



National Federation of plus Areas

13th Annual General Meeting
78th Annual National Conference

Held at the Jacobean Hotel, Coventry on Saturday 23rd February 2019

Present

Erica Knight (National Chairman)

Ian Crawshaw (Honorary General Secretary)

Nick Grant (National Finance Officer)

Gerry Edwards (Vice President)

Adrian Barnard (Vice President)

Jeff Rea (National Internet Co-ordinator)

Ben Allen (National Activities 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 and thanked everyone for coming. 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) welcomed everyone and said it's nice to see 1 or 2 new faces. He introduced himself for those who might not know him. It's an interesting day as not that much has changed since last year. Let's use it to think of new ideas. It's a great social occasion but we need to do something. We have some very inspiring groups to talk about. Perhaps the successful groups can tell us how they are doing so well. What are we going to do between now and next year. We've really got to utilise the time today. There's probably 30 different opinions in here, let's make them all count. I want everyone to engage in the conversation. If we accept what we have got then that's fine but let's make a decision and do we need to come here again? I hope the answer is YES. Today we have to move ahead and decide how we are going to do it, whatever that direction may be. That's for you to decide. Would it not be nice to not have a "no" microphone! Nothing wrong with honest friendly criticism in the discussion, but not negatives. This will engender a better spirit amongst us. I hope everybody here will have the chance to say something even if just "we are doing ok". Let's all take part. Let's be controversial, we don't have some "Jeff" motions today but we need some controversy. Be positive and critical and constructive but not negative.

3 Election of Tellers

Nomination of Two Volunteers from the Observers

Joan Clifford and Ben Allen, proposed by Stevenage and seconded by South Bucks and voted in by 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

Joan Clifford and Ben Allen, proposed by Lichfield and seconded by Rothwell and voted in by conference.

5 Apologies for Absence

Nicholas Leeks (Didcot) and Richard Thomas (HLM).

6 Acceptance of Minutes of the 12th Annual General Meeting at The Jacobean Hotel, Coventry, on 24th Feb 2018

The minutes were proposed by Lichfield and seconded by Barnet. The minutes were accepted nem con.

6.1 Points of Accuracy

None

7 Matters arising thereon

Francis Wallington Lichfield Delegate. He referred to his question in 7.1 from last year and reminded the conference that the National Website was down recently and asked about this, saying that a NEC member had paid privately to ensure continuity of the service from the web host. Ian Crawshaw (HGS) affirmed it did go down and there were conversations between himself, Mark Hewson, the NEC and the web hoster. He paid £240. Said that Mark generally liaises directly with the web hoster and after a few hiccups it all now seems to be running. Francis thanked Ian and hopes he is suitably reimbursed.

There were no other matters arising.

8 Presentation and Acceptance of the Federation's Reports for the year 2018

National Chairman's Report – Erica did not provide a report.

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

NEC Admin Report – Joan gave a written report and there were no questions.

NAO Report – Ben gave a written report and there were no questions.

NIC Report – Jeff gave a written report and there were no questions. There was a question from the floor – when did it become available and Ian Crawshaw (HGS) said he believed within the last 48 hours.

Due to the late availability of the report, Erica read it out.

“At the National AGM last year I was elected to continue as NIC and I agreed to cover Publicity as no one was elected to that post and I see them as closely related. During the year I have researched our marketing image. I have looked at the various names that our organisation has used, how they represent what we do and how well they work in a modern online world. I have researched what people are looking for and how we should present ourselves in order to be found and be able to grow. I presented the outcome of this work to the NEC meeting in November with proposals on the most effective name and image we could use. The NEC agreed we should go ahead with this and build a consistent new design and image, for the new website and for our marketing across the organisation. Unfortunately since that meeting I have been ill much of the time and have made little further progress. I am very disappointed as I had hoped and intended to present the planned new image and website at this National AGM. I appreciate that there is not much to see at this stage, but I really have done a lot of work on this and I hope you will re-elect me so

that I can continue with this project. This is exactly what our inspirational speaker Wendy said we needed to be doing and I feel it really does offer a way forward and a future for Plus.

Jeff Rea”

There were no questions.

