

FUTURE of the LABOUR PARTY



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The Young Fabians are the under-31's section of the Fabian Society, Britain's foremost centre-left think tank. Set up in 1960, we remain the only think tank run by and for young people.

Our membership numbers over 1,800 and includes young professionals, students, parliamentary researchers, political activists and academics. The Young Fabians promote policy debate through seminars, conferences, pamphlets, and online through our website and blog.

About the Fabian Society

The Fabian Society is Britain's leading left of centre think tank and political society, committed to creating the political ideas and policy debates which can shape the future of progressive politics. The Society is unique among think tanks in being a thriving, democratically constituted membership organisation, affiliated to the Labour Party but organisationally and editorially independent.

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Introduction

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We live in a time of disruptive change, one that requires a new and renewed Labour Party.

Our country faces some big challenges: In the UK there are 13 million people in poverty; there are 2 million people unemployed; there are 90,000 people in prison, 1,000 of whom are children; there is the upcoming EU referendum; the need for reform in our public services; the challenge of how our economy can deliver a fairer society; there is a serious question about the role of centre left politics as we see lurches to both the left and the right across Europe. How do we meet the challenges and opportunities of globalisation, big data, climate change, and the constantly shifting foreign policy issues in the Middle East?

In May 2015, Labour got knocked down. In the world of boxing, when you get knocked down, you have two options. The first is to get up as soon as possible. Usually, these fighters get knocked down a second time straight after. The other option is to stay on the canvas, take a deep breath, recuperate, readjust, and take the full nine seconds you've got before the 10th count.

Right now, with over four years until the next General Election, the Party has 9 seconds. And we need those 9 seconds on the canvas to take a deep breath, recuperate, re-evaluate, and re-adjust.

Since the General Election in May 2015, 75,000 people have joined the Labour Party. The membership has soared at the fastest rate for 64 years. Another 70,000 people signed up as registered supporters to vote during the leadership election. People are joining because they care desperately about Britain being a fairer

society. They want to address the big challenges we face, and they want to tackle the injustices they see in their communities and that they experience in their lives. The Labour Party must be ready to welcome these people and foster their skills and energy.

The task at hand for our Party cannot be tougher. The Conservatives now have a 12-point lead. We need to secure a swing of 9.5% to secure an overall majority and win back over 100 seats – from both the SNP as well as from Conservatives, as well as acknowledging and addressing the challenge of UKIP. We need to become an electable party built on a social movement. We need to speak with and for the country. From London to York, from Cardiff to the Lake District, from Glasgow to Belfast, we need to work together and remain united.

In the weeks following Labour's defeat in May 2015, there was a plethora of analysis on what went wrong and what we need to do to win in 2020 and beyond. The Party has embarked upon a deep process of soul-searching, including Margaret Beckett's and Jon Cruddas' investigations. As the conversation turns to what the Party needs to do to win back voters and win in 2020, the Young Fabians decided to contribute their unique perspective to the debate. Our aim has been to capture views about the future of the Labour Party by the future of the Labour Party: namely young people who play an active role in Labour.

To achieve this, the Young Fabians have produced this pamphlet which harnesses the ideas and views of the Young Fabians membership. It is the culmination of a listening campaign made up of a series of events, activities, and a survey where young people put forward ideas about where the Labour Party must go in the lead up to the 2020 General Election and beyond.

The listening campaign formally asked people the following questions: What must the Labour Party do to win the General Election in 2020? What type of leader does Labour need to win the General Election in 2020? What must activists and organisers do to win the General Election in 2020? Other questions were also discussed including how will the party bring change and make the United Kingdom better.

We worked hard to ensure that the listening campaign was as inclusive and diverse as possible. We encouraged challenging and constructive debate and we asked participants to be forward-looking rather than revisiting the "what went wrong" questions too much. It was a battle of ideas led by communities across the country.

This pamphlet represents the individual views and opinions of Young Fabians as shared over the listening campaign. This pamphlet does not set out specific recommendations for specific actions, but instead outlines the key challenges the Party under the direction of its new leader must take on. We have sought to answer the big questions rather than put forward specific policy proposals. We believe that we still have those nine-seconds on the canvas to recreate a new Labour Party, to co-sense and co-create our plan and strategy for winning 2020.

The challenge for us still is to take time to think deeply about our role as a Party, and radically about how we can win 2020. The future of the Labour party depends on us ■

What does the party need to do to win in 2020?

