



National Federation of plus Areas

10th Annual General Meeting
75th Annual National Conference

Held at the Jacobean Hotel, Coventry on Saturday 27th February 2016

Present

Erica Knight (National Chairman)

Joan Clifford (Honorary General Secretary)

James Oliver (National Finance Officer)

Gerry Edwards (Vice President)

Francis Wallington (Vice President)

Matthew Dickinson (NTAC Chairman / Deputy National Chairman)

Nicky Rolfe (SA Chairman)

Martin Posner (ASEA Chairman)

Adam Redshaw (MA Chairman / Sounds Operator)

Delegates and Observers of the Federation

1. Chairman's Welcome to Delegates

National Chairman Erica Knight opened the NAGM at 10.30am. She welcomed everybody to the conference. She said she would like a non-personal debate and asked everybody to turn their phones off.

2. The Presidential Address by Vice President Francis Wallington

Welcome to the NAGM. Please stand up if you can claim to have changed somebody's life through Plus. How many have had their life affected in a positive way through the organisation? At this point everybody was standing! The conference was asked to shake hands with those nearby.

Francis continued: We continue to live in the shadow of World War 2. Mass migration is happening today. Diversity, sexuality, and World War 2 have all played a part as the backdrop to Plus. Francis is scared to use social media in traffic jams! He is pleased that Erica has chosen The Samaritans as our charity. He said that tomorrow the profit from the Treasure Hunt event will go to the Samaritans. He said we are all shy and it takes courage to stand up to speak. Thank you all.

3. Election of Tellers

Nomination of Two Volunteers from the Observers

Ben Allen, proposed by Stevenage, seconded Barnet

Mark Hewson, proposed Didcot, seconded Barnet

3.1 Determining Voting Strength

The voting strength is currently at 18.

4. Election of Ballot Counters

Nomination of Two Volunteers from the Observers

Also Ben Allen and Mark Hewson.

The tellers and ballot counters were voted in by the conference.

5. Apologies for Absence

Rita Grimes, Tina Bunyan, Lichfield, Rothwell.

Erica said that in an amendment to the Agenda we would vote on the motions before doing the elections. 17.2 (Impact of Plus) would be done after 17.3 (VP Elections) and the motions would be done in a different order than that on the agenda.

6. Acceptance of Minutes of the 9th Annual General Meeting at The Oak Hotel, Hockley Heath, on 28th Feb 2015.

6.1 Points of Accuracy

Katie Hawkins (Barnet Delegate) said that Rhianna Wright was from Hillingdon group not Barnet. Mike Shapcott was South Bucks not Hillingdon. Vicky Schwimmer was Stevenage not Hillingdon. The figure of £725 relating to travel expenses on Page 5 was wrong, it should be £7.25.

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) said he wants to discuss one of the motions further, but will do so later.

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

Voting to accept the minutes:

For	18
Against	0
Abstain	0

Minutes Accepted unanimously.

7. Matters arising thereon

No matters arising were discussed.

8. Presentation and Acceptance of the Federation's Reports for the year 2015

National Chairman's Report – No questions

Honorary General Secretary – No questions

NTAC Report – No questions

MA Report – No questions. James Oliver (NFO) thanked Adam Redshaw for the report.

SA Report – No report submitted.

Nicky Rolfe (SA Chairman) presented a verbal report. Membership count was Abingdon 4, Andover 5, Oxford 2, South Bucks 5. The area worth was £2416.36. Four committee positions were filled. Area Activities included meals and a Xmas meal. Training – one meeting was held online using Skype. Publicity – Groups do their own. Recruitment and Development – is ongoing. Membership is static, a common positive focus, an active programme, looking for diverse activities.

Adam Redshaw (Midland Area Chairman) asked where is the new group. Nicky Rolfe (SA Chairman) said in Caversham and it is a badminton themed group. James Oliver (NFO) asked Nicky to email this report around and Nicky replied that she would.

Internet Co-ordinator's Report – Katie Hawkins (Barnet Delegate) asked about the renewal of the contract. Steve Rolfe (National Internet Co-ordinator) said at the August NEC meeting they had agreed £250 in the budget for this, but felt it did not give value.

Katie said that explains why it took 6 months to renew. She also wondered why Mark Hewson's website is nearing its end of life, and said it (that website) was fantastic. Steve Rolfe replied that the software it

utilises is coming to the end of its life. Mark Hewson (Solihull Observer) said the software is old. Ian Crawshaw (Chiswick Delegate) asked if Mark Hewson would be able to continue supporting his website with new software. Mark said he can host the content but is not up to date with the new software.

Joan Clifford (HGS) asked if Steve would be able to make the national membership payments available to do online. Steve replied that the option was available to do on a national level, if the NEC want to do this.

Katie Hawkins asked Steve how do you audit members? Steve replied we don't, the Southern Area Committee get notified who joined. You can only join Sothern Area via this method as it currently is. Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) said you should not allow anybody to just join at will.

NEC Administrator's Report – No questions

The reports will be accepted en bloc. The reports were proposed by Leeds and seconded by South Bucks. They were accepted (18 for) – unanimously.

Richard Thomas (HLM Observer) said he could not find the membership figures. Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) says he captures them for a report he provides and said that his figure for last year was 316, this year 348. Richard Thomas said Well Done. He was pleased that training is covered within the Finance report and said this is helpful.

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

There were no questions for the NFO regarding his accounts.