Anglia and South East Area Report – Martin gave a written report. Francis Wallington (Lichfield Delegate) asked him what the situation is regarding paying levies to the national tier, as money was owing according to the 2016 independent examiner’s report. Martin Posner (ASEA Chair) felt that the only money owing now was that for this year for which he has not yet been invoiced. Katie Hawkins (Independent Examiner and Barnet Delegate) there were some unidentified credits on 2017 accounts, maybe a cheque from ASEA. They owed money for 2016, there is the unidentified credit from 2017, and no sign of payment in 2018. You need to tell Nick [Grant, NFO] what to invoice based on your membership figures. Martin said these were in the report. Katie said NTAC and Midland have a standing order set up to pay every quarter and NTAC just adjust the SO accordingly. James Oliver (MAC) said yes they pay about £600. Ian Crawshaw (HGS) made a point of order that James’s comment might not make the minutes because he was not near a microphone, please be at the microphones when you speak. Nick Grant says normally at the November NEC meeting we know roughly what the membership numbers are for each area. Both Midland and NTAC work out their membership and pay by SO accordingly and Nick works it out for ASEA and Southern. Normally they know what they owe and Martin normally pays a cheque at the NAGM (although he hasn’t got a cheque this time).

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

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

Southern Area Report – A written report by Nicky. No questions.

Vice Presidents’ Report – A written report from Gerry and Adrian. No questions.

The reports will be voted en bloc. The reports were proposed by Rothwell and seconded by Abingdon. They were accepted by majority (16 for – 1 against – 2 abstain).

9 Presentation and Acceptance of the Federation’s Accounts for the year 2017 and 2018

Erica Knight (National Chairman) said you should have both the 2017 and the 2018 accounts before you, and asked for any questions. Francis Wallington (Lichfield Delegate) questioned why the NEC is loaning money to Hillingdon rather than its Area. Nick Grant (NFO) explained that a cheque bounced going to WASH from Hillingdon. It concerned WASH as they need to pay for bands etc. NG said it was easiest for National to pay it to get it paid quickly and he wants to see events continue without people getting disgruntled. This should be alleviated by the National Guarantee Scheme which Nick will talk about later. Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) – he is kind of half getting this but we only appear to be getting levies from half the areas and he worries about our future and what we are doing, how can we get it right, can we

expand on that please. Nick Grant (NFO) – anything owed to the Federation is a sundry debt so it's a debt until it's paid. He is not too concerned that there is money owed to the Federation. Steve Rolfe (South Bucks Delegate) – can I just clarify – has the loan been repaid by Hillingdon to National? NG – no. SR – why is this? From the WASH accounts to which he has been given some access, there are several references to a cheque for £1205. This debt was in October and we are now at the end of February. Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) said this is very peculiar. Hillingdon does not have much money, it's always tight with getting money in / out for events, this cheque when initially presented, the bank said the account had not got sufficient funds to pay it but then later agreed we had. Then the cheque was paid, the money has left the Hillingdon account but has not arrived in the WASH account. So basically it has disappeared in the bank clearing system. JR has been pursuing this with both banks and the banking ombudsman and trying to get this resolved, but as of yet we have not got a conclusion and the money is still missing. SR – can you show some evidence of this? – statements, correspondence etc. JR – our bank say the money has been paid and WASH say they have not received it, but he does not have the proof with him. SR – maybe NTAC can pay WASH so it becomes an issue that can be resolved within NTAC. JR – that would be an area decision. SR is concerned this could happen again next year. John Smith (Leeds Delegate) raised a point of order that the question has been answered and this NAGM is not the forum for going into further nitty gritty about this.

Francis Wallington asked if we are now able to vote and accept the statements produced by Katie. Katie Hawkins (Independent Examiner) - the only question in my mind are the assumed figures on the 2017 because I was unable to find out from Nick, was not able to find out what those unidentified credits are so I have had to assume the NAGM and spring holiday figures are correct. I have had to assume these unidentified credits are for these events. So that's not ideal. And obviously the question of ASEA levy has arisen, we need to find out what those credits are and has the levy been paid although 2018 got easier as the NAGM and Spring Holiday then had separate accounts. I believe my own statements but I will be abstaining from voting on them! FW – I am pleased we have an Independent Examiner as it has helped resolve this situation. But not comfortable with how Katie answered my question and feels the NEC needs to defer this vote to the next NEC meeting. Erica Knight asked would you be happier if we split the accounts by year and voted separately on them? FW – we still have problems over levies so I want to err on the side of caution. Katie – 2018 was much easier and there were no questions with levies, it was just 2017 and the unidentified credits but it would seem silly to vote for 2018 and not 2017. Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) – I am still uncomfortable about the levies and how we can be sure they are being paid properly. Nick Grant (NFO) – I've been trying to change the system over the last 3 years to make it easier for Katie and 2018 has been easier. Katie's thinking about the levies is correct, the outstanding levies become sundry (good) debts – you can actually vote on the accounts with this in. Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) – Nick's statement counters my thoughts but we still have got to be sure who has paid what when. I think deferring it to the NEC meeting would be a good idea. I'd remind everybody that anybody can attend the NEC meetings. Mark Hawkins (Barnet Observer) – having watched Katie prepare the accounts in some detail, from a cash position you can have confidence in the accounts, what you can not be sure of is the worth of the member areas because of a bounced cheque, the area levies question, and although I trust Martin it's a matter of attribution. That payment would reduce amounts due to creditors and interest payments. It would be possible to resolve this by accepting the accounts subject to confirmation of the outstanding items, and take the outstanding items back to the next NEC meeting. That way the delegates here get a chance to express their opinion on the accounts without waiting another quarter, but doing this with noted outstanding actions seems to be the way forward to me. John Smith (Leeds Delegate) agrees, says we are able to accept these accounts, given the NEC is aware of the issues raised and the need to deal with them. The issues themselves can be dealt with by mandating your Area Chair to chase up the issues at the next NEC meeting, or raise it at next year's NAGM under matters arising. I don't think we need to defer the vote and urge the floor to accept them.

