 members would pay proportionally less. (Naturally an Area with greater than 120 members would pay more).*

*This motion has either taken place at the February NAGM or at the May NEC meeting. In each case it has been carried.*

*The NEC believes that it would be sensible to make this an ongoing amendment for the time being. It would therefore remove the need for it to be raised as a Group motion year after year.*

John Smith (Leeds Delegate) said as a point of order he believes this is a Constitutional motion and as such needs 75% to pass. It affects 4.2 of the National Constitution that gives the NEC power to set the Area Levy. Adrian Barnard (Didcot observer) said as a point of information that the votes on the equivalent motion raised each year have exceeded 75% anyway.

Erica Knight (National Chair) accepted the change to a 75% majority required.

Francis Wallington (Lichfield HLM) asked regarding motion 13.2, please explain why we are repeating a motion. Erica said it is not a repeat because 13.2 is about proportional representation not proportional membership. Francis asked what is the difference between this motion and the previous year's motion. Erica replied 13.2 is about proportional representation at NEC meetings.

Matt Dickinson (NTAC Chairman) said the motion reflects reality and how we have done it the last few years, we can afford financially to do this so vote for the motion. Katie Hawkins (Barnet Delegate) asked is the income due meaning £20 or a different amount that an Area may charge. Nick Grant (NFO) said it means £20 per member. Katie asked does the "preceding year" mean the calendar year and Nick replied it's November to November as that's when the membership count is done for levies. Katie said that's not what the motion says. Katie then said the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph says "excluding National HLMs" but the pre-ambule says "Excluding life members and the like". So what happens with group LMs, Area LMs etc. Matt clarified that the example was badly worded and it refers to HLMs so the levy would include £5 per quarter for Area LMs etc but not National HLMs.

Richard Thomas (HLM) wanted clarification on the decision about the membership year, was it November or December? Nick Grant (NFO) clarified it was November. Richard said this causes a conflict between this motion and the next which refers to a calendar year. Nick Grant (NFO) clarifying, said the membership year was November – November because of the Insurance policy. He said as the policy is not for renewal until 2019 there would be no problem with going with the calendar year. Francis Wallington (Lichfield HLM) said this motion is delaying the inevitable, that of areas no longer being able to sustain themselves. One area in particular has been in grave threat for at least 3 years. The NEC has to plan for this in its budget. We are now amending the existing mechanism to set a levy. We need the organisation to reform as a whole and for the NEC to lead us in that and plan for growth. Needs a lot more work, and a business plan. Secondly we need a budget, budget plan to be produced for this meeting or another meeting to be discussed. Please vote against this motion. Adrian Barnard (Didcot observer) used to be against this idea for all of Francis' reasons, but it actually seems to have worked. It takes money out of the equation where necessary and helps those who are struggling. In previous years you have passed this with > 75%. I think it's a good thing because it helps people out where needed.

Matt Dickinson summing up, said this motion reflects reality and what has been in place for the last 5 years, and has helped struggling areas survive. The NEC would ask you to vote for the motion.

The motion was **carried** (nem con with 17 for and 2 abstentions).

### **13.2 Proportional Motion to 2018 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 area may have a hundred members and these hundred members would have one vote to represent their views around the NEC table. Another area may only have a dozen members and they too would have the one vote.

In an organisation that is funded at a national level per member, it seems only reasonable that the influence be similarly distributed. Not to do so would surely be taxation without representation.

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

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 Purposes sub-committee, National sub-committees or the Federation shall be incorporated into National Standing Orders.

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

This motion will require a 75% majority to pass.

Proposed: Stevenage

Seconded: Didcot

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) proposing, said these motions complement each other nicely. We decided to pay national levies in proportion to our membership size, this lets us vote in proportion to membership size at the NEC meetings. To not do that would be unfair, this is keeping it in line, please vote for the motion.

Erica said the NEC were against the motion.

Gary Hardiman (Didcot Delegate) seconding, spoke for because he thinks it's fair the votes be cast in proportion to membership size of an area. It's not fair if a small group gets the same vote as a big group.

