

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES for Annual Conference 2008

Guidelines for CLPs and affiliated organisations

Last year's Annual Conference agreed a new process for the handling of contemporary issues at Conference. The new process enables affiliates and CLPs at the 2008 Conference to:-

- submit contemporary issues for debate to be determined in a priorities ballot at the start of Conference.
- participate in the discussions and ongoing work by the Policy Commission if the matter is successfully agreed as a priority contemporary issue by Conference.
- receive, via an annex to the appropriate National Policy Forum report, a progress report or agreed statement on the successful contemporary issues referred to the National Policy Forum from the previous year's Conference. This annex can be debated and voted on separately at the 2008 Conference.

The new arrangements were agreed by amendment to Rule and are set out in Clause 3C2.3. The Conference Arrangements Committee is the body elected by Conference to oversee and administer the Conference business and programme and has developed the following guidance, within the framework of the new rules, on how the new processes will operate.

This note therefore advises on:-

- submissions on contemporary issues to the 2008 Conference and the appeals process.
- handling of contemporary issues debates at the 2008 Conference
- the process for dealing with successful contemporary issue subjects after Conference.
- the process for dealing with contemporary issues carried by the 2007 Conference
- CAC Report 1 to the 2008 Conference
- emergency resolutions
- constitutional amendments

1. Submissions on contemporary issues to the 2008 Conference

All affiliated organisations and CLPs may submit one issue that is contemporary. This is an issue which, in the view of the submitting affiliated organisation or CLP, should either be prioritised for debate or which has not been substantively addressed in the annual reports to Conference or in the Policy documents of the policy commissions.

These issues must be submitted online via the contemporary issue page on membersnet or in writing on the appropriate form. Contemporary issues should deal with one subject only, be expressed in ten words or less, and meet the CAC's criteria set out below.

To accompany the submission affiliates and CLPs may submit an explanation to the CAC of a maximum of 250 words explaining why the issue should be prioritised or how they believe the matter has not been substantively addressed in reports before Conference from the National Policy Forum or National Executive Committee.

All contemporary issues submissions accepted as valid by the CAC will be grouped by subject and submitted to a priorities ballot at the start of Conference.

The supporting explanations for all contemporary issues accepted by CAC for inclusion in the priorities ballot will be published to Conference in an annex to Conference Arrangements Committee Report 1.

The CAC's criteria for the consideration of the validity of contemporary issue submissions is as follows:

- contemporary issue submissions must be on one subject only and expressed in ten words or less
- contemporary issues cannot be used to by-pass either the NPF policy-making or NEC decision-making processes, or to change the procedure of Conference; or propose rule changes.
- contemporary issues must not have been substantively addressed in the Annual Reports or policy documents to conference from the National Policy Forum, including in alternative positions arising from the NPF in the final year
- if an issue is defeated at the NPF and has failed to achieve the status of an alternative position, it cannot be raised at the following Conference via a contemporary issue submission
- contemporary issues cannot be used to overturn or revisit the agreed policy in the manifesto for the subsequent general election
- contemporary issues or supporting explanations must not be defamatory or offensive in content
- affiliates and CLPs who have submitted a constitutional amendment may not also submit a contemporary issue in the same year.

Any contemporary issue submission considered by the CAC not to meet the above criteria will be notified to the appropriate policy commission or to the NEC for consideration or ruled out of order, if it is in contravention of the Party's Rules.

2. Appeals against CAC decisions on contemporary issue submissions

Decisions of the CAC on the validity of contemporary issues submissions will be notified to all submitting affiliates and CLPs as soon as possible after the CAC meeting at which the decision is made (see timetable below). Affiliates and CLPs whose submissions the CAC considers do not meet the criteria will be invited to attend the CAC the day before the start of Annual Conference.

Where the delegate is unable to attend in person, the CAC will consider written appeals from the relevant CLP or affiliate, and will also endeavour to provide telephone conference facilities to allow absent delegates to make their appeal directly to the CAC.

As in previous years, the ballot paper for the Priorities Ballot will be printed immediately after the CAC's consideration of appeals so that voting can begin at the at the start of Conference. The CAC's decision on the validity of contemporary issues for the priorities ballot is therefore final and cannot be subject to reference back from the Conference floor under consideration of CAC Report 1 to Conference.

3. Deadlines and key dates concerning contemporary issue submissions

The timetable for submissions and consideration of contemporary issue submissions is as follows:

Contemporary Issues - deadline for submission	Friday 12 September at 12 noon
Conference Arrangements Committee to consider the validity of Contemporary Issue submissions	Monday 15 September
Emergency Resolutions - deadline for submission	Thursday 18 September at 12 noon
Conference Arrangements Committee to consider appeals	Friday 19 September at Conference

4. Handling of contemporary issues debates at the 2008 Conference

The top four priority issues voted for by CLPs in the priorities ballot will be timetabled for debate at Conference, as will the top four priority issues voted for by affiliates. As soon as the priorities ballot result is announced, the CAC will convene and chair meetings of delegates from submitting organisations for each of the successful issue subjects to meet with the relevant NEC policy commission co-convenor and minister to discuss the progress on the issue and how the issue might be taken forward.