Proposed by Chiswick. Seconded by Slough Windsor & Eton

The accounts were accepted nem con (16 for, 2 Abstain)

Presentation and Acceptance of the Auditor's Report

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

Erica Knight (National Chairman) said we would now move to vote on the motions starting with the motion from Lincs Quest.

12.2 Motion to remove the upper age limit of 65

Current rules forbid the membership to the organisation of anyone over the age of sixty five. The proposal is that the rules should be changed to allow anyone who was previously a member to re-join the organisation irrespective of their current age unless misconduct precludes this. The parts of the group constitution that would need to be altered are:

4. MEMBERSHIP

4.1. FULL MEMBERSHIP

4.1.1. Full membership of the Area is open to all persons over the age of 18 who agree with its fundamental values and objectives. Persons under the age of 18 and those who have reached their 66th birthday may not join the Area as full members

4.6 A member who holds a valid membership card issued prior to their 66th birthday shall remain entitled to full membership notwithstanding that they attain the age of 66 during the currency of such card

4.7 After reaching the age of 66, a member may only renew their membership only if they hold a current valid membership card at the time

4.8 Membership terminates at the age of 81.

Proposed Lincs Quest

Seconded Leeds

75% majority required

Martin Reed (Lincs Quest Delegate) said he wanted anybody to join regardless of their age, unless for reasons of misconduct. Erica Knight (National Chairman) said the previous insurers (Ecclesiastical) did not insure for people over 80, whereas the current policy (Hiscox) has no upper age limit.

John Smith (Leeds Delegate) gave a formal second.

Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) said this motion is common sense. The insurance obstacle has gone, vote for it. Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) asked is the intention of this motion to open the age range to include 65-80 year olds, or no age range restrictions? Martin Reed (Lincs Quest Delegate) said the latter, although the motion is aimed at opening the door for renewals.

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) asked if a previous member who is 82 can re-join? Martin Reed (Lincs Quest Delegate) replied yes, because the insurance obstacle has been removed. Richard Thomas (HLM Observer) asked that since clause 4.6 says you cannot re-join, presumably this clause would be deleted.

Katie Hawkins (Barnet Delegate) proposed an **amendment** that membership would terminate at the age of 81.

Martin Reed (Lincs Quest Delegate) said his motion is on the table purely because of the new insurance policy. John Smith (Leeds Delegate) said as a point of order, the amendment changes the meaning of the motion so you cannot accept it.

Erica Knight (National Chairman) said she would not accept this amendment.

Nick Leeks (Didcot Delegate) asked is there a possibility for membership to 81 year olds and over? Martin Reed (Lincs Quest Delegate) replied the above clause 4.8 was introduced for insurance reasons, therefore the new arrangement would be for the age range to be unlimited.

Adam Redshaw (Midland Area Chairman) said don't take out the age range, put in that the age is capped by the insurance policy. John Smith (Leeds Delegate) said that NEC members should not speak during the debate.

Simon George (Slough Windsor and Eton Delegate) proposed an **amendment** to change clause 4.8 to read "in accordance with the National Federation's Policy" rather than specifically referring to a number. This was proposed by South Bucks and seconded by Stevenage.

Votes for 11 – against 6 – abstain 1, so the amendment was accepted.

In summing up, Martin Reed (Lincs Quest Delegate) said that in principle in this day and age, age discrimination is unacceptable.

Richard Thomas (HLM Observer) said the NEC need to consider how this changes the constitution. Take this away and consider it. There could be a danger of having uninsured members, or being held to ransom by the insurance company. John Smith (Leeds Delegate) asked as a point of order – what are we voting on? This now appears to be a motion allowing anyone of any age to join. Martin Reed (Lincs Quest Delegate) confirmed this is only for past members.

A vote was taken on the amended motion.
For 18. Against 0. Abstain 0.

Motion carried (unanimously).

The conference broke for morning coffee.

H6 Motion to reverse the decision to give project Officers the vote

Motion H6 – To Reverse the Decision to Allow Project Officers to Vote on NEC. This was proposed from the floor at the National AGM last year. It was passed perhaps without the full consideration it should have had. It is felt that it is wrong. The area chairs represent their members. The project officers have no mandate to represent anybody. Therefore it cannot be right that they could potentially outvote area chairs representing their members. Therefore it is proposed this change be reversed and only area chairs to have a vote. The Constitution to return to what it was on this matter before the National AGM last year. As this motion was passed last year on a 66% majority it should require only a 66% majority to reverse it. (This motion should proceed even if special measures have been implemented, as it is still necessary to correct the constitution.)

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) as Proposer spoke for this motion, and said the project officer's vote should be reversed and the vote should revert back to the Area Chairmen. We could have a situation where the Area Chairs are out-voted by the votes of the Project Officers. He wants this motion to only require 66% as that was the terms on which it was voted in, so it would be equal.

The motion was seconded by Chiswick.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) said the 66% figure was pertinent to last year's conference so this year it's irrelevant. Katie Hawkins (Barnet delegate) asked about the Hillingdon motions, why have they not been seconded? Erica Knight (National Chairman) responded because they have been submitted late, and added that a precedent was set at last year's NAGM. John Smith (Leeds Delegate) said as a point of order that precedents such as this should not be set. Erica Knight (National Chairman) pondered whether we should be voting on these motions given they don't have seconders.