Ben Allen (Stevenage Observer) asked for clarification on how this changes from the present situation, is it per group or per person. Matt Dickinson (NTAC Chair) said that at the NEC meetings Nicky would have 9 votes, Matt 128, Martin about 70 and James about 114. Nick Grant (NFO) said the NEC were against this because it would deter some from coming to the NEC meetings as there would be no chance of their views being represented. Kath Good (Abingdon Delegate) feels this is penalising her Area because it is struggling and deters people from attending the NEC meetings and NAGM and the larger areas can create a dictatorship. Matt Dickinson said as a point of information this does not affect the NAGM, only NEC meetings. Kath Good added that people will just become disillusioned with the whole process and give up. Steve Rolfe (South Bucks Delegate) looked for what is the motion going to achieve. More members, more groups, or more interaction within the organisation. In 5 years of NEC meetings he cannot recall when the 4 area chairmen have not reached consensus. He'd rather see one member one vote and see more members attending and interacting rather than sending 2 delegates. It would encourage more people to integrate and take on the ideas from Richard, Adrian and Erik. Please vote against the motion. Francis Wallington (Lichfield HLM) said this organisation runs on individuals being committed to engage with it, gaining confidence and practice in democracy. The motion reminds him of the worst of a Trade Union Congress where huge personalities dominate – please vote against. Adrian Barnard (Didcot Observer) said Steve's argument would suit a different sort of one member one vote AGM. The positives are that this motion encourages people to do well, doesn't punish, it rewards the success. John Smith (Leeds Delegate) spoke against, I do not see representative democracy as a lesser democracy. To suggest each Area Chair should have votes equivalent to their members seems fair on the surface but structurally I don't think it works. If we go by that logic do we need an AGM where each set of delegates also has votes equal to the number of members in their group. It's a representative system, I don't think it has caused us injustice thus far. We are a very consensus oriented organisation the way we do things, evidenced by that motions turn up year after year.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) summing up, once implemented this would not stop Area Chairs speaking at NEC meetings, it is only about votes at NEC meetings, it is rewarding success and we are also keeping the principle of having voted to pay in proportion let's vote in proportion. For fairness and good governance please vote for the motion.

Richard Thomas (HLM) asked for clarification about how abstentions affect the voting figures. Ian Crawshaw (HGS) said that abstainers are removed from the voting pool and the percentage is determined only by votes for and against. Please use your vote as it is fundamental to the result.

Voting on the motion: 4 for and 15 against so the **motion was lost**.

### **13.3 New Membership Fee for New Members**

That the membership fee for new members be set at £10

Proposed: Hillingdon

Seconded: Stevenage

This motion will require a simple majority to pass.

#### *Supporting Notes for 13.3 and 13.4*

*Two proposals following on from the excellent speaker we had at the last National AGM and her idea that we should have some kind of incentives to encourage people which we could publicise on a national basis.*

*The first proposal is that we adopt at a national level what some areas do and say new members can join for £10. This has proved very effective at getting new members to join up for the first time. It would only be for completely new members, not for people who have been a member in the past and come back.*

*The second proposal is that we adopt at a national level what some groups do and say that members under 30 only pay £10. This has been proved successful at retaining younger members. Younger people are often finding things hard financially, many will still be studying and although for many of us £20 is not much, for them it can be a significant barrier to renewing. Of course our older members are still important, but if we do not take steps to build up our younger membership, inevitably the Federation has no future.*

*The aim of both these proposals is that they are headline offers. It is not expected that either of them will have any significant financial impact. In fact if we find ourselves with loads of new members and loads of members under 30 only paying £10, that would be a really good problem to have!*

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) said this motion (and 13.4) ties in with this morning and last year's speaker, an incentive to encourage people to join up. There are 2 ideas so 2 motions. First one is new members can join for £10. This is almost status quo in that several areas do it already but not consistent across the Federation. This would make it consistent. £10 for first year only. Area levies would contribute £2.50 rather than £5 in respect of each new member in this way. Although this is less money to National this would be 'extra' money as it would come from new members, so all good. Both of these offers (13.3 and 13.4) would be headline offers and would look attractive on the website with minimal financial impact.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) seconding, would echo a lot of what Jeff said, extra money, positive effect, generate more in the long run, recruitment is so important, help increase our 322 members into many more, so please vote for the motion.