EB – I propose we vote on the accounts with those qualifications sent forward to the NEC. This was proposed by Rothwell and seconded by Leeds. Mark Hawkins (Barnet Observer) – if we are going down this route we need to note down the exceptions we need to resolve and Katie I think you are in a good position to do that (Levies, bounced cheque, loan). Erica asked Katie for clarification. Katie replied that in 2017 I could not easily identify all the income for the Spring Holiday and for NAGM, and have assumed the unknown credits were at least partly related to that. The 2 unknown credits in January for £849 and March for £2735. There were 2 payments made to NG totalling £55 I don't know what they were for and assume for NEC expenses. There was also a cheque for £250 again don't know what this is assume NEC expenses. Possibly a dictafone? Then the question as to whether the unidentified credits contain levy payments from ASEA [but not Southern as they have not made any payments]. Then in 2018 there's following up on the loan and getting the missing money found, and also the bounced cheque for last year's NAGM £126. NG – with the Lloyds Bank Adrian and I were both put on the account. The cheque never came back to me so I presume it came back to Adrian. At the time I gave Adrian all the online access to the account so he could look. I was able to print out all the statements from the Plus AGM account which by the way works really well as it makes more clear where money is. I am still clearing this all up for the handover to my successor as NFO and I will address all these outstanding issues. My successor should find it much easier than I did! KH – questioned why Nick did not act on the bounced cheque earlier. NG – I only looked at the statements when it was clear that Adrian had not done this. Most of the year the account lies dormant.

Erica – can we now vote on the procedure to vote on the accounts with these exceptions. Proposed by Stevenage and seconded by South Bucks. The procedural amendment was accepted.

Voting on the accounts – proposed by Rothwell and seconded by Leeds. The accounts were accepted by conference.

10 Election of National Chairman to serve from 1st March 2019

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 2019

And

17 Announcement of Election Results of National Officers to service from 1st March 2019

11.1 / 17.1 Honorary General Secretary

Ian Crawshaw (HGS) re-stood for the position.

Ian said he could not deliver as much this term due to mainly work commitments but would do what he could.

Proposed by Didcot and seconded by Abingdon

With the voting strength at 19, Ian was elected to the position.

11.2 / 17.2 National Finance Officer

Nobody stood for the position.

11.3 / 17.3 National Training Officer

Nobody stood for this position.

11.4 / 17.4 National Activities Officer

Ben Allen (NAO) re-stood for the position.

Proposed by Stevenage and seconded by Didcot

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 (NIC) re-stood for the position.

Jeff said he has done a lot of work which he will discuss later on and he did do a presentation for the NEC on where we were going, in November. He hoped he could present more today but has not been well lately and has had to sort out the problem we were discussing earlier.

Proposed by Leeds and seconded by Lichfield.

Jeff was elected to the position.

11.7/17.7 National Publications Officer / Plus News Editor

Nobody stood for the position.

11.8/17.8 NEC Administrator

Nobody stood for the position.

Erica said that without a Chairman and a NFO we do not have a constitutional committee. Notwithstanding, the NAGM continued.

13 Motions for Debate

13.1 Making the definition of Life Membership Consistent

That the Area Constitution and Group Constitution be changed to reflect that Life Membership terminates in accordance with the National Federation's Insurance policy, rather than at a specific age.

Area Constitution

Change 8.3.2 to read:

8.3.2. Life Membership terminates in accordance with the National Federation's Insurance Policy.

Group Constitution

Change 5.2 to read:

5.2. Life Membership terminates in accordance with the National Federation's Insurance Policy.

This motion will require a 75% majority to pass.

Proposed: NEC

Supporting Notes

Currently these clauses refer to the age of 80. We would like to make the definition of the termination of Life Membership consistent with what is already in place for Ordinary Members, and bring it in line with what the Insurance Policy allows.

