

**The English Labour Network's  
Submission to the Labour Party  
Democracy Review 2017-18**

**“Why Labour needs an English Manifesto,  
and a transparent democratic process for  
making policy on English issues”**

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## **Introduction**

This document is a submission by the English Labour Network to the Labour Party's Democracy Review.

Our submission is based on the principle of democratic representation. We believe that English Labour members deserve the same rights as Welsh Labour members and Scottish Labour members.

We believe policies should be brought together in an English manifesto, with all English Labour members given the chance to contribute.

But our more general position is that Labour in England should be served by an English policy making process.

These democratic changes will increase our chances of winning the next general election, as explained on the following pages.

It should be noted that our preferred proposal stops short of demanding an entirely different policy-making structure for Labour in England, as is the case in Scotland where devolved matters are accounted for through a policy making process entirely independent to UK Labour.

We therefore hope that our proposal for a English Labour Manifesto, and the structural changes we suggest within the National Policy Forum to help deliver this, will be given due consideration by the National Executive Committee.

## Why do we need an English manifesto?

### The key challenges in England

Labour faces a number of key challenges in England.

- **Labour needs to win an English majority.** The party cannot rely on additional MPs from Wales and Scotland to secure a UK majority – and politically it will require an English majority to implement Labour policy in England.
- **Labour gets much less support from ‘English’ voters than ‘British’ voters.** If English identifying voters had supported Labour as strongly as British identifiers, Labour would almost certainly be in government now. (And it was English voters who took the UK out of the EU.)
- **Labour’s target seats are towns and smaller cities,** where the electorate is older, more working class and more likely to identify as English.
- **Labour must help ensure an English voice,** within the union, and by delivering real devolution to England’s cities, counties and regions.

To form a government, Labour needs to win England, and Labour needs to win more votes from people who have a strong sense of English identity. We need to demonstrate the strong links between building a better society for the people of England and Labour’s radical policies ‘for the many, not the few’.

Neglect of England and English identity has cost Labour votes in recent general elections and had a major influence on the Brexit decision. It is no coincident that it was England-outside-London, and particularly those areas with a high percentage of English-identifiers, that voted Leave by a sizeable majority.

Many Labour campaigners now see the need to present Labour policies as a progressive, patriotic vision for our country.

## How an English Labour manifesto can meet England's challenges

An English manifesto should be the vehicle to take Labour's message to English voters, and an opportunity for English Labour members to shape policy for England.

In Wales and Scotland, the party is clear. We have a Welsh manifesto and a Scottish manifesto. In England, it has always been much murkier. There is no English manifesto. Instead, the UK Labour manifesto mixes up policy on issues that will only apply in England – health, schools, universities, apprenticeship, most transport, social care and many other areas – with issues that affect the whole of the UK.

There's a high price to pay for that muddle. We give the impression that Labour doesn't really think England exists; or that England and the UK are just the same thing. Labour should go into the next election with a clear, English manifesto.

Labour must win England, yet too often our support lags amongst voters who feel English but are not yet convinced Labour speaks for them. We are a unionist party, but England has its own history; sometimes conservative but often of radical struggles for rights and fairness that are still relevant today. We should have the pride to tell that story. We must also ensure that the Englishness we celebrate is progressive, inclusive and reflects the England we live in today.

The 2017 manifesto was a big step forward in recognising England. It proposed a Minister for England, it renewed our calls for a constitutional convention and, for the first time, proposed a "relationship of equals" between England, Wales and Scotland. But it left a lot to be fleshed out. It said we were the party of devolution, but nothing about the balance of power between the centre and local areas; between ministers and elected local leaders, between north, south and London.

Now we must take the next step and publish a manifesto that sets out clearly our policies for England and how England should be governed.

An English Labour Manifesto would also show that we are serious about serving those communities who want to "take back control". Brexit will happen and part of the reason for the referendum result was that phrase. Many of the public feel they lack control, and there is a clear, positive correlation between people who identified strongly with Englishness more than Britishness and those who voted Leave. A lack of political representation was clearly a part of this.

There is a debate about what devolution should look like, and whether we need an English Parliament, but whatever the decision an English manifesto process will help focus on what that structure may look like under a Labour government.



Labour has a real opportunity to fill this political void. We are by far the best-placed political party to do so, and we cannot risk another UKIP rising up with its nasty brand of English nationalism.

### How an English Manifesto can remove Labour's democratic deficit

This about more than winning elections.

We also want to give fair representation to Labour members themselves. It cannot be right that Scottish and Welsh Labour enjoy a high degree of autonomy from UK Labour; English Labour members should enjoy the same rights to make policy for England.

We need to remove that democratic deficit. We have got hundreds of thousands of members in England – we should empower them further.