John Smith (Leeds Delegate) proposed a **procedural motion** and said I propose the conference rejects any motion that does not already have a seconder. This was seconded by Kings' Lynn.

Ian Crawshaw (Chiswick Delegate) said these motions should be debated but we should be circumspect in debating motions that have not come through the proper channels in future. Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) said the majority should be 75% and he was against John's procedural motion.

The vote was taken on John's procedural motion and it was For 5 – Against 10 – Abstentions – 3. So the procedural motion was lost.

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) said he had already spoken in favour of his motion (H6) and believes it should be passed, reversing the decision made at the last NAGM.

Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) said he is a project officer. He does not want to have a vote. The Area Chairs are here to represent us. Project Officers can be appointed. What we have now is not democracy. Steve Rolfe (National Internet Co-ordinator) spoke against this motion. He likes having the vote and feels the vote should not be limited to 4 people (the Area Chairs).

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) is for the motion, and recalls Yes Minister! He says votes should come from the elected representatives. Mark Hewson (Solihull Quest Observer / Midland Area Treasurer) said he thinks 4 people are not enough to carry decision making votes. It could be even less if some of these are absent. Richard Thomas (HLM Observer) asked how many project Officers does the constitution allow us to have? James Oliver (NFO) replied there are 8 positions at present, as per the Standing Orders. Richard Thomas asked – are these elected at this Conference? Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) said yes, or appointed. Nick Leeks (Didcot Delegate) asked if this concept would be able to expand to other geographical areas such as Wales or Scotland. John Smith (Leeds Delegate) was against the motion and wants Project Officers to have a say as to how things are run, feeling last year's NAGM had a feeling that there would be value in this. He also felt it made the NEC and Project Officer's positions active rather than merely administrative.

Simon George (Slough Windsor and Eton Delegate) **Proposed a move to the vote.**
This was seconded by South Buck and it was carried.

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) in summing up, said he was pleased this motion was debated but believes the Area Chairs should guide the Project Officers.

Voting on the motion – For 15, Against 3.

The motion was carried.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) asked the National Chairman to conduct the voting protocol as votes for then votes against then abstentions.

12.4 This clause is split and voted on as separate motions

Motion - *“Groups implement a minimum standards policy. Any groups that are not following this are helped to achieve it –then after an agreed time period they are to close as they are weakening the “brand” of Plus.”*

Proposed by Midland Area, seconded by Kings' Lynn.

Adam Redshaw (Midland Area Chair) said every group should have a set of core standards such as protocol for sending notices to members, events programme. Paul Catterwell (Kings' Lynn Delegate) in seconding, said Plus is a brand and we have to provide a united front. We need to provide a common ground. Some struggling groups need help.

Ian Crawshaw (Chiswick Delegate) spoke against the motion, said this over administrates groups and this protocol would be appropriate if we had 10,000 members but not for just 300 members. Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) spoke against and said he does not want to impose rules on groups. Adrian Barnard (Didcot delegate) spoke against, we are a voluntary organisation and if you impose rules on people, they will leave. Steve Rolfe (South Bucks Delegate) speaking for, said it's not about trying to change groups but we need to do a minimum number of things such as put posters up. Jeff Rea (Hillingdon delegate) said he supports the idea but is speaking against it, because he is not sure what we are voting on. Is it constitutional? What are the minimum standards? He felt there was not enough information within this motion.

Adam Redshaw (Midland Area Chair) in summing up, said the group standards would be decided later on. We promote ourselves as a National Federation. How can we be united without a set of minimum standards, whatever they may be.

Erica Knight (National Chairman) said this motion needs 75% to pass.

Voting For 6, against 10, abstentions 2

Motion Lost.

Motion - *"Areas implement a minimum standards policy. Any area that is not following this are helped to achieve it – then after an agreed time period they are to close as they are weakening the "brand" of Plus."*

Proposed by Midland Area and Seconded by Kings' Lynn. Adam Redshaw (Midland Area Chairman) said the Areas are autonomous, but are they working together? He said that Jeff Rea had said let's agree the concept, the principle. Then let's work out the detail.

Ian Crawshaw (Chiswick Delegate) said that Areas are autonomous, don't over-administrate them, please vote against. Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) said this would be appropriate for a business but not for a voluntary organisation, vote against. Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) said imposed standards would scupper the success we enjoy.

Richard Thomas (Honorary HLM) said he has been observing our brand, and pointed to the 18 Plus logo on the big screen. It's an organisation run by volunteers. It comes first, the brand comes first. Start from a minimum and grow from that. He is worried that we are losing our core identity. Steve Rolfe (South Bucks Delegate) said this idea came from a Pow Wow session. Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) supports the ideas but doesn't think it needs amendment to the Constitution, that would be counterproductive.

Adam Redshaw (Midland Area Chairman) in summing up, said this is to get us singing from the same hymn sheet. We need to look out for everyone not just our own. He feels the Federation is drifting away from its roots, and this will get us working together again.

Voting For 7, against 10, abstentions 1

Motion Lost.

Motion – *“The Federation invests in running a 2 day event where a guide is created to aide with the running of the Federation”*

Proposed by Midland Area. Seconded by Kings’ Lynn.