Matthew Dickinson (NTAC Chair) – this is about tidying up, because the Constitutions used to say a specific age and it was decided at previous AGMs that the membership of the Federation should terminate in line with the Federation's insurance policy. This does not affect when members can join the Federation which remains at maximum age 65.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) – my concern is that leaves us without specifying a minimum Life Membership termination age as it would depend on the insurance policy bought at the time. I would like to see such a minimum put in. Brian Whittaker (Rothwell Delegate) asked how much input would we (at the NAGM or NEC) have into deciding this age as some insurance policy employee could set the benchmark. This benchmark should be set by us rather than some employee of an as yet unspecified insurance company. Nick Grant (NFO) – the insurance is set to whatever we decide on the motions. This year I managed to reduce the cost of this by £200. If we change the motion I will need to change the insurance. If we change the insurance to cater for an increased exit age then it will be bound to cost more. Ian Crawshaw (HGS) – clarifies that this motion related to Life Membership only and the wording is already in place for Ordinary members, this is just to make it consistent. Brian Whittaker (Rothwell Delegate) re-iterated his concern that an outside body could decide something that is for us to decide. Nick Grant (NFO) – this is about risk, they just assess risk. If a motion is created at NAGM then I will go back to them and

they will re-assess the risk. So it's not really somebody making decisions for us all they are doing is assessing risk. He said that we decide the risk, therefore they [the insurance company] decide the premium. Erik Bean – so how do we decide what to tell the insurance company? Gerry Edwards (VP) says this begs the question what is a Life Membership? It could be bought or it could be given as an honour. It would be wrong if a Life Membership had to end in this way, it should be for life. Nick Grant – the Plus insurance is different from say Centreparcs and more complicated, it is up to us to set our insurance requirements based on what is in our constitution and that includes our upper age limit. He answered 80 to a question from the floor: what was the prevailing age limit.

Katie Hawkins (Barnet Delegate) – the motion talks about Life membership, but the Annual Membership also needs tidying up, because the Group Constitution says membership terminates in accordance with the Insurance Policy, but the Area Constitution does not seem to address this. Ian Crawshaw (HGS) said the Group Constitution does set this out in more detail, and it is not about making the Constitutions identical but about addressing where it is inconsistent in treatment of ordinary vs Life members. Katie says there are other bits such as employed staff and national accountants and not of all this is consistent but maybe this is a conversation for another time. Ian said a lot of this is historical and we can't just remove these clauses, we need to get the removal ratified. John Smith (Leeds Delegate) says vote against this motion because as others have said it puts us in line with insurance companies rather than ourselves. The motion should state our definition of such a membership exit age, not one that can be decided by an insurance company. Francis Wallington (Lichfield Delegate) – there is no continuity of Life Membership here – the person awarded it has to renew it annually. Gerry Edwards said that the exception is National HLMs which don't have to have a group. This whole area needs tidying up and it is probably historical from when National split into Areas. Joan Clifford (NEC Admin / Lichfield Observer) said she is a Life member (paid up) and has never needed to prove it. Adrian Barnard (Didcot delegate) said as a Life Member it's the best £60 he has ever spent but he doesn't mind whether the rules change, he has had value for money.

Geoff Buller (Lincs Quest Delegate) questioned where the 80 came from and wanted to know if it affects Lincs Quest members coming up to 80. Ian Crawshaw (HGS) said he believed the upper age limit used to be 65, then a NAGM voted it to 80, then another motion changed it to "in line with Insurance policy". He said this is his current understanding but he can clarify it later.

Gerry Edwards said we have an issue here and we need to take action and this might mean raising the age limit rather than kicking active members out. We might need to do this sooner rather than later. Lis Buller (Lincs Quest delegate) said in 2016 one of the LQ members put forward a motion that lapsed over 65 members can rejoin. She felt the ensuing discussion unearthed that there was no upper age limit on the insurance.

Steve Rolfe (South Bucks Delegate) proposed we move to next business. This was seconded by Stevenage. This was carried. Ian Crawshaw (HGS) said he would revise this and hopefully return with an answer that was less controversial. He thanked everyone for being controversial!

14. Presentation – Constitutional Updates

Ian Crawshaw (HGS) handed out copies of his presentation and said there would be an element of "Popmaster" [guessing the years changes were voted in]! He was pleased and surprised that motion 13.1

did not just pass in a straightforward manner. He said this presentation is not about changes to the constitutions going forwards, but changes that were voted in since 2013 and had not been written into the documents. He wants the NAGM to ratify the changes at the end.