# Shaping Labour Party structures to make English policy and support an English Labour Manifesto

## National Policy Forum

The most natural ‘home’ for the creation of an English Labour Party manifesto would be the National Policy Forum (NPF).

The NPF is a body of representatives from all the major groups in the Labour Party, from constituency parties and regions to affiliated trade unions and socialist societies. Its role is to shape the Labour Party’s policy agenda.

Currently NPF Representatives read and discuss submissions received via the Labour Policy Forum website, and discuss them in the relevant Policy Commission meetings. There are currently eight different policy commissions; education, housing, economy, health, justice, work and pensions, and international.

The NPF covers policy for the whole of the UK. Separate from the NPF sit:

- A Scottish Policy Forum (covering Scotland-only policy)
- A Welsh Policy Forum (covering Wales-only policy)

Currently there is no ‘English policy forum’ because, as is the case more widely, England-only policy is not recognised as such. It is instead bundled up in the ‘UK-wide’ section. The same can be said of England itself.

An English Policy Forum leading on the drafting of an English Manifesto would allow Labour the chance to untangle this undemocratic muddle.

## Creating an English Policy Forum

An English Policy Forum (EPF) would work on policy that is England only, i.e. all those areas that are devolved to Scotland and Wales.

It would cover the same policy areas as the Scottish Policy Forum:

- health

- education and training
- local government
- law, including most aspects of criminal and civil law, prosecution system and courts
- social work
- housing
- tourism and economic development
- some aspects of transport, including the Scottish road network, bus policy, and ports and harbours
- planning and the environment
- agriculture, forestry and fishing
- sport and the arts

There are two natural options for the structure of this English Policy Forum.

#### **Option 1: Housing the EPF within the NPF**

The first option would not be difficult, and for reasons of expediency it would be our preferred route towards an English Labour Manifesto.

The English Policy Forum would simply consist of those members within the 204 members of the NPF who are elected to represent England.

Members would be appointed to lead on certain policy areas, as is the case with the NPF. But these EPF leads would be different people to the NPF policy leads, to avoid conflicts of interests and to carefully manage workloads.

These English policy commissions would meet with the same regularity as the SPF groups.

The Representatives of the English Regions who sit on the NPF would play a key role in working with CLPs to encourage a healthy number of submissions through the Labour Party website. (Engaging CLPs in the process must be a key priority as this would likely increase submissions.)

An initial English Manifesto would be drawn up in a shortened, agreed timeframe to increase the chances of it being complete for the next general election. It would then be updated annually in draft form.

The responsibility for drafting the English manifesto would lie in the hands of an English Joint Committee – a new Committee made up of the chairs of each of the English Policy Commissions. The EJC members would elect a Chair.

We suggest that the policy produced by the English members of the NPF would then be passed to the full NPF for approval and onward submission to the NEC. The NPF would not be precluded from amending the proposed policy, but this would now be an open and transparent process.

This is a less radical proposal than establishing an entirely separate English policy-making process akin to that of Scotland. In part, this is because such a radical change would have implication for policy-making up to and including annual conference. In part, it also reflects the reality that English domestic policy can have bigger implications for the devolved nations than vice versa. For example, English health policy has a bigger impact on patients served Wales, as the Welsh NHS has a bigger dependence on English hospitals. The ability to ensure the effective coordination of policy is desirable.

### **Option 2: Mirror the Scottish Policy Forum model**

The alternative would involve setting up an English Policy Forum to mirror the Scottish Policy Forum (SPF). The SPF currently has 104 elected members, so this option would involve not just creating a new body but administrating further elections within Labour.

It would then follow a similar ‘content gathering’ model to that explained in Option 1, above. (See the Appendix for more on how the SPF works.)

### **Why Option 1 is preferable**

Option 2 would clearly go further in recognising England’s unique political identity.

But we believe Option 1 is preferable. Not least because time is of the essence.

It is important we move quickly to begin bridging the growing gulf between Labour and English identifiers, and more widely the parts of England we are falling behind in electorally. In 2010 Labour won 29% of the public vote and 258 seats. In 2017 we received a very respectable 40% of the vote but still only achieved 262 seats. We have to act now if we want to buck a trend that sees Labour only strengthen in areas where the party is already strong in. An English manifesto is an important and urgent first step, particularly with an early general election a very real possibility.

It is clear that Option 1 would be more straightforward to administer, and therefore quicker to get off the ground. We hope that this would make it easier for the NEC, the Leader’s Office and the NPF to approve changes.

# Background

## About the English Labour Network

The English Labour Network is:

***'For Labour in England'*** - helping Labour to win in every part of England.

***'For England in Labour'*** – helping Labour address the 'English' dimension in politics that Labour has often neglected or shunned.

The English Labour Network is bringing together party activists at every level to make Labour's case for England to English voters.