Adam Redshaw (Midland Area Chairman) said it was agreed at the NEC meetings the Federation needs to invest in its future. Some effort went into scoping a venue, but ultimately nothing really happened. Adam felt this was very wrong. Going forward, we need to keep pushing for change. Please vote for this type of event. Paul Catterwell (Kings’ Lynn Delegate) seconding, said the Pow Wow in 2014 was brilliant, people were enthusiastic. Diversity is both our strength and our weakness, and a 2 day forum would really unite us.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) liked the idea but spoke against the motion. He didn’t want the Federation to make a financial loss and said it should be a “may” not a “must”. The Pow Wow was great but did we really achieve anything? Note the points down but don’t make it into a 2 day event. Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) said he wants a ‘middle’ microphone as neither really for or against but on balance he is for. The enthusiasm would bring in new faces. If you do vote for the event, would you go? He would like it to be cost neutral. Ben Allen (Stevenage Observer) asked how will it be financed? Adam Redshaw (Midland Area Chairman) said he does not know but it should break even. Whether put on by Midland Area Committee, Midland Area, or All. We are a social organisation, let’s be social. Ian Crawshaw (Chiswick Delegate) said this is another event. We don’t have enough events, vote for this.

Richard Thomas (Honorary HLM) said what we are all doing here today may only delay the death of Plus, it won’t make it grow. What are you scared of? You do what you want in your little group. It’s very cosy, you and your mates. Run Plus. Make it better. Make it grow. Is it good enough. Is it working. Are you content to leave it at that. What happens after the event. We ask what did we do. What did we achieve. The commitment is there but we have to be better. Do something. Doing nothing is a failure. A guide may not help you but it will help someone somewhere. Please don’t be afraid. Please do something. John Smith (Leeds Delegate) liked Richard’s speech. Let’s do more than discuss the administrative structure. There must be more to Plus than this. We need more activities. Activities and recruitment are the main things we should be doing. Tinkering with the structure is less so. Let’s produce a guide as to how things should be done. Let’s then act on it. Plus needs enthusiasm and that’s what events generate.

Adam Redshaw (Midland Area Chairman) was offered the chance to sum up, but said this was not necessary. Erica Knight (National Chairman) said this motion needs a simple majority to pass.

Votes For 12, Against 5, Abstain 1.

Motion Carried

The conference broke for lunch, after which the voting strength was re-established at 18.

12.4 Motion to renew all memberships at the start of the calendar year

Motion – *“The Federation adopts a set year for a term of memberships. All memberships will be due for renewal on the same day.” All memberships should become due for renewal on the same day. It is proposed that this falls in line with the National Accounts.*

Adam Redshaw (Midland Area Chair, proposing) said if we adopt a fixed date it would be easier to track membership statistics. This can be done online and be automated. Paul Catterwell (Kings' Lynn Delegate) gave a formal second.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) spoke against the motion, saying that January will become a heavy overhead month, their group wants to be able to charge their members throughout the year and the way we currently do it works. Liz Buller (Lincs Quest Delegate) said that renewing 82 members in one go would be a mammoth task. She also felt that the system could be open to abuse if people only joined eg for WASH. People won't want to commit for more than 1 year. Her group offers a loyalty discount and it would be difficult to administer changing rates online. Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) said he has another group with a high turnover. Being with other members will encourage you to renew. This advantage would disappear if we were to fix the renewal date.

Adam Redshaw (Midland Area Chair) in summing up, said this is about change and moving forward.

This motion needs 75% majority to succeed.

Voting For 0 – Against 15 – Abstentions 3

Motion Lost.

H4 Setting the Area Levy for 2016

Motion H4 – *“Setting the Area Levy for 2016”*

It is proposed to set the area levy on the same basis as last year. The following motion may be irrelevant if some preceding motions are passed, in which case the proposer may withdraw it.

Motion H4 - That the compulsory element of the area levy be set at 25% of the total income from membership fees for each area in the preceding year. And, that any proposals for expenditure exceeding this to be put to Areas. Instead of all areas paying the same, areas would continue to pay a levy in proportion to their membership. (“Total income from membership fees” means the full amount of the membership fee, including any part retained by the group.) The levy would be calculated as 25% of the membership fee income in the preceding year.

To clarify any doubt about what the motion passed last year meant, the contribution should be 25% of income received – so for new members who are charged £10 the contribution will be £2.50 and for life members it will be nil because no income has been received from them in the preceding year.

This would be the compulsory element of the levy; areas could pay more if they elected to do so. This would provide sufficient funds for NEC to hold meetings and pay for insurance and website. Areas or Groups which are in a strong financial position may wish to help by supporting their members by contributing to their expenses for attending meetings.

Other expenditure proposals, such as funding national holidays and training events, would be put to the areas. So, when the NEC wishes to authorise expenditure which exceeds their total income in the year from member area fees (“the levy”), any monies which areas or groups voluntarily contribute and any other income, such proposals shall be put to Areas for a vote on whether the expenditure should proceed and whether it should be funded by further contributions from Areas and Groups, from the National Reserves or by other means. The expenditure may proceed if the majority of Areas vote in favour.

This is not an amendment to the constitution; it is simply a resolution to set the levy for the coming year and a mandate to the NEC on how they should act for the coming year. It can be reviewed and revised at the next National AGM.

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) in proposing, stepped through the points of the above motion and said the intention is for this to set the Area Levy as 25% of the total membership income. It is similar to the motion he put forward last year. This will provide an incentive to grow the group.

Simon George (Slough Windsor & Eton delegate) gave a formal second.