Ian said that the changes boil down to 4 main areas. The first change was frequency of meetings, with quarterly NEC and Area meetings being replaced to "as needed" and can be remotely, although an annual meeting is still necessary. Areas and NEC still tend to meet quarterly anyway, just the formal obligation has gone.

The second change related to motions. Historically motions may have needed to pass between Area and National back and forth to seek ratification, and a dual priority system for such motions was in force. This has now been simplified such that Constitutional motions can only be moved at NAGM or a NEGM, and all else can just be handled within an Area or the NEC.

The third change was about the Non-Geographical Area, a concept whose purpose is to allow geographically distant groups to exist in a virtual Area with an appropriate committee, to aid development of such groups. We don't have an NGA presently but this change allows it to be possible.

The fourth change related to membership exit ages and may need revision, although these changes were voted at previous NAGMs. The previous rule was that you could not enter the Federation if over 60 but you could remain until 80. The 60 is replaced by "66th birthday" and former members can also rejoin after this. The exit age is currently referred by the current insurance policy (which needs investigation). So in theory this area is more flexible.

Ian asked the floor for questions. Francis Wallington (Lichfield Delegate) referenced Joe Gurney's knowledge of jurisdiction and asked why we don't mention complying with the legislation of the UK and the European Community. We need to follow such legislation in the light of Data Protection / Ownership. Ian answered that since 2013 no motions have been brought to add in such wording. There were no further questions so Ian asked for a vote to ratify the draft Constitutions and Standing Orders. The documents were proposed by Didcot and seconded by Rothwell. Ian said a majority vote would be enough.

The draft Constitution documents were ratified nem con (17 for, 0 against, 2 abstentions).

Matthew Dickinson (NTAC Chairman) said he had the minutes from NAGM 2016 when the age range was addressed and voted on. *"There was an initial motion from Lincs Quest that membership terminates at 81. Erica had said that Hiscox [Insurance] had no upper age limit. Adrian had said this motion is common sense. Jeff asked is this to open the range from 65 to 80. Martin (LQ) said the motion was aimed at opening the door for renewals. Members over 82 could renew as an insurance obstacle was removed. Katie proposed an amendment that membership would terminate at 81. Amendment was lost. Simon George proposed an amendment to make it in accordance with the Federation's Insurance Policy rather than a specific number. That amendment was passed. The amended motion was then passed."*

Ian Crawshaw (HGS) thanked Matt for clearing that up and said this clarifies that the upper age limit is dependent on the insurance policy. Ben Allen (Stevenage Observer) also thanked Matt for the clarification.

Francis Wallington (Lichfield Delegate) thanked Ian Crawshaw for his work on the Constitutions and Standing Orders.

15. Facility for National Debate

15.1 The National Guarantee Scheme

Nick Grant (NFO) passed information to the Conference and invited comments. Ben Allen (NAO) said the Spring Break does benefit from this as we do get a loan into the account which helps us when paying for deposits. Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) – it operates to allow the Spring Break to happen and can be extended for other events to happen too. His National Karting example was £10 per attendee – made a loss of £780 but that was his 50th birthday present to us. It's for viable events. If an event crashes and burns then the guarantee probably would not be offered next year. You need to show it to be viable when you get the funding as well. Nick Grant (NFO) replied anyone wishing to do an event would present the idea to area, the area would deem whether viable, then allow money to be given to the event, if the event makes a profit it goes back into its budget for the following year, if it makes a loss then the area can apply to the NEC for the guarantee to be reimbursed them from the National Reserve account.

Francis Wallington (Lichfield Delegate) said he has done events with a team not from the same area and with different skills, how does the scheme recognise that friendships come from outside the same area and may want to experiment with budgeting for an event. Nick Grant – the clue is in “guarantee” so the make up of the team does not matter, the financial side has no bearing on the people who are organising. Joan Clifford (NEC Admin) had a question (recording lost). Nick Grant said if an event is already in progress and hits a brick wall eg bounced cheque, then the guarantee scheme would have to jump in and support the event to stop people becoming disillusioned with the event. Joan – what if I wanted to apply a week before an event. Nick Grant – any event in trouble would need to apply, the funds are there to be released for the events. After the event we can then decide if a profit or loss was made and then the guarantee would go back to the area which would have already despatched the funds, the timescale does not matter. The scheme can also assist with other budgetary problems such as lost deposits.

