

Charter for a Democratic Conference



1. At least 50% of conference time should be reserved for contributions in policy debates by delegates

- At last years conference, time was allocated as follows: Platform speeches (including Leader's Q&A & US Professor) 50%, sofa panels 8%, Delegates (moving motions & debate) 18%, awards/obits 4%, conference arrangements/voting/admin 4%, Policy Forum seminars 16%.
- The balance between PR exercises and the opportunity for debate and decision-making is wrong - showcasing PPCs does not have to happen at the conference rostrum.
- Conference doesn't have to be entirely in public – some sessions could be members only without press.
- Delegates contributions matter most and are given least time – the fringe is the right place for panel discussions and videos.
- CLPs have voted with their feet – 1 in 4 CLPs absent in spite of free passes – using the full weekend would improve attendance.
- Speakers should be randomly chosen by the Chair, subject to ensuring balance of CLP/union and gender.

2. The criteria for motions should be flexible and fair

- The requirement for policy motions to deal only with “contemporary issues” is too restrictive. Any motion on organisation, finance or campaigning should be permitted and submission deadlines should allow for publishing motions in advance, to allow preparation for compositing, and mandating delegates.
- CLPs & affiliates should be able to propose a rule change and a motion – large unions are effectively prevented from proposing rule changes unless they wish to forgo their one motion.
- The NEC should also abide by deadlines for motions and rule changes (except in emergencies where conference waives this requirement)
- Restrictions on debating rule changes (the “three year rule”) must be fair and transparent.

3. Conference should choose the right policies, not rubber stamp them

- Policy statements should include options where there are alternative positions that command significant support. Reports/policy statements should be voted on in parts where requested.
- Calls for card votes must be respected and abstentions must be counted not ignored.

4. Conference decisions and all papers should be available online to party members

- By the day after debate. Members are entitled to know what's happening in their party.

5. The structure of conference therefore needs a review by the Conference Arrangements Committee

- This should be based on consultation with party organisations and affiliates. The Conference Arrangements Committee must restore its own influence, regaining control of conference from party bureaucrats, meeting without officials, and restore the role of conference as the party's sovereign body.