

# *ANC News 2005*

## **Saturday Afternoon**

National Chairman Wayne Fenton welcomed everybody to the 64<sup>th</sup> Annual National Conference. He said that despite the important decisions that need to be made, the most important thing is to go out and get new members.

Vice President Gerry Edwards then gave the Presidential Address. He said this is possibly the most important Conference of all and we need to continue to develop to stay in touch with society. He urged delegates to listen carefully to each of the options with an open mind, and not personalise the debate. He acknowledged the hard work the NEC have put in over the past year on the restructuring options. Finally, he emphasised the need to have fun.

Wayne then explained the general procedures for debate. Election of tellers followed with Chris Porter, Phil Bettis, Mike Shapcott, and Kathy Morris elected. Voting strength was established at 60.

Richard Morton (So'ton Friends Del) challenged the Chairman's Ruling based on the exclusion of a motion from the agenda, to allow "Option D / Group Lead" [see later for more on these options!] an equal hearing as a restructuring proposal. Barkingside seconded. There was some discussion on what exactly was being challenged, with Tony Burgess (National Finance Officer) explaining that the NEC had spent the last year finalising and publishing Options A, B, and C, and there wasn't time to give Group Lead the same attention to detail. He said Group Lead was also too similar to Option C (Area Lead). Because the challenge related to Agenda Item 14 (ballot pursuant to the motion from last year empowering the NEC to restructure the Federation), if it succeeds, it will invalidate the Agenda item and nullify the NEC's work. Andy Campbell (Barkingside delegate) said the challenge should not throw out the NEC's three options. Chris Brandon (Northwich delegate) remarked that Group Lead should be included as So'ton Friends had worked hard to put it together. After a break, Richard withdrew the challenge. Wayne Fenton explained that the NEC had decided to accept So'ton Friend's motion as an amendment to the Agenda. The mood of the Conference eased considerably!!

Janet Rintoul, Nicola Poppitt, and Joanne Taylor were elected as ballot paper counters.

Apologies for absence were received from Martin Maze and Steve Sheldon (Direct Members), and Rita Grimes (HLM).

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Donna Verrall (HGS) handed out the amended agenda to include Group Lead. The minutes of the last conference were proposed (Black Country) and seconded (Banbury) and accepted nem con, with no matters arising. The Federation's Report for 2004 was proposed (Black Country), seconded (Northwich), and accepted. The Federation's Accounts were proposed (Brentwood), seconded (Sutton Coldfield), and accepted, as was the Accountant's Report. Donna read out nominations for the following National positions up for election: Francis Wallington (HGS), Andy Cole (NFO), Dave Filer (National Activities Officer) and Adam Redshaw (National Development Officer).

Richard Morton (So'ton Friends delegate) then introduced the motion that "Group Lead" should be among the options discussed for restructuring. He said that all the available options should receive an equal hearing and explained that a Group lead option was missing from the options available. Iain Parkes (Banbury delegate) seconded the motion and said the floor should have more choice in deciding the Federation's future structure. Tony Burgess (NFO) spoke on behalf of the NEC against the motion. He said the NEC's position was unchanged but had made the compromise to allow the motion in, and the NEC had repeatedly asked for feedback on their restructuring options. Ian Crawshaw (Plus News Editor) thanked Richard and the NEC for coming to a sensible compromise. Lara Collins spoke against as she felt So'ton Friends has hijacked NEC procedures. Sharon Law (Redbridge) said the motion should be debated. Adrian Barnard (Didcot delegate) said members were not excluded from the ongoing debate at any time and urged to vote against. Mark Randall (Black Country observer) said there were differences between Group Lead and Area Lead. The motion was **carried** as Wayne demanded a break, and beer from Richard!

Wayne Fenton (and his duck) then gave his speech for re-standing as National Chairman (proposed by Northwich, seconded Barnet). He asked for your votes so he could continue as National Chairman. Martin Berry (Black Country delegate) asked Wayne what new things he could achieve in the next 12 months. More beer, exercise, and sex! Seriously, he said he will only know for sure when we know which option will take us forward. Huw Morris (Oxford delegate) asked Wayne to confirm he will not stand down depending on which option gets voted, Wayne declined to answer! Venita Olayemi (sp?) (Coventry delegate) pressed Wayne for an answer, and got the answer that he could not work with two of the options as he disagreed with them. Katie Buse (Slough delegate) asked where the Federation will be led if Wayne stands down. Wayne said it depends on whether anybody else stands as National Chairman, and Donna explained the most senior Area Chairman who restands would become Acting National Chairman. Corinna applauded Wayne for not saying which options he did not like as it may influence the vote. Wayne was asked if he may consider doing Brean again! (No!).