Nick Grant clarified that this does not need to be voted on, it is just a consideration for the areas.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) asked for clarification that areas are not obliged to use this scheme, it is optional. Nick said this was the case. There is also no geographical limitation to this. Adrian Barnard (Didcot delegate) – gave the example of the WASH missing cheque. He also gave the example of a national holiday abroad. Some people did not book insurance and when the airline went bust, his team paid for alternative transport on the understanding that the holiday goers would pay him back. It cost hundreds of pounds but one guy defaulted. The scheme is not there to support this sort of behaviour but to be an aid to responsibly run events and assist with the odd unpredictable financial mishap. Nick Grant – this is exactly what this is about and this has been happening in various guises for several years. Instead of people moaning about financial mishaps the scheme will support best endeavours in putting on events. The Reserve account has enough money to help events affected by circumstance. Most events do very well but we want to help remove any financial reservations one may have that puts them off putting on an event.

The conference then broke for lunch.

After lunch, the voting strength was re-established at 17.

Nick Grant (NFO) clarified a question asked over lunch. Alongside the National Guarantee Scheme is the National Event Support Scheme. The question was what happens from someone coming up with the idea of an event. You'd go to your group, explain your idea and it might get debated or modified by the group.

Once the idea had settled, the group / area / event organiser would discuss its viability. The same rule applies as if you were organising the NAGM or the Spring Break. National would forward money to the event which would then stay with the event until it ceases.

12 Presentation – Building the New Marketing Site

Jeff Rea (National Internet Co-ordinator): I'm going to talk about what I have done so far this year re: the website and marketing ideas. I didn't get as far as I was hoping for various reasons. Jeff distributed some notes to the Conference. Jeff said our objective is to be found by people looking for a social group such as ours. A key problem with this is our name(s) as lots of historical names are still around. Plus does not work as it's far too common and difficult to search for. Plus Groups presents similar problems. Some people still use "Eighteen Plus" with the obvious Internet search problems! Active Plus is also the name of a well established organisation that helps elderly / housebound people get some exercise, so risk of confusion. "National Federation of Plus Areas" is too long and meaningless. So we need a new marketing identity. The name has to describe us and attract people in. It has to be such that online searches for it will be effective. I've done a lot of research on this regarding what people will look for online. It's probably not a good idea for us to describe as a "social group" as this has a different connotation in psychology and so people searching for that term might not find us. "Loneliness" has become a term that is more prevalent now and we even have a Loneliness Minister! Apparently loneliness does not just affect the elderly and research indicates one of the loneliest groups could be those in the 20-40 range. It would be good to tap into that and attract relatively young members. So we need to ensure that we are what these people are looking for. The top searches done by this target group is "make / meet friends" so perhaps this should be in our marketing name with "meet" better as "make" might imply that you don't have friends! We would like to be near the top alphabetically with an appropriate name, so we could use "About Meeting Friends" as it is a strong description and describes us. But we are about more than that, so "About Meeting Friends Plus". Currently the Plus domain exists so our website address could be aboutmeetingfriends.plus. This will be picked up well by internet searches as the words are in the URL and it also describes what we are about. This is not about formally changing our proper name as that would be a big hassle. There could however be a problem setting up the domain name as American organisations have not been quick to realise that they will be affected by GDPR. Plus and various other "meaningful" names are all run by one US company who are currently in dispute with the EU for not being GDPR compliant, so it's difficult to buy these names in the UK and it's not clear whether they will carry on working. That's about as far as I have got, but going forward the plan is to get a logo and graphics designed that fit in with this marketing identity and we take advice from such a provider given they have a track record of marketing for this type of target audience. If it works then great, if not then we will rethink. I've had some initial discussions with some parties and got a good level of interest as there is some prestige in working with a national organisation even though it might cost more (but not too much). I hope some proposals can materialise later in the year. This is where I have got to, any questions.

Chris Tillyard (Barnet Delegate) – We have had some good names for events in the past such as JACK, TAG and WASH, perhaps they can come up with something like that. Erik Bean (Stevenage delegate) – Jeff has worked hard on this but "About Meeting Friends Plus" is an appalling name as it implies it's a euphemism for something more. However he has used the domain .plus for several years without any problems. Jeff replied that the name is good as it matches what people are searching for and will bring them to our website. It's just a marketing device to attract attention. Erik defended his own argument saying people have come down to Stevenage on a group night expecting "more". He was asked what was the gender breakdown of such people and said 50/50. Adrian Barnard (Didcot delegate) clarified that the About Meeting Friends Plus was just to help with searches and was not a name change. Jeff said let's try it and if it does lead to the problems Erik is suggesting then just change it. Steve Rolfe (South Bucks delegate) said

the presentation does not mention Twitter / Facebook / Instagram. Jeff said the social media side is all there by implication as it's about marketing identity. Websites are where people go primarily to search for things, apart from the under 20s who are probably not our target audience. Steve Rolfe said he is not a fan of the name. James Oliver (Midland Area Chairman) said the older generation do also use social media. Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) said it's about marketing and advertising, groups have used different names but have had to do a lot of advertising to get enquiries - and Tina is wearing a Plus shirt! Do the work don't just rely on Jeff. Jeff said come and chat afterwards if you want to share ideas.