Erica said the NEC was in favour of the motion. Nick Grant (NFO) at the moment the membership fee is £20 of which 25% goes to national. National gets the £5 regardless of what an area charges for membership. National can support £2.50 coming in from each new member if this motion is passed. Adrian Barnard (Didcot Observer) was not for or against but had some points of information, his members are happy to pay £20 for subsequent years as £10 or £20 is still excellent value for money. He asked Katie Hawkins if this would present an increased workload for her. Katie Hawkins (Barnet Delegate) asked what Adrian meant by workload. Adrian clarified that there would be some members at £10 and some at £20. Katie replied it was no problem as she can filter her spreadsheet on new members, or not. Lis Buller (Lincs Quest Delegate) asked her members at Lincs Quest group night, 44 members there and nobody was in favour. A new member said £20 was great value, to make it cheaper devalues the organisation. You can try before you buy for 1 month and the £10 makes no difference. Lincs Quest have a discount for those who stay so they reward loyalty by making it cheaper for subsequent years not more expensive.

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) summed up, he believes the effectiveness depends on geography, members are not objecting to the £20 in places where there is little competition. It's harder for groups near London etc where there is more competition. People are attracted by the reduced joining fee. Lots of businesses do have these headline offers and he understands the argument that loyal customers are unhappy about that, but those commercial organisations know what they're doing, they have the headline offer because it works. We need to have something that works and to communicate that to our existing members and explain that we all benefit if the Federation grows.

Voting for the motion, 11 for and 8 against so the **motion was carried**.

Adrian Barnard said as a point of information groups can still charge what they like, it's just the £2.50 on the area levy for new members that becomes the compulsory part. Nick Grant (NFO) said the £10 would be the price publicised everywhere on the website to keep it consistent. Katie Hawkins (Barnet Delegate) said this will affect motion 13.1 because the income collected per member could now be £5 or £2.50. Geoff Buller (Lincs Quest) asked from what date would this start. He was told the 1<sup>st</sup> of March.

#### **13.4 New Membership Fee for Under 30s**

That the membership fee for members under 30 be set at £10

Proposed: Hillingdon

Seconded: Slough

This motion will require a simple majority to pass.

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) said this is a very similar incentive again driven by the same ideas, about retaining new members who we get who are under 30. Some groups are already doing this. Younger people are often in a more difficult financial situation and the membership fee can be a bigger barrier, that is his experience with Hillingdon Plus and other groups he is in. Also depends on geographical area, if you are nearer a big city there will be more competition for your membership, to keep things going we need to get and keep younger members. It's a headline offer, an incentive and it's thinking about our future.

Rhianna Wright (Slough Delegate) seconding, said it's hard to get younger people in, would be great to have some under 30s and anything that supports that is a good thing.

Kath Good (Abingdon Delegate) asked how about the over 40s, am I less valued than an under 30. How many here are under 30? The reality is we are an older organisation. We took the 18 away as we recognised this, what's wrong with older members. It's a stereotype to say that younger people don't have money and older people do, so I am voting against. Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) spoke against, he doesn't like age discrimination, we've finally got rid of the age restriction and tied up the insurance, we don't have age discrimination in this organisation anymore, please don't bring it back. He is just reflecting on how young 30 is to most of us now and thinks this motion is wrong.

Erica said the NEC were for this motion. Nick Grant (NFO) said it won't affect the finances materially, we think £10 for under 30s would work quite well, they would be happy to hand over £10 but maybe not £20. John Smith (Leeds Delegate) spoke against, he wants to know is there any statistical evidence that this



scheme would have a positive effect on recruitment. Adrian Barnard (Didcot Observer) said as anecdotal evidence Didcot members are happy with the £20 and the younger ones don't worry about having a mortgage and so on. It devalues people in this room who care enough to turn up, so he would vote against.