Adrian Barnard (Didcot delegate) spoke against, saying that as Areas our voting strength is the same whether we put in £600 or £90. It's getting cheaper and he felt this was a bit like saying you can pay what you want! John Smith (Leeds delegate) said he is not against the idea of the 25% but it allows areas to reduce membership rates to their members which in turn reduces what they will pay to National. Kate Hawkins (Barnet delegate) said NTAC Area charge £10 for new members and the Area makes up the difference. Costs have been cut as far as they can be already. She continued – James Oliver has produced a budget that relies on an income of £2400 but he only received £1930. He budgeted for a break-even but this will create more of a loss. James Oliver (NFO) added this will create a larger loss and the Federation will stay static. Matthew Dickinson (NTAC Chairman) said the levy had risen to £750 but after being challenged by Anglia & South East Area it went back to £600. Steve Rolfe (South Bucks Delegate) said this is not about the actual figures but what ability an area has to spend. Without this, Southern Area would close and the other Areas would then have to pay more.

Ben Allen (Stevenage Observer) asked what would happen if this motion was lost, to which Erica Knight (National Chairman) said the levies would be £600 for each area.

Adrian Barnard (Didcot delegate) said the raise to £750 was unconstitutional so areas would not necessarily pay the extra £200 (if Southern closed). Erica said that was a one off decision.

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon delegate), summing up, said we cannot afford to do everything we want to do, but we need to stop bleeding areas to death. He also re-iterated that the amount set is a minimum and areas can pay more if they want.

Voting For – 9. Against – 7. Abstentions – 2.

There was some confusion over whether this was a tied vote. The constitution was consulted with Matthew Dickinson (NTAC Chairman) eventually saying a majority was more than half with abstentions excluded from the figure. This motion only needs a majority to pass.

Motion Carried.

H5 Implementing Special measures

Motion H5 - To Implement Special Measures

Our constitution is written for an organisation of thousands of members, but we now have only a few hundred. The number and the cost of meetings being held are excessive for the size and income

of the organisation now. The money being spent on meetings means that funds are not available for marketing, development and events, which is contributing to the further decline of the organisation.

We cannot allow a situation where the National Federation simply fades away because it runs out of money. Therefore we must put in place measures to control costs. Proposals to do this by continuing with a full NEC but using online meetings have been unsuccessful.

However, we hope to recover and do not wish to cut off our route to future development by permanently changing the constitution. Therefore it is proposed that temporary special measures be implemented. The special measures will end and we will revert to normal once national membership has recovered to the point where it exceeds 1000. This will then provide sufficient income to return to a full NEC and regular meetings.

The Special Measures to be implemented are as follows –

- We opt only to elect a National Chairman, Honorary General Secretary and National Finance Officer (all three are needed in order to maintain the number of signatories required by the constitution) Their duties are to include the following –*

- To ensure that the National website(s) and insurance are organised and paid for centrally*
- To ensure membership cards are issued centrally to Areas*
- To ensure a directory is collated centrally for distribution to Areas*
- To provide a contact point for the National organisation*
- To ensure that an annual National AGM is held*
- To present audited accounts to the National AGM*
- This will be funded as agreed at the National AGM*
- Quarterly National meetings with Area representation are not required. However such meetings may be held if necessitated by exceptional circumstances.*

National funds will not be distributed to the areas and are to be held in reserve. Any expenditure of this reserve will require the agreement of a majority of the area chairs or a resolution at the National AGM. The Special Measures NEC are not to make expenditure from the national reserve without such authorisation.

It is asserted that this motion does not require any amendments to the constitution and therefore only a simple majority is required –

- It implements only a temporary and necessary expediency*
- In passing this motion we are simply opting not to elect a full NEC committee. This has happened before*
- Motion H3 (which was passed last year) has already removed the requirement for a specific number of meetings to be held each year.*

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate), in proposing, said this was similar to “National Lite”. The constitution is written for thousands of members but we number only a few hundred. A lot of our funds are spent on national admin, not enough on marketing etc. It should revert to normal when membership exceeds 1000.

Jeff ran through the motion and the options, explaining that the requirement for a specific number of meetings has been removed.

The difference from National Lite is that then reserve funds would stay with National. It's a temporary measure, not a constitutional change, and in any case the bit about numbers of meetings has already been passed.

We have some funds in place, a national body, and can revert back once membership of 1000 has been reached.

Simon George (Slough Windsor & Eton Delegate) formally seconded the motion.

Erica Knight (National Chairman) said this motion requires a 75% majority.

John Smith (Leeds Delegate) spoke on behalf of the NEC, opposing the motion for the following reasons. First, it's undemocratic to have area chairs removed from the NEC. Second, "no taxation without representation" – areas will be paying towards national but not being represented. Third, it will remove the trustee element from the NEC. We need trustees to be a legally existing organisation. Finally, hard to see how this reduces costs. The reduced budget was kept to last year and will also be adhered to this year.

Erica Knight (National Chairman) asked John Smith to expand on why this is a 75% majority motion. John replied that it changes the constitution, it has to be if we make these changes, even if temporary. Jeff Rea said the constitution says roles on the NEC are held by area chairs and this has not changed. It removes the requirement for regular meetings which has already been done. Richard Thomas (HLM Observer) spoke against the motion, saying that this suspends the Standing Orders for an unspecified time. It also said you cannot co-opt, although not important if people do not stand. It has to be a 75% majority motion. Paul Catterwell (Kings' Lynn delegate) said get rid of areas, let the money rest with National. We can pick this up later on, as a future motion.

Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) spoke against, saying this motion will leave fewer of us to do even more. The existing top table do an awful lot of work, as members we should not be cutting it back even further.

In summing up, Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) said he wants a vote on whether this motion requires 75%. He disagrees that fewer people would have to do more work and his Terms Of Reference indicate that less work is involved.

Erica Knight (National Chairman) refused to have a vote on the majority required. Jeff Rea challenged the National Chairman's ruling but Erica Knight (National Chairman) said this was not allowed as he had already proposed the motion. Matthew Wilson (Hillingdon Delegate) challenged the National Chairman's ruling. There were no other valid challengers so the challenge fell.

Voting on the motion: For – 4. Against – 13. Abstentions – 1.

Motion Lost.

Erica Knight said that the next 3 motions would be debated in parallel.

12.1 National Lite

Federation of Groups

12.4 National Lead + NEC Meeting replacements

12.1 National Lite

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

- *National should consist of a figurehead and deputy.*
- *Their duties are to ensure that the National website(s) and insurance are paid for the organisation as one body.*
- *They are to ensure membership cards are issued centrally to Areas annually (or as required if higher frequency required).*
- *They are to ensure a directory is collated centrally for distribution to Areas and thence down annually.*
- *They are a contact point for the National organisation.*
- *They ensure an annual meeting for election of new National body, facilitating the meeting of Groups from across the organisation.*
- *They will present audited accounts to the annual meeting.*
- *This will be funded as justified at the annual meeting equally by the member Areas.*
- *National funds, bar a contingency of a year's running costs, will be divided equally among the Areas.*
- *Areas are relieved of quarterly national meeting representation at National.*
- *Groups see no change.*

Proposed by Didcot Plus

Secoded by Stevenage Plus

Erica Knight (National Chairman) said this needs a 75% majority to pass.

Adrian Barnard (Didcot delegate) went through the motion and said the level of funding suggests that this is what we want, with funding going to Membership cards, Membership directory, Insurance, Central website, Central contact, and annual AGM.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) gave a formal second.

"Federation of Groups"

The Federation reverts to being a Federation of groups. The Federation will be funded by the membership fees.

- *The NEC pays Groups ... % - membership income each year*
- *The NEC pays Areas ... % - membership income each year*

Proposed by Midland Area.

As it is an Area motion it does not need a second.

The ... are deliberate and are to indicate the actual amount is flexible.

John Smith (Leeds delegate) read out the motion and said the delegates become the supreme ruling body at the AGM. This leads to proper democracy. We would also have control of the funding of the Federation.

The AGM would get to approve the National budget. There would be no area levies using this system. Groups fund National, National funds the Areas. He continued: I recognise that groups love areas and do not want to eliminate that.

National Lead / NEC Meeting Replacements (taken from 12.4)

“The Federation adopts a National Lead structure. The Federation adopts a system that replaces the 4 NEC meetings with having an AGM and a Bi-AGM that every Group is invited.”

Proposed by Midland Area.

Adam Redshaw (Midland Area Chairman) in proposing, read out the motion. He said, following on from this, there's talk of handing power back to the members. We are a social organisation; cut off the NEC meetings and have two Bi-AGMs for all. We are 50% business 50% social, we want to move forward.

The debate on all three motions in parallel started.

Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) said he is concerned with having 2 AGM events a year. It takes a lot of work to get the conference up and running. At the end of the day, it's not the talking in here that counts, it's the doing. The turnover for this event far exceeds £5K, NEC meetings cost far less. It's a commitment to have another weekend of the year as a talking shop. Regarding National Lead, having cut the national budget why would we want to give the money to National.

Paul Catterwell (Kings' Lynn delegate) agreed with Adrian and said an amalgamation of all 3 motions could work. We have 23 different groups and are thus diluting our brand. We are demonising the NEC, giving them no money. Areas do not work, apart from NTAC. We don't need Areas if Groups can propose things for the NEC to vote on. Trust the NEC. It is too easy to get on to some Area committees.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) said it would be dangerous to abolish areas and NTAC would likely defederate. Groups do not need to remain in Areas. National Lite saves on a lot of costs. Strong groups govern themselves, weak groups would suffer regardless. An amendment to keep NTAC and abolish the other areas would be acceptable.

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) said last year we removed the requirement for a set number of meetings. Also brought in the option of the Non Geographical Area. What we are discussing is already available. Jeff feels we have already voted on the principles. He was not sure that this year's National Lite is the same as the similar motion from last year. He asked in the reformed motion from last year, groups would keep 50% of membership fees. Is this still on the table? Matthew Dickinson (NTAC Chairman) replied No. Jeff also asked about who gets to vote?

Paul Catterwell (Kings' Lynn delegate) regarding keeping one area and abolishing others, which area do we want? If we all join NTAC then the situation would be the same as it is now. We are not talking about Area expenditure. There is a lot of money not being used. Erik Bean (Stevenage delegate) said in NTAC we don't have much money in the Area, we re-invest it in our groups, equally. Don't collect the money, spend it on groups.

Matthew Dickinson (NTAC Chair) began to summarize the pitfalls of each motion but was interrupted by John Smith (Leeds Delegate) who retorted he had no right (in his position) to argue about his motion!

Richard Thomas (HLM Observer) asked if any of these motions are actually discussing getting rid of Areas, as it seemed not.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) said he was not really clear on what the 2nd and 3rd motions actually were.

Summing up.