15. Facility for National Debate (Continued)

Erica Knight (National Chairman) asked if there were any other topics anyone wanted to bring under the Facility for National Debate.

Francis Wallington (Lichfield delegate) – we recently changed our bank account as Santander was limited in what they could offer us as a Club / Society. I want to discuss banks as there is a move to electronic banking. Recently we had a form inquiring about our compliance to International Tax Regulation 2015 which seemed to me to be about anti-terrorism / hidden funds management. We have not yet completed the declaration. Has anyone else had similar experiences? Steve Rolfe (South Bucks Delegate) said his wife could not pay small change into his personal account because of money laundering fears! Matthew Dickinson (NTAC Chair) – as long as you use a pre-printed paying in slip you can pay in money. Steve said Lloyds were very helpful when he had to do some NAGM bank business. Adrian Barnard (Didcot delegate) said conversely he “got the third degree” when he recently went to the bank to transfer money. All banks are a pain but Lloyds perhaps less than others. It's getting difficult to run a club account now because of laundering risks. James Oliver (Midland Area Chair) said as ex NFO he has not had such experiences. Nick Grant (NFO) agreed with Adrian re: setting up another account in the same name. He is not sure that banks want club / community accounts and they don't like dealing with cheques. In 2017 the tax laws changed so the taxman can possibly go back 20 years to check historic remunerations and profits made back then. Katie Hawkins (Barnet Plus) has had a bad experience with Lloyds when she put money in during the Lloyds / TSB split, but it went to TSB. She has also had issues with the NTAC account at Lloyds. It's worth complaining as you may get a gesture of goodwill.

Gerry Edwards (VP/HLM) introduced the topic of “where to go from here” and was pleased with the debate so far. Do we still want an NAGM like this one? What is their purpose? What is their value? Money not a problem in the short term. He thanked Adrian for organising this one. Do we change the format? The new NEC need to know what you think. We have plenty of time now to talk about these issues. Over to you guys. Ian Crawshaw (HGS) said he is speaking as a group member not the HGS. He felt when writing the 2018 NAGM minutes he did not have a sense of what has happened since that NAGM about growth, has not seen any motions of substance put forward, and said the most important part of the minutes was the page where Lincs Quest, Stevenage, Didcot and Hillingdon delegates said to the audience what was the secret of their success. He said the NAGM should be sold as one of the best events of the year, a lot of fun socially and interesting, and he'd like to see more delegates from the 300 or so members we have. Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) said that years ago when the Area Lead option got voted in, the delegates said we also want an AGM. Area Lead tried to save costs by not having an AGM but instead had the complex system of passing motions around areas. He still loves the NAGM. Do folks want an AGM next year? Steve Rolfe (South Bucks delegate) – is here for 2 reasons: formality, and to meet all of us. He would be sorry to lose it but maybe the format does need to change. Nick Grant (NFO) – was not sure whether he needed to go to an AGM after Area Lead but was persuaded to on the strength of the weekend being a good laugh. It's still an event, we need to keep it and I like it the way it is. James Oliver (as Solihull member) – keep the NAGM but possibly find an alternative venue, this room is a bit small. Brian Whittaker (Rothwell delegate) – the ideal PNM for us is someone who wants to get their hands dirty with organising things and help their

self-development. The NAGM is a perfect weekend for this and so let's give the PNMs a reason to join. Erik Bean (Stevenage delegate) – I enjoy these AGMs. This venue is affordable and practical so let's keep it. It's good to have a laugh and hold the NEC to account and do it all in 1 day, so keep as it is.

Gerry wanted to see some more opinions and do a straw poll. Gerry reminisced that the old ANCs were two full days with early starts. Do people think we need an AGM? Most people indicated yes. Should we come back and do it next year? Again a good majority of yesses. The floor also indicated they liked the existing format.

Adrian Barnard (Didcot delegate) – do be aware of having it over 2 days as some come a long way. A lot of the cost of this goes on it being a 2 day thing. You could save money for the organisation by making it 1 day but would it be the same thing? I am pleased that the floor returned that they like the existing format. Mark Hawkins (Barnet observer) – the timing of the day could be adjusted, a later start could enable the NEC to have a morning meeting. We need to balance the cost / benefit. We need to get the right time allotted to general debate, and that for proceedings, possibly with an adjustment. Nick Grant (NFO) – the organisation can evolve but it's fine at the moment, the finances are not currently a worry.