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) summing up said regarding evidence, there is empirical evidence from experience, talking to younger people in Plus and others. He expects it's different geographically, certainly people under 30 do see £20 as a barrier and we'd struggle to get them to renew. Of course it is discriminatory but we are discriminating to build up the younger membership of the group or we will all get older and won't have a younger generation to keep this going. Vote in the interests of the Federation not your personal interests.

Voting on the motion – For 2 Against 17 so the **motion was lost**.

Richard Thomas (HLM) asked when did we last publish a full age profile of the membership, and isn't it time we did it again? We need to know where we are at. Ian Crawshaw (HGS) said the NEC will take an action to work on this.

The NAGM broke for afternoon tea.

## **14. Facility for National Debate**

### **14.1 Social Media Survey**

James Oliver (Midland Area Chair) said last year on the back of Wendy's inspirational speech, some people including Richard Haydon, Bexi Cooke, Francis Wallington, Ben Allen, Dot Sallis designed a Social Media Questionnaire which went to the general public and also to some Plussers. The aims were to promote guidance for business strategy and marketing strategy based on the social media (SM) tools out there. We will review data and highlight key points and give you conclusions. Thanks to all for participating and I will put a PDF on Mark's website.

46 people responded, most between 36-64, none below 25, gender split equal. Locations included Dagenham, Stevenage, Birmingham, Solihull, Walsall. The questions were:

Do you use SM? Over 40 respondents said yes, 3 no, top 3 SM outlets were Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp. Bebo, LinkedIn, Instagram, Google+ also used.

What technology do you use. 82% smartphone 67% computer 63% laptop 47% tablet / iPad / Notebook.

Why would you want to join a social club. Top answers: new people, friends, activities. 93% said they organise activities.

Supplementary question on charity fundraising – 65% have done some charity fundraising now or in past.

Apart from Plus what other groups have you joined? Scouts or girl guides most popular. Potential for them to join Plus after 25.

Office for National Statistics said in 2017 90% houses in UK have internet access up from 57% in 2006. Adults use internet through laptop or smartphone on the go. Emails still most popular activity with 82% adults using it. Breakdown: Facebook / Twitter 80% adults below 34 use internet for that, down to 60% for the 45-54 age band. Google estimates two thirds of the UK are online every day for about 2 hours.

In conclusion, the Federation's use of SM is very patchy, don't seem to have coherent national strategy towards FB and SM in general. FB / Twitter etc are free. Plus should produce a strategic review of the

organisation using SWOT regarding SM. We have people in this room with SM skills. We should try and utilise these skills. Need effective broadband in your home. Cannot afford dialup. The Government is concerned re loneliness, people less engaged to go out. Plus offers opportunities for people to engage and socialise with.

James asked the floor for questions. Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) said he, Lis and Tom are the email contacts for Stevenage via their website and they can help with any questions. Gerry Edwards (VP/HLM) complimented James on his work. I run my business on SM we can get fantastic results but I get more work than I can do! It's wrong to think old people don't use it, it's a mixture. People generally are using it. I like Instagram. It does work, is free, easy to advertise, does snowball, but need to keep at it. Need to update websites regularly. Ten years ago at the AGMs we were talking about spending £000s on advertising but now it's all free. Agree with James we need a strategy. Happy to mentor people, encourage everyone to use it. Young Farmers have a very effective SM campaign. Can pay to target age audience with Twitter. Still very cheap. Maybe this time next year we can have another survey to see where it's being used. James added that you can use Youtube etc for "How to"s to get help with using SM. Francis Wallington (Lichfield HLM) said beware of FB's policies regarding what information gets through. Also if you use SM, use it to tell a story.

## **14.2 General Data Protection Register**

James Oliver (Midland Area Chair) said the next presentation was about the General Data Protection Register. We were asked to raise this because Mark Hewson brought this up at the MA Conference recently. Europe is introducing new regulations for protection of personal data. This will impact Plus. Data in personal computers and how it's shared will be affected.