Adrian Barnard (Didcot delegate) spoke about National Lite, saying it's there as an option, it will be funded by the funding we give National. It's there to cut us down to the bare bones, so more money can be used at Group level.

John Smith (Leeds Delegate acting for Midland Area) said our motion does not abolish areas. National will be funded by the membership fee. National is the Area Chairs and that won't change. This will not take money from areas, and the Non Geographic Area will still exist. Is this similar to last year's motion? No – there is no reference to 50% distribution of funds. This % distribution value would be proposed by the NEC and voted at NAGM. To say income goes to National and 'disappears' is rubbish, National are your elected Area Chairs.

John continued - Plus will look the same from the outside. All that will change is the way it's funded, and the way it's operated. This should be a uniting idea for us all, to be part of a National organisation. You will not lose your Areas, they are a vital support structure for the groups. Finally, "Federation of Groups" sounds better than "Federation of Areas".

Adam Redshaw (Midland Area Chairman), speaking for National Lead, said the turnover for this NAGM was £5K, but the event has sold out and drawn people together. There has been massive demand for this event, it is a flagship event. Let's do it again. Save the cost of 4 NEC meetings, we should be together more often.

Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) asked what if all three motions get the required 75%? Gerry Edwards (VP) said we'd revote some of them again. If none of them get through we have status quo, we need at least one to have 75% for a change.

Voting on the three motions in the order they were presented:

Didcot Group National Lite: For 7 Against 11

Midland Area revert to Groups: For 8 Against 10

Midland Area National Lead: For 1 Against 15 Abstentions 2

All three motions lost.

The conference broke for afternoon tea.

Hillingdon Motion H1 - That groups may keep up to 50% of the membership fee. This is to enable groups to have direct access to funds for marketing, development and events, and so assist them to grow.

The proposal is that paying 50% of membership fee income to Area will be a minimum. Some groups have very healthy bank accounts and have other ways of raising money too, and so have no need of the membership income. They will be free to continue to contribute as much of membership fee income as they wish to their Area and can carry on contributing 100% if they elect to do so.

It is asserted that this motion requires a simple majority and does not require an amendment to the constitution.

Article 9.1.5 of the Model Area Constitution currently reads – “Each Member Group shall submit an annual membership fee for each enrolled member to the Area Treasurer (or their representative) within seven days of receipt and in accordance with the internal procedures of the Area Committee”. It does not say “the annual membership fee” which would imply it meant the full fee. As it is, the amount of the fee to be submitted to the Area Treasurer is not specified.

This motion is that the following be incorporated into the Standing Orders – Each Member Group shall submit at least one half of the annual membership fee for each enrolled member to the Area Treasurer (or their representative). Groups may elect to submit more than half. The remainder of the annual membership fee shall be retained by the group. If the meeting should take the view that “an annual membership fee” means “the full annual membership fee”, then this motion is that the Model Area Constitution be amended as follows:

Article 9.1.5 to read: Each Member Group shall submit at least one half of the annual membership fee for each enrolled member to the Area Treasurer (or their representative) within seven days of receipt and in accordance with the internal procedures of the Area Committee. Groups may elect to submit more than half. The remainder of the annual membership fee shall be retained by the group.

The voting strength was re-established at 18.

Erik Bean (Stevenage delegate) confirmed that the equivalent motion H1 from last year’s conference needed 66% and got 61%.

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) in proposing, said the motion does not specify the amount which groups should pass to the area, it just refers to it as “a” fee. His motion is to set a minimum where there currently isn’t one. Groups may keep up to 50% of the membership fee if they wish. The further the money gets away from the group the worse it gets spent. His group does not have a lot of money. Many groups are subsidising memberships, and an increase in membership fee would just make people join a different group. As it is, we are competing with (free) meetup groups. If passed, this motion would take effect from 1st January 2017.

Simon George (Slough Windsor & Eton delegate) gave a formal second.

Erik Bean (Stevenage delegate) asked for clarification regarding the proportions. Jeff replied National would receive 25% of the whole, and Area would receive 25% of the whole. Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) said this motion is self serving. Small groups will not get much out of this. It is trying to make up for poor monetary policy within a group, it will end up underfunding Area and will fund big groups only.

In summing up Jeff Rea said the intention of the motion is to give flexibility. We do and will continue to mutually support each other. This gives control to the groups where it should be.

This motion needs 75% to succeed.

Votes For – 4 Against 14

MOTION LOST

13. Facility for National Debate

Erica Knight (National Chairman) said we have had 1 item submitted for debate.

13.1 Feasibility of Achieving Charitable Status or Limited Liability. For the future, what steps can we take to achieve charitable status or limit the liability of the organisation and its members – presented by Francis Wallington and James Oliver

Francis Wallington (VP) said past and honorary members think Plus cannot operate as a charitable body. Today it is an unincorporated association where members and committee members share liability. If we incur a debt or legal action, Francis would be liable as a Trustee. We should seek to limit our liability and change to charitable status. We could adopt several formats eg Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Other organisations around us are adopting these structures. Achieving this will enable external funds. Is this the right choice? Well, it is a legal choice. A committee could be set up to investigate this. We would employ a specialist solicitor to guide us through this process which will ensure the members are protected.

James Oliver (National Finance Officer) added that Francis's proposal is easily achievable via existing committee members.