Have fun tonight, enjoy the Plustars and the Funfair, and let's be having you bright and early tomorrow and not too hungover (some chance ☺).

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## Sunday Morning

Returning to the end of Saturday afternoon, a ballot vote was taken for Wayne with voting strength 61.

Kingscott Dix and Co. were re-elected as the Federation's Accountants.

The National Officers standing for re-election were asked questions. Francis felt he was the most suitable candidate (for HGS) at this time. His strengths and weaknesses were tenacity! Andy Cole (NFO-elect) was asked whether Plus News will continue to be funded as present; that decision will be made by the NEC. Adam Redshaw (NDO-elect) was asked about how he could help in the next year and about his forthcoming projects (a National DVD, a new "Meet your friends" website, and links with the NUS. Dave Filer (NAO-elect) was asked about blowing up balloons (!) and his experience of running activities. Votes were taken on all.

Wayne Fenton was re-elected as National Chairman with 55 votes for, and 3 against. Francis Wallington, Andy Cole, Adam Redshaw, and Dave Filer were all elected to their new posts. Congratulations to all.

Donna Verrall (HGS) gave a presentation on the current state of the Federation. She outlined the current structure; Group, Area, and National Committees, and how they work together. She explained what will happen tomorrow in the lead up to the restructuring decision. Wayne made himself popular by saying the Conference will start at 9am ☺.

In a departure from previous years the Awards Ceremony took place during the evening festivities, with awards being made for Treasurer's Trophy (L&SE), Excellence Award (Steve Browning – EAA), Charities Trophy (Black Country), Gold Trail Trophy (Northwich), Training (EAA), Magazine (Barnet Flyer), Development (L&SE), Spirit of 18 Plus (Wayne Fenton), National Chairman's Merit Award (Andy Cole), Best Group (So'ton Friends), Best Area (EAA). Some additional "Plustars" awards were made, these were Don Juan (Ian Crawshaw [*thanks guys*] ), Femme Fatale (Alison Bray), Time Keeping (Paul West), P\*sshead (Pete Mann), Eccentric (Iain Parkes), Futuristic (Black Country WAP Technology), and Spirit of WASH (Phil Bettis). A funfair replaced the usual band, with skittles / stocks / tin can alley all being played with chances to win various Plus Products. Nearby the Kissing Booth one particular Plusser was receiving somewhat preferential treatment..... ♥

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First business on the Sunday morning was the presentation by So'ton Friends (Richard Morton and Kirsty van Lieshout) on the restructuring option "Option D" / "Group Lead". This option would reduce the membership fee to £25, of which £10 would go to National for Insurance, ANC etc. Group and Area Committee elections would be made annually, but the Area would be slimmed down. The main events will be put on by Groups who will tender for the running of the larger events such as the ANC. The Office would be closed, with an upgraded website which would be used as an events calendar and in processing of memberships. The presenters fielded questions on the age range (stay as it is), Internet usage (volunteers within Groups would liaise with the remaining members), the specification of the virtual office and timetable for its setup, and comparison of costs (current Office 25K a year / Virtual Office £10K setup costs, £800 a year ongoing).

Andy Cole (L&SE Chairman) and Joe Gurney (EAA Chairman) presented the next option, "Option A" / "National Lead". This option slims down the current Committee structure, with Area Committee replaced by a representative and Group Committee replaced by a representative, Treasurer, and other optional posts, elected annually. There would be a new NEC post of Website Officer and voting of Project Officers would be at the ANC, as at present. Staff costs reduced and extra emphasis placed on communications and the website. No upper age limit. The membership fee would rise to £40 and extra options for payment would be made available. In time, more functions would be carried out electronically. Questions were asked to clarify various points including payment of memberships, membership fee, and office admin contingency.

Tracy Thorn (NT&C Chairman) and John Smith (Northern Chairman) presented "Option B" / "Member Lead". This vastly simplifies the organisational structure by removing Areas and Groups (although Groups may optionally exist), and retaining a National layer and an Office, all accountable to the members. Communication will be enhanced via the Website and Plus News. The ANC will change to one member one vote and a majority of 66% needed to pass motions. Project Officers will run local events such as dances and competitions. Membership fee would rise to £55 and the age range would be open. Questions were taken on the budget, feasibility of "Group" bank accounts, recruitment, vote rigging (!), running small scale events, and existing funds.