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espondents to the survey shared considerable common ground in their views on how the party could return to power in 2020. A key consideration and recurrent theme was the selection of a competent leader who would be perceived as credible. Connected with this is rebuilding the party's economic reputation, which is critical to success, as is creating a set of genuinely pro-business policies. There is strong appetite to broaden the range of candidates participating in party politics, to underpin a necessary broadening of appeal among voters; across generations, classes, and regionally. Some respondents highlighted the nettles which must be grasped to achieve this, for example by abandoning uncostered promises, or taking a tougher line on immigration. Others highlighted the need to remain committed to a left wing ideology rather than aiming for the centre ground, while aspiration was a recurrent theme for many respondents.

RESPONSES



"Craft a narrative so grand, practical and understandable that it electrifies supporters, engrosses voters and shocks the Conservatives to their core"



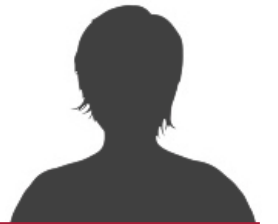
"The Labour Party must reach out to disaffected voters, both those who voted for other parties in and those who did not vote at all. To do so it must present a simple message that fairness and equality lead to prosperity for all. They must move away from questions of the left and right, and present a clear vision of the Britain they want to create in much the same way the Tories did. Their message must offer hope for those disenchanted with politics; the young must feel valued and trusted whilst the most disadvantaged must feel that they count in a country that is increasingly sidelining them for the interests of the few. Yet Labour must also accept that many in Britain worry they are not economically credible enough to be in power"



Engage with people at the grassroots level. They should look to the likes of Syriza, Podemos, and the SNP for inspiration



"Reset its relationship with the business community. This goes beyond merely emphasising a pro-EU stance or saying some nice words about entrepreneurs, and it doesn't mean mollycoddling companies who don't play by the rules just out of fear of being seen as 'anti-business'. We need a party that reassures businesses that they will be encouraged to grow and prosper under a Labour government, whatever their size, as well as urging them to adopt initiatives such as the living wage where possible."



"Labour must drift left and right simultaneously, combat the rise of English nationalism, find a fairer resolution to immigration, oppose austerity in Scotland, break the party in two, regain middle England, find a leader charismatic enough to battle Boris Johnson and accept its past mistakes under New Labour. In short, it is nearly impossible."



"We must offer something to these Conservative voters who are most likely middle-class and earning a decent wage. We must not, however, sacrifice our belief that we must help those in need."

What type of leader does the Party need?

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he ideal leader for the Labour Party will be charismatic and shrewd; he or she will understand the electorate and be able to articulate a hopeful and credible vision for 21st century Britain. This leader will not compromise socialist principles and will have the strength to question the received wisdom on the tough issues of today: economy, immigration, welfare. A clear and powerful media message and a strong leadership team will enable this leader to communicate their sound economic and social understanding to core Labour voters as well as to non-traditional Labour voters. They should have experience outside of politics and demonstrate that they can empathise nationally as well as strategise globally.

What Young Fabians want from a Labour leader

Characteristics	Percentage of mentions
Articulate a clear vision	18%
Uncompromising ideology	16%
Charismatic	11%
Credible future Prime Minister	11%
Understands electorate	9%
Economic credibility	11%
Connect with workers	9%
Strong media image	7%
Not a career politician	7%

"A leader who can combine real passion for the Labour cause of equality and fairness with a strong and firm image"

"Capable of galvanising cross-sections of the country"

"Someone who looks and sounds prime ministerial"

"Someone the electorate can clearly see as being different from the Conservative leader"

"Someone who is unafraid to say what they mean, someone unapologetically committed to a belief system"

"Labour's leader must present hope"

"The most important factor to winning the election is that the party leader comes across as real"

What must activists and organisers do to win in 2020?



We over performed against our targets to have 1 million conversations on the doorstep in the 2015 General Election campaign. But did it have any impact at all? Were we having the right type of conversations? '3 years of fighting a marginal seat, giving it huge amounts of time, energy and money and at the end, it felt like nothing was achieved... I'd rather have litter picked the estates we went round rather than asking voter ID, at least it would have made a tangible difference!' What if we'd asked instead: What would make your street/community a better place to live, and how can we help you to make that happen?

Communications



1/3 of our responses to this question highlighted the need for a genuine left wing vision and message to take to the doors. So, what's our elevator pitch?

Conversation



1/6 of the responses referenced we need to be more effective at targeting voters and about listening, engaging with them and persuading them of our cause. We need to understand our potential voters and tailor our messages to them for 2020.

Organising



27% of the responses mentioned a need to engage and reconnect with other community organisations and improving our visibility in our communities. What could our army of volunteers do for the next 3 years that would demonstrate that Labour can improve people's lives?