Adam Redshaw (Midland Area Chairman) said there are other options which are less restrictive than charitable organisations and he will send information to James and Francis. Francis Wallington suggested he send it to all VPs and NEOs. Ian Crawshaw (Chiswick Delegate) asked how much the solicitor's cost would be and would it not wipe out any savings, and in addition are we not covered by our insurance policy? James Oliver (National Finance Officer) said the gross costs would be in the region of £1,500. This would protect us from some types of liability. Steve Rolfe (South Bucks Delegate) asked what liability would it save us from? James Oliver replied we are already covered for events liability, volunteer liability, he will have to get back to Steve on that.

Erik Bean (Stevenage Delegate) opened a second topic of debate. What about having a .plus domain? The domains are out there if you want. It would be slightly more expensive, but cool!

There were no other speakers.

10. Election of National Chairman to serve from 1st March 2016

Erica Knight said she would re-stand. She said "This is me". We need to communicate better amongst each other and decide how to take it forward.

Proposed by Kings' Lynn
Seconded by Stevenage

The floor had no questions for Erica.

There was a ballot paper vote.

14. Announcement of Election Results of National Chairman to serve from 1st March 2016

Erica Knight was elected to serve as National Chairman

11. Election of National Officers to serve from 1st March 2016

15. Announcement of Election Results of National Officers to serve from 1st March 2016

11.1 / 15.1 Honorary General Secretary

Joan Clifford (HGS) stood for the position.

Joan said it has been a learning curve and she and Ian Crawshaw have helped each other and will continue to do so.

Proposed by Chiswick and seconded by Coventry

Joan was elected to the position.

Nobody stood for the National Finance Officer position at this time so we moved to:

11.3/15.3 National Training Officer

This position has been abolished.

11.4/15.4 National Activities Co-Ordinator

Adrian Barnard (Didcot delegate) stood for the position.

He said he attends NEC meetings and organises events.

Proposed by Stevenage and seconded by Leeds

Adrian was elected to the position.

11.5/15.5 National Public Relations Officer

Nobody stood for the position.

11.6/15.6 National Internet Co-Ordinator

Nobody stood for the position.

11.7/15.7 National Publications Officer / Plus News Editor

Nobody stood for the position.

11.8/15.8 NEC Administrator

Ian Crawshaw (Chiswick Delegate) stood for the position.

Proposed by Barnet and Seconded by Leeds

Ian was elected to the position.

11.2 / 15.2 National Finance Officer

Voting strength re-established at 19.

Nick Grant (South Bucks late arrival) stood for the position.

Proposed by South Bucks and seconded by Kings' Lynn.

Katie Hawkins (Barnet Delegate) asked what experience does he have of finance? Nick said he's been group treasurer, run two businesses, and deals with 10 times the amount of money as is in Plus.

Nick was elected to the position.

16 National Chairman's Address

Erica said we have here a room full of people who care about our future. There is still a place for Plus. Our belongings are safe when we leave them in the room. We can be ourselves without fear of rejection. Let's continue to find new ways to improve.

17 Election of Honorary Officials

17.1 Independent Examiner of the 2016 Accounts

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

17.3 Vice Presidents

Gerry Edwards and Francis Wallington

The recommendation of the NEC to appoint Gerry and Francis as VPs was unanimously accepted by the conference.

17.2 The Impact of Plus – Gerry Edwards

Gerry Edwards (Vice President) took this opportunity to celebrate some of the highlights of Plus on this, our 75th Anniversary year. He showed Plus News copies from the mid 1970s. He cited the enmity between Chiltern and Thames Valley areas from the mid 70s. Ipswich group wanted a folk concert in 1975. Pigsty Hill Light Orchestra turned them down. 2nd choice was Jasper Carrott! In 1976 there was a major budget slash and Maidenhead had a big publicity event featuring Michael Parkinson. Caister 1977 had 3000 members and 200 went on the Real Ale trip. Membership peaked at 10000. Gerry said we have to keep the impetus going. Groups are now small but sustainable.

Adam Redshaw (Midland Area Chairman) followed with some Plus statistics over the 75 years, celebrating the number of members, groups, beers drunk, relationships started and ended, children, grandchildren.

Gerry Edwards said Plussers have done well in business, some became authors etc. David Attenborough and Michael Parkinson are two people who have previously declined the invitation to be Eighteen Plus President. Gerry said keep building, don't get complacent, fight to survive.

18. Any Other Urgent Business (Not Promotion of Events)

Liz Buller (Lincs Quest Delegate) asked is anyone producing a National Directory. Adrian Barnard (Didcot Delegate) replied he is happy to collate that, please give details to him.

Richard Thomas (HLM Observer) said we do have leaders here. He is celebrating 40 years of marriage and met his wife through Plus. He urged everyone to get organised in advance regarding motions, don't wait until half a month before the next NAGM. You cannot play fast and loose with voting and percentages. Respect the Constitution, it is your strength.

19. Announcement of the Date of the Annual General Meeting 2017

No date as yet but it will be in February 2017.

20. Presidential Closing Address by Vice President – Francis Wallington

Francis agreed with all of Richard's remarks. He reminisced over the more memorable moments of the day. Martin Reed getting the age motion through. Jeff Rea learning some hard lessons about submitting motions. One challenge to the Chair. Nick Taylor has a video camera, so talk to him! And come walking with us tomorrow.

21 Closure of the meeting by the National Chairman

Erica closed the meeting at 5.10pm and wished everyone a fun night and a safe journey home.