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The final option to be presented was “Option C” / “Area Lead”, on behalf of the NEC by Huw Morris (Oxford del). Under this option Areas would get increased responsibility for membership and decision making, with National operating on a vastly reduced budget. National policy changes would be made at NEC meetings, with results fed back to Areas and new ideas collated and voted on at Area level for a decision to be taken at the next NEC meeting. The office would close and there would be no ANC. Membership fee drops to £25 and there would be no Group levies, only a flat levy applied to each Area. There would be an increased reliance on the Internet with all communications taking place online. The age range would be unaltered. Questions were taken to clarify a number of issues including membership cards, and training / development budget, and levies.

Wayne presented cheques for £100 for increased membership to So'ton Friends and Billericay.

Following a jacket potato lunch it was back to the Conference, with a voting strength of 62, for the debate to start in earnest!!

The first option to be debated was the Group Lead option. Bekki Randall (Black Country observer) felt this was the only way forward as the other options were status quo (A), death of Groups (B) or could cause Areas to de-Federate(C)! Adrian Barnard (Didcot delegate) felt D demanded too much work from ordinary members. Katie Buse (Slough delegate) felt experience could be lost with the loss of Areas. Mark “Martin” Randall (Black Country observer) felt D could adapt and Groups were key to the Federation. Pete Strawbridge (Solihull observer) felt the virtual office was unworkable without an Administrator. Sharon Law (Redbridge delegate) felt D was innovative and could work well within current procedures.

Next up was the National Lead Option. Martin Berry (Black Country delegate) felt A was the most viable option as it cut down on existing red tape, C had a too complex procedure for change, and B lacked appropriate bodies for processing change. Sharon Law (Redbridge delegate) felt the membership fee would put new members off. Corinna (Sutton Coldfield observer) felt strength should be maintained at National. Ian Oliver (Black Country observer) said his group were divided on the option. Steve Sykes (Didcot delegate) felt A would waste too much money.

Lorraine Whiting (Havering delegate) started the debate on Member Lead Option “B”. Dressed as a bunny, she felt a lot of membership money would disappear into a black hole and would break up the family of groups. Andy Campbell (Barkingside delegate) felt all the options had merit. Matt Bonar (Sutton Coldfield delegate) liked the One Member One Vote offered by B. Rob Jones (Bradford delegate) felt B would put us into competition with Spice – and we would lose! Several delegates felt retaining Groups and the locale was important and the price was prohibitive.

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Martin Posner (Romford delegate) opened the debate on Area Lead Option “C”. He spoke for, favouring the way Areas would provide strong support for struggling groups. Mark Hewson (Solihull observer) spoke against, that C would duplicate Area work and procedures were confusing. Sherrie Roberts (Redbridge delegate) felt C had an attractive membership fee and was the best option. Phil Bettis (Lichfield observer) felt D was “a step too far” and C was the best option as the financial burden was removed from all. Andy Campbell (Barkingside delegate) said his Area had struggled and there was too much reliance on Area Committee members. Lara Collins (Brentwood delegate) said the alternative to C would be to close the Federation! Pete Strawbridge (Solihull delegate) felt there was too much reliance on Areas. Janet Rintoul (Bradford observer) felt C allowed change to get pushed through quicker. Giles Kirby (West Kent delegate) felt the ANC was necessary with everybody in one place. Steven Sykes (Didcot delegate) said the ANC – though good – cost too much, but could always be put back later. Hazel Bunker (Barkingside delegate) had concerns about what would happen if an Area closed. Steve Thomas (So'ton delegate) said new members notice groups rather than Area and favoured D over C. Corinna Teale (National Publicity Officer) felt cheap membership was a smokescreen and C was not best for the Federation. Ian Oliver + Laptop felt there was lack of concern that Areas may close and to restart the ANC again would be cost-prohibitive, then spoke faster than I can write ☺.

Gerry Edwards (VP/NEO) then explained the voting procedure, and then the voting took place, with a voting strength of 62, as Wayne blabbered on about some football team or other.

Adam Redshaw opened the National Facility for Debate by asking for technical advice re: the DVD for 18 Plus he is working on. Tracy Thorn asked how much a disk cost and was told under £2. Richard Morton asked Adam to consider his target audience and was told this would be eased by menu options.

The results of the ballot came in with National Lead 16, Area 36, Member 0, Group lead 10, so Area Lead will be the way forward.

Wayne then gave his Chairman's Address. He thanked the NEC, So'ton Friends, and everybody for all the hard work on the options. He also said he was standing down, and the next Chair would be co-opted at the July NEC meeting. He gave a few thank yous and handed out some unexpected gifts, particularly recognising the office staff.

Andy Cole announced he was going to step down as NFO-elect.

Gerry Edwards was re-elected as VP and Donna Verrall and Tony Burgess received an HLM. Gerry gave his Presidential Closing Address and then Wayne closed the 64th ANC, the last as we know it. Watch this space!