...we need to be visibly beneficial to the community before the next general election

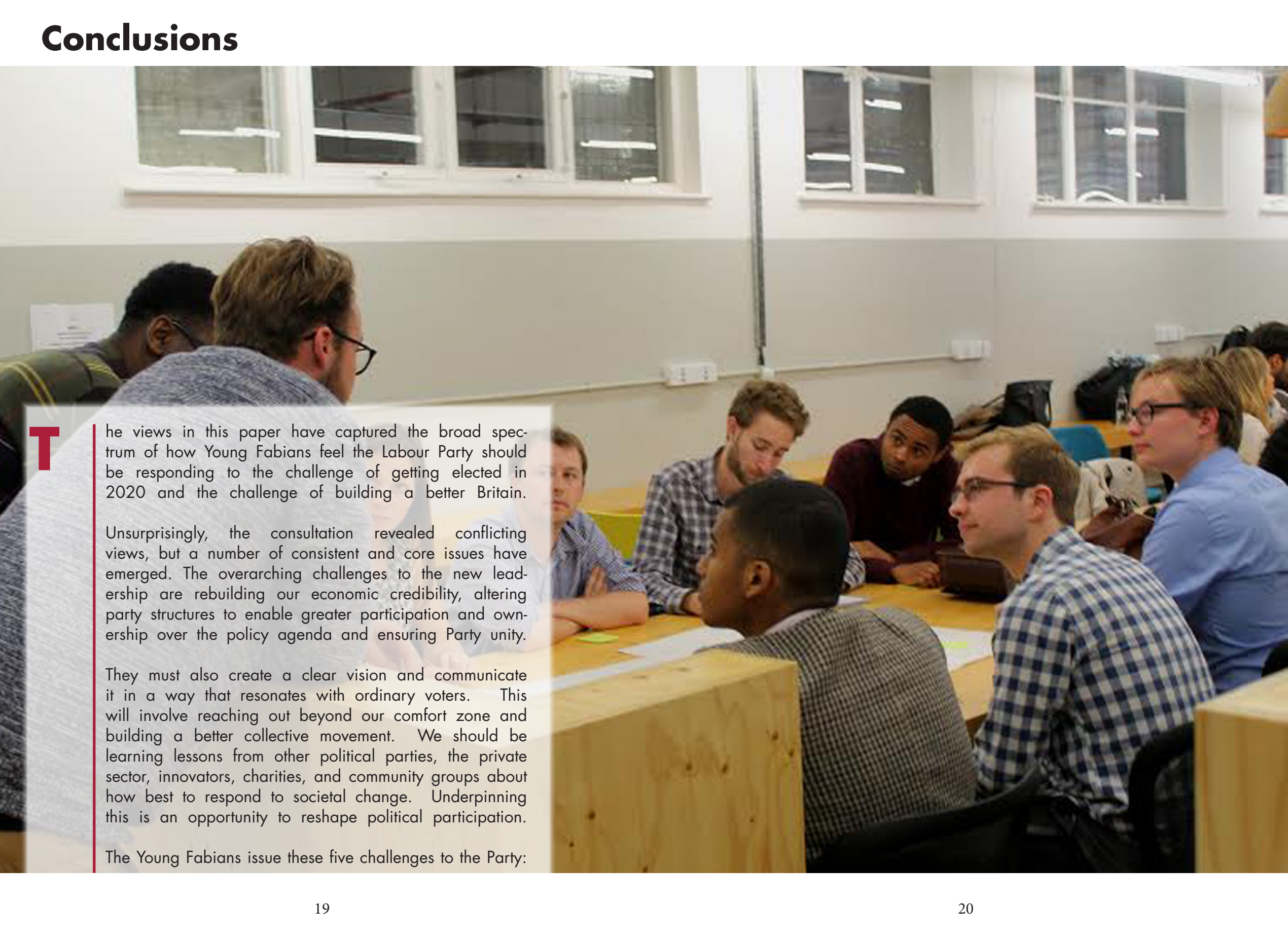


Make being a member a rewarding experience.
happy members = more members = more workers = success



We need to use language which people relate to and connects with everyone - not just the left-wing intelligentsia of North London

Conclusions



The views in this paper have captured the broad spectrum of how Young Fabians feel the Labour Party should be responding to the challenge of getting elected in 2020 and the challenge of building a better Britain.

Unsurprisingly, the consultation revealed conflicting views, but a number of consistent and core issues have emerged. The overarching challenges to the new leadership are rebuilding our economic credibility, altering party structures to enable greater participation and ownership over the policy agenda and ensuring Party unity.

They must also create a clear vision and communicate it in a way that resonates with ordinary voters. This will involve reaching out beyond our comfort zone and building a better collective movement. We should be learning lessons from other political parties, the private sector, innovators, charities, and community groups about how best to respond to societal change. Underpinning this is an opportunity to reshape political participation.