Gerry Edwards said this has been useful and can see this has stabilised somewhat. You have asked for the NAGM to stay the same so we can now think about 2020. But we should ask the question again next year. We want it to be an event that you want to go to rather than feel duty bound.

Erica Knight (National Chair) asked the floor if there was anything else they wanted to discuss.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) asked how can the NEC see themselves operating without a Chair or an NFO. James Oliver (Midland Area Chair) asked if an interim NFO can be appointed. Gerry said we do have a Deputy National Chair in Matt Dickinson. The more important one would be NFO. No NFO means the organisation probably could not carry on. After some background discussion about "good for the CV" Erik asked for a show of hands how many people mention Plus on their CVs, and felt about a quarter did. John Smith (Leeds Delegate) tried to persuade Nick Grant to stay on as NFO. Nick replied there are still things to be done and access to some bank accounts has been difficult, however he believes he will not get a unanimous vote or only get a vote because there is nobody else, and for that reason he is not going to stand.

10 (Revisited) Election of National Chairman to serve from 1st March 2019

And

16 Announcement of Election Results of National Chairman to service from 1st March 2019

Erica asked the floor if anyone would like to stand for any of the vacant positions. Steve Rolfe (South Bucks delegate) said he'd like to stand for National Chair. Steve said he stood unsuccessfully against Erica before, and now has the time and the opportunity to stand again. Francis Wallington (Lichfield Delegate) asked Steve to describe his Plus "CV" and NEC experience. Steve said he spent a number of years in Plus and recalls the Southport ANC. He has been Area Chair, Area Treasurer, run groups, he helped Newbury get from 3 people to 30 in 18 months. Has been on NEC for several years, has charring experience from his work at NHS Trust and Trade Unions.

Steve was proposed by Lincs Quest and seconded by Abingdon.

Voting Strength re-established at 18.

Steve was elected to the position of National Chairman.

Erica asked if anyone else wanted to stand for the vacant positions, but nobody did. Erica advised that if you would like to stand, please come to the May NEC meeting where you can be co-opted.

Nick Grant (NFO) confirmed he will do the duties of NFO until May.

18 National Chairman's Address

Erica Knight (National Chairman) said thanks for coming and I hope the new committee works well. Ian Crawshaw (HGS) asked the conference to give Erica a round of applause.

19 Election of Honorary Officials

19.1 Independent Examiner of the 2019 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.

Adrian thanked the conference for trusting them and said we are sure to endeavour to serve.

20 Any Other Urgent Business (Not Promotion of Events)

Erica asked for anyone who has brought trophies to put them on the table at the back. Adrian Barnard outlined the plans for eating and said the raffle prizes were worth £104, all money raised will go to Cancer Research. Do enjoy the food and the dance. Erica said please bring your voting cards to the front. Adrian added that there are 3 spaces remaining for the Spring Holiday, talk to him or Ben Allen if interested.

James Oliver asked if the Rothwell ABBA tribute night was opened to all areas, would it be covered by the National Guarantee Scheme. Nick Grant (NFO) said put it to the Area who pays for it, then if the area approaches the NFO and asks if it is a viable event then it would go from there.

21 Announcement of the Date of the Annual General Meeting 2020

Erica Knight (National Chairman) said the date has not been decided yet, but likely around the same time next year.

22 Presidential Closing Address by Vice President – Gerry Edwards

Gerry Edwards (VP) – we have had good discussions today and they don't have to come from motions. I was pleased with the constructive comments and debate. It's nice to see a new National Chairman and thanks Erica for doing a fantastic job for the last 20 years! Please give Adrian a round of applause for putting the NAGM together. It's easy to go to an event and forget about the people putting it together because it's not easy. You have agreed to have an NAGM next year but you need to find a new NFO. If we don't get an NFO the Federation may well have to close as we have to have someone to manage the finances. Hopefully in your groups you can find someone to take this on, it's not that hard a job these days and Nick has set it up well. Otherwise please carry on what you are doing and continue doing the positive stuff. It's great that Midland may be setting up a new group and Jeff's website work may help, there are things we can do. I use social media a lot for business and it works for me, it may work for Plus as well. Midland Area use Instagram, Facebook and Twitter all the time to good success, keep the positive attitude, even if we don't grow we must continue to exist. We are a social group, we just don't say it because of the connotations and I am pleased we also agreed to keep the Friday night as it's a really good part of the NAGM. Enjoy the weather outside, thanks all for coming and do bring back the trophies for later tonight! We are looking to evolve our trophy system even though there have been terrible awards like the Miss Eighteen Plus! We will try and evolve some people awards too as well as the groups. See you later for a good fun night, good food and wine and the raffle for a good charity.

23 Closure of the meeting by the National Chairman

Erica closed the meeting at 3.35pm.