It was launched in July 2017 to be a voice for Labour in England and for England in Labour.

We already have the support of hundreds of activists from across the Labour movement, including more than 50 MPs and more than 20 council leaders.

We want to help Labour win in every part of England and to deliver the key seats Labour needs to form the next government, while also ensuring England is represented within Labour.

Many current political challenges are centred on England:

- It is English voters that are taking the country out of the EU, and the gap between the 'metro-liberals' and more socially conservative voters is at its widest in England.
- Labour support lags amongst the millions of voters who identify as English.
- And, of course, England remains the most centralised nation in Europe; Labour has no settled view on whether and how power should be devolved.

All these challenges require a distinctive focus on England and our policies must be presented clearly to English voters. To achieve this we are campaigning for an English manifesto, and also providing resources to help campaigners develop clear messages that recognise issues of English identity.

Our founding supporters are:

- Shabana Mahmood, *MP for Birmingham Ladywood and Labour NEC member*
- Jon Cruddas, *MP for Dagenham and Rainham*
- Liam Byrne, *MP for Birmingham Hodge Hill*
- Sam Tarry (supporting in a personal capacity), *National Political Officer, TSSA*
- Alice Perry, *Councillor and Labour NEC member*
- John Denham, *Former Cabinet Minister, and Director of the English Labour Network*
- Judith Blake, *Leader of Leeds City Council*
- Vince Maple, *Councillor and Leader of Medway Labour Group*
- Polly Billington, *Former PPC for Thurrock*
- Jonathan Rutherford, *Writer*
- Michael Kenny, *Cambridge*
- Paul Hilder, *Co-Founder, Crowdpac*
- Morgan McSweeney, *Labour Together*
- Joe Jervis, *English Labour Network*
- Scott Langdon, *Campaigner*

### Contact information

If you would like to talk further about this submission, please contact Joe Jervis on [j.jervis@eln.org.uk](mailto:j.jervis@eln.org.uk).

## Appendix: the Scottish Policy Forum

The Scottish Policy Forum (SPF) oversees and conducts consultation with Party members and outside organisations on all areas of devolved policy (e.g. health, education, local government, tackling crime etc) towards developing our Scottish Parliament manifesto. The aim of the Forum is to consult with a view to presenting draft policy documents to the Scottish Joint Policy Committee. The Scottish Joint Policy Committee then reviews these draft policy documents before passing them on for debate and voting at Scottish Conference which remains the sovereign policy making body of the Scottish Labour Party on devolved matters.

### Who is on the Scottish Policy Forum?

The SPF has 104 elected members in total, representing all divisions of the Scottish Labour Party as follows:

- **Division 1 – CLPs**  
43 members – Following a rule change at the 2008 Scottish Conference there is now 1 member for every 2 Scottish Parliament constituencies, with constituencies being grouped into four to ensure gender balance. Information about this process is provided below. In addition, 6 members from Young Labour are also elected by OMOV ballot.
  
- **Division 2 – Trade Unions & Affiliates**  
31 members appointed by nationally affiliated trade unions and socialist societies:
  - 25 from affiliated trade unions
  - 3 from affiliated socialist societies
  - 3 from the Scottish Co-operative Party.
  
- **Division 3 – Elected representatives**  
30 members:
  - 6 members of the Scottish Parliament Shadow Cabinet
  - 6 others from the Scottish Parliament Labour Group
  - Shadow Scottish Secretary of State
  - 3 others from the Westminster Scottish Parliamentary Group
  - 7 members of the Scottish Executive Committee
  - 1 representative from the European Parliamentary Labour Group
  - 6 representatives of Labour local government elected by a ballot amongst all Scottish members of the Association of Labour Councillors

### **How are local party representatives to the SPF elected?**

Following a rule change at the 2008 Scottish Conference there is now one member for every two constituencies, with each constituency twinned with a neighbouring CLP, and grouped into four to ensure gender balance. Detailed information of this process can be found below. In addition to the election of these representatives, division one will allocate six members from Young Labour, all of whom are elected by OMOV ballot.

Nominations should be sent to the Scottish Labour Party by 12 noon on Friday 6th September 2013. Forms are available from your CLP Secretary.

Once nominations have closed on 6th September 2013, a ballot will take place of all party members and the first meeting of the newly elected SPF is currently scheduled to take place on 26th October.

### **Gender balance**

As with previous years, there is a still a requirement to achieve a minimum 50% female representation from local parties on the SPF. The Scottish Executive Committee agreed that this would be achieved by ensuring that at least every second representative elected by CLPs to the SPF would be female.

The nominee from the four CLPs with the highest number of votes will be elected first. If the first candidate elected is male, then the female candidate with the highest number of votes would also be elected to represent those two constituencies.