We were going to show a video by Lewis Silkin about GDPR. I'm going to explain key points about registration and how it will come into force on 24 May. There will be penalties for data breaches of up to €20m or 4% of worldwide turnover. The NEC will have to take an audit of the current system and where data is held and by whom. Also needs to tighten up on forms of consent which a member gives to Plus when joining, all membership forms to have consent box to agree to share personal data. Also need to document we have done training for GDPR and regulations and ensure it is kept centrally. Current legislation was incorporated into UK law 13<sup>th</sup> Sept 2017, awaiting review in House of Commons. European law still applies up to end March 2019. This will allow British companies to be safe harbours for European data held here on its servers post Brexit. Next actions, Plus needs to spend money on a national workshop for all area membership officers for GDPC to learn new regulations, needs to tighten up membership forms to take this into account, needs to be aware that it applies to EU citizens' rights even if they leave. Members need to be informed about data being kept and for what use and updated membership forms need to be introduced soon. Any questions.

Steve Rolfe (South Bucks Delegate) asked if every member will need to fill in a form now. James answered that members who renew will need to use the new membership form which explains use of data. Steve said Southern Area members complete the form online so what about that. Matt Dickinson (NTAC Chair) said this is fine as long as the online form has a checkbox and a statement of intent and complies with the GDPR legislation. Steve said his form was quite simple and James said it will need to change to comply with GDPR regulations. Steve asked if there would be a template, to which James replied that Mark Hewson (the MA membership officer) had brought this up. Francis advocated that a workshop would assist with this. Gerry Edwards (HLM / VP) manages GDPR for 4 different organisations that was brought into legislation last year, caused a lot of panic, but as a smaller organisation we can relax a little, we can manage it, can be done by consent form on membership renewal. We need a National membership officer

and one for each Area and for certain data not to be shared, for example an age profile is fine but not with names. We can do it without spending masses of money. The NEC will need to decide who this Membership Officer would be, and they would be responsible for holding that database and sharing the right parts of it with the area membership officers, appropriately.

Mark Hawkins (Barnet Observer) asked Gerry if he would share his knowledge with a view to wording the membership forms. He added that if the member data was decentralised that was OK as long as it is known who holds what data. Gerry agreed with Mark and said we were probably small enough an organisation to be exempt but it would be good practice to do it anyway. Matt Dickinson said if there are data breaches (loss, hack) the ICO should be informed straight away and there were penalties for not doing this. James said this must be done within 72 hours. Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) echoed that an added paragraph on the membership form explaining where the data would be owned and used should suffice. James did not know at present. Matt presumed that any use of the data for marketing would have to explicitly have permission sought. Mark Hawkins wondered that old hard copies of former members' details would have to be shredded. James said that was why an audit would be necessary. Joan Clifford (Lichfield Delegate) asked if membership officers would have to periodically do a Data Protection test. James assumed there would be an annual compliance audit. Adrian Barnard asked if he would be able to get information on who was a member, for the purpose of booking members into the NAGM. James replied that names and numbers were OK but probably not anything else, and Mark Hewson was going on a course soon so would know more after that. Francis Wallington offered to email CIPD Fact Sheets to the NEC, this was used to help prepare James' presentation, but he needed to be careful about disseminating this as he did not want to compromise his own membership of the CIPD.