The Young Fabians issue these five challenges to the Party:



Develop a new cadre of diverse leaders

The party must support leaders from all sections of society and increase diversity from the grassroots up

Whilst a leader who is credible and relatable is important, the Party also needs to encourage different voices and diversity. It needs to be equipped to support people from a variety of backgrounds into politics. This means nurturing talent at all levels and building collective leadership across the Party, not just at the top.

The strength of our candidates will be crucial in 2020. Our Parliamentary candidates and councillors need to be supported, well equipped and reflect the diversity of our Party and country, but it shouldn't end there. The Party must also support all of our volunteer organisers, tweeters, data crunchers and much more.

The Party should consider how it opens up pathways to power within its own structures, and how it can proactively encourage, identify, recruit, and develop people from all corners of society – teachers, doctors, nurses, business people, entrepreneurs, creatives – to get involved in the Party.



Develop a compelling vision for the future of the country

We must stick to a clear and consistent message, one that can reach beyond our traditional base and be a clear alternative to the Conservatives

The leadership needs to provide a clear vision for the country, which incorporates the challenges of the future and a clear message of what we stand for that resonates with voters. We need to be able to articulate how Labour is a genuine and economically credible alternative to the Conservatives. Failure to do this in 2015 was one of the greatest criticisms of the Party.

We need a genuine offer that not only covers all policy areas including health, education, social policy, foreign affairs, economic policy, but also weaves it together into a coherent narrative. The Shadow Cabinet needs to work together, utilising all ideas, to develop a broad, unifying narrative.

We will then be able to reach out beyond our traditional base and gain support from the electorate to win in 2020. A clear, compelling vision also empowers our activists to engage with people on the doorstep in a confident and meaningful way.

The Party must not be timid about reaching out beyond the membership and engaging non-members – both young and old and urban and rural, swing voters, Tories, and getting into work places – and having something to say that resonates with these people.



Master the art of digital communication

Is the Party fully equipped to deal with the age of digital?

Digital technology is revolutionising the way we consume services, seek out information and engage with friends, family and colleagues. People communicate in different ways now than in the past and this will continue to evolve rapidly – particularly amongst the 16-24 year old demographic. The future of the Party depends on its ability to respond to these changes and rise to the challenge of communicating in a more digitally savvy world, including avoiding spamming members with untargeted messaging.

This is a fast moving space. One where the Party must be aware of what platforms people are using and avoiding getting stuck. Whilst Facebook may be an appropriate platform today, tomorrow it might be Snapchat or Vine or something else which hasn't yet been invented. The Party should gravitate to where people are, find innovative ways to engage in the digital space and use them as opportunities to organise for impact.

The Party must also explore ways to engage digital natives and other non-voting citizens – online voting, national voter registration, apps to ensure information at grassroots is fed to the decision makers. We can learn from the tech industry, on how to harness their user-networks for political outcomes.



Connect local activism to policy making

The Party must create mechanisms to re-connect the party leadership to the issues members care about at the grassroots

The Party needs a healthy open culture of disagreement and debate, which links the leadership with the grassroots. This should include creating pathways for campaigns, activism and the issues people care about at local level to influence the policy making process. This will also help ensure that our activists feel part of the process to developing solutions and Party positions that they can fully champion.

Making the party, and in particular the policy development process, less hierarchical, and more flat, would be one way to address this. There also need to be genuine feedback loops that link national-level policies and local constituency-level context in a way which enables the national to be relevant at local level and the local to inform the national.

In age where the public receives information from a wealth of sources, a top down approach of setting policy is no longer adequate. People have to feel like they are part of the decision making process to feel they have ownership over what the Party is promoting. This will help them see the results of what they are involved with and make them more confident to talk about it on the doorstep.



Change the world from Opposition

We need to act now and use the powers we have from Opposition to building a better Britain now

The next five years do not have to be spent languishing in the boondocks. We need a positive set of policies and campaigns that make a difference to people's lives across the United Kingdom. Labour needs to campaign and community organise in Opposition and to be seen to be making a difference at local level.

The London Mayoralty election provides a unique opportunity for Labour. We should be focused on amplifying the work of our councillors and local authorities who are already in power to make change, and supporting backbenchers to have an impact through their involvement in campaigns, social enterprises and other movements.

Community organising formed a large part of Labour's strategy to win in 2015. However its effectiveness and the true extent to which we embraced it proved variable. A genuine strategy for involving people and actively seeking to implement policy at local level is needed. This means recognising and harnessing the strengths of local memberships and adapting accordingly; running pilots and testing what works; being an active part of the community, asking people how we can help; and making interventions less Party political, integrating them into other community and cultural events to broaden support for causes.

The Party must renew its offer for the British people and get on with the important job of challenging from opposition.



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