The meeting will also agree two speakers from amongst the submitting organisations' delegates. These speakers will propose and second that Conference should vote to refer the issue to the NPF for further deliberation and investigation. If there are differing views on the issue among the submitting organisations delegates, then the proposer and seconders should, as far as possible, reflect these differences.

During the debate at Conference, the policy commission co-convenors will set out how the Commission will take forward the issue in response to the debate.

If the vote for referring the issue to the NPF for further deliberation and investigation is carried then the relevant policy commission will fully integrate the issue into their workplan for the year ahead. The proposer and seconder will be engaged in these discussions, and a report on the outcome and progress of the discussions will be contained as an Annex to the appropriate Policy Commission report to the subsequent Conference under the procedure set out in item (5) below.

Σ. Process for dealing with successful contemporary issue subjects after Conference

The Joint Policy Committee will meet in advance of the NPF's first meeting after Conference to agree the policy commission's revised workplans and the agenda for the upcoming National Policy Forum. The JPC will ensure that the contemporary issues are fully integrated into the Policy Commission work programme, and that the proposers and seconders at Conference are fully engaged in the discussions. The NPF, at its first meeting after Annual Conference, will receive an interim report from the commissions notifying stakeholders of the progress made on the issues referred to them. The referred contemporary issues will be a standing item on the NPF and JPC agendas and NPF representatives will have an opportunity to discuss the issues in greater detail in workshops and in plenaries.

The JPC will receive regular reports from the commission co-convenors and ensure the NPF is kept informed of progress.

Members and stakeholders will also be able to take part in discussions on the contemporary issues through the discussion forums on Membersnet and on the policy commission web pages. There will also be opportunities, such as regional Policy Forums and Spring Conference, for members to contribute to the debate.

The policy commissions will provide regular reports of their work and discussions to the NPF as well as to stakeholders and members through 'Dialogue', the new NPF newsletter.

The Chair of the CAC will meet the Chairs of the JPC and NPF to ensure a joined up and integrated approach between the work of the NPF and Annual Conference.

6. Process for dealing with contemporary issues carried by the 2007 Conference

At the 2008 Conference, the policy commissions will provide annexes to their Annual reports which report on progress made over the year on the referred contemporary issues from the 2007 Conference. These annexes will reflect the various discussions and contributions held by the commission over the year, and will be agreed by the policy commissions and the Joint Policy Committee.

The annexes will be voted on separately by Annual Conference and will be moved by the policy commission co-convenor. The mover of the original issue will also have the opportunity to speak to Conference to indicate their view of how the issue has been progressed by the NPF, and whether Conference should vote to accept the report as a satisfactory resolution of the issue or vote to refer the issue back to the NPF for further discussions.

Should Conference vote to refer the issue back to the NPF, the relevant policy commission will take steps to ensure the issue is fully integrated into their workplan for the year ahead. The proposer and seconder of these issues will be engaged in the discussions.

7. CAC Report 1 to the 2008 Conference

In the light of the amended procedures, CAC Report 1 to the 2008 Conference will therefore include:-

- a list of the subjects put forward for the priorities ballot and the submitting organisations
- a summary on progress on the issues put forward for the priorities ballot at the NPF and in the policy commissions
- an Annex containing the text of explanations from affiliates and CLPs whose contemporary issue submissions are accepted by CAC for inclusion in the priorities ballot
- a separate list of the annexes to Policy Commission reports arising from successful contemporary issue subjects and when they will be scheduled for debate at Conference.

8. Emergency resolutions

Emergency resolutions must relate to an issue which could not reasonably have been the subject of a contemporary issue submission. They should also cover an issue which has arisen after the closing date for a contemporary issue submission and which is of urgent and immediate importance to the discussions of the whole Labour Party at Annual Conference. The decision by CAC on whether to accept and table an emergency resolution will be taken at Annual Conference.

For 2008, the deadline for submission of emergency resolutions is Thursday 18 September at 12noon. Emergency resolutions must be emailed (no form required) to cac@new.labour.org.uk and a hard copy, signed by the CLP secretary/affiliate authorised officer and sent to the Conference Arrangements Committee, The Labour Party, 39 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0HA or faxed to 020 7783 1506.

4. Constitutional amendments

The procedure for submission of constitutional amendments is unchanged by the new procedures. Constitutional amendments should be submitted on the appropriate form and in accordance with the required deadline. Affiliates and CLPs submitting a constitutional amendment may not also submit a contemporary issue submission.

Conference Arrangements Committee
22 July 2008