## **15 Presentation – The National Guarantee Scheme**

Nick Grant (National Finance Officer) is going to present on this and the related National Event Support Scheme. He mentioned "Tapping into soft intelligence" to find out what people really want to do, for example, put on events but they are scared of finances or support. Nick proposed to NEC that we can alleviate this by allowing people to put on events with no fear of this. Say an area had somebody wanting to put on an event but wasn't sure what this would achieve. The Area releases the money to guarantee the event. More events leads to more members. When areas guaranteed the project / discussion / speaker / holiday etc – they would be given a guarantee by National that it would not financially lose. Same principle works for areas with less funds; you can ask for money up front. We want people to feel they can put on things without fear of financial penalty. Nick cited Good Practice. Once we have this, everyone pulling in same direction, then we have a chance. Good Practice is about looking after our event organisers. The National Event Support Scheme will come down to the NAO to build up a team so for anyone putting on event, there are ways of supporting you, whether help with setting up bank accounts, how to advertise, or use of the tools we have discussed earlier. Once programmes are getting fuller, we are going somewhere. We have the money, we can put it to use.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) was concerned that while this was basically a good scheme, it allows poor organisers to let money get frittered away. Can we vet against this? Nick replied that would be organisers would have to approach their area Committee and the vetting would take place at that stage. Erik said that Areas could still take advantage of this and Nick replied due diligence would need to be used. Katie Hawkins (Barnet Delegate) assumed National would require a budget for such an event, this would mitigate against poorly thought out finance. Nick replied that Area supported ideas would go to the NEC for a second level of checking. Katie thinks this will cost time. Matt Dickinson said this could happen faster through use of email, not necessary to wait until the next meeting. Nick clarified that this was not a compulsory idea, and would be aided by the GPC. He also felt that if Erik was advocating a "risk free

Federation”, the Federation would not grow. Erik replied there’s risks and there’s risks and was worried we were not even voting on the biggest decision of the day. James Oliver (Midland Area Chair) asked if Nick could write up his notes and Nick said he would put it up on the website, and you don’t need to vote on it as it’s choice. Adrian Barnard cited some examples of events and budgets; the NAGM is scalable easily; the Spring Break runs because an AGM mandated it and last year it made £200 – this year it’s likely to make a surplus and so it can be scaled similarly next year. Then there is National Karting which Adrian heavily subsidised and made an expected loss, but if it was planned to break even it would attract few because of the expense. Main points being a judgement call on the budget and competence of the organisers. Nick added the Area Chair and Committee would be able to make this judgement call also. It won’t attract crazy ideas but hopefully will lead to more events.

## **18 National Chairman’s Address**

Erica Knight (National Chairman) said thanks for a productive meeting that improved as it went on, good team around me, if you want to join us or attend NEC meetings you are all very welcome, you can find details on the website. James’ presentations will be on the website as well.

## **19 Election of Honorary Officials**

### **19.1 Independent Examiner of the 2018 Accounts**

The appointment of Katie Hawkins was accepted by the conference.

### **19.2 Vice Presidents**

Gerry Edwards and Adrian Barnard

The recommendation of the NEC to appoint Gerry and Adrian as VPs was voted en bloc, and was accepted by the conference.

Gerry thanked the Conference on behalf of both VPs and said they are always there to help at any time about anything.

## **20 Any Other Urgent Business (Not Promotion of Events)**

Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) said don’t leave booking for the Spring Break to the last minute as places are filling up. He also said the evening meal would start slightly earlier at 7 for 7.15 as more trophies to award. Richard Thomas (HLM) thanked Conference for letting him come and to speak. He liked the positive vibe at lunchtime with people talking about Plus but was slightly concerned that the vibe had regressed a little this afternoon. Bringing on new people, trying things out, you’ve got to learn to try it, do a budget and so on, that’s the only way we will get new things happening with new people. Please don’t stifle it before it starts, take the many positives. He is hoping there will be some good success stories and ideas discussed in 2019. He looks forward to seeing everybody next year.

## **21 Announcement of the Date of the Annual General Meeting 2019**

No date as yet but it will likely be in February 2019 on the equivalent weekend.

## **22 Presidential Closing Address by Vice President – Gerry Edwards**

Gerry Edwards (VP) said it's been a good "up and down" conference and cannot follow Richard's speech. He recalled the much longer AGMs of years past and thinks perhaps it is better now. You have achieved a lot today. The contentious bits are challenging but we need challenge so that's good. To sit through an NAGM and do nothing would be the worst thing. It was a constructive debate with important decisions made, we can build on that, social media is a great platform, listen to the 4 groups that told of their successes earlier. The success stories meant it was hard to decide who to award the trophies to. There are a number of groups now who are developing and who can build on what they have done, and then start helping other groups. It can happen with inspiration and energy and some work. I wish you all a safe journey home and thanks for coming. Let's come back next year with even more members!

## **23 Closure of the meeting by the National Chairman**

Erica closed the meeting at 5pm and thanked everyone for coming.