



# POA Annual Conference 2024

## Conference Papers 1-3

**CUTS HAVE  
CONSEQUENCES**

# **CONFERENCE PAPER 1**

## **Conference Paper 1: Honorary Life Membership**

At Conference last year delegates passed Motion 71/23. Conference agreed a review of the criteria for Honorary Life Membership. The criteria was written well over 20 years ago and we needed to ensure that it was still fit for purpose going forward and that it is fair to full time members and also fair to existing HLM's.

The basis for the review was initiated to seek to ensure that the award continues to be viewed as the highest accolade we bestow as a trade union, to properly recognise those that achieve the standard required, and to seek to ensure that it is not something that is devalued or misunderstood by us as a trade union.

The starting point of any review is to examine where we are currently, before deciding on the key elements for any change going forward.

The key areas of focus were on the criteria for being awarded HLM and whether those elements needed reviewed. The criteria which formed policy consisted of the following;

### **ELIGIBILITY**

- 1. Nomination by the NEC for members who have served for a minimum of 7 years on the NEC.**
- 2. Nomination by the NEC of members in receipt of both the Cronin Clasp and Long Service Award.**
- 3. Nomination by the NEC.**

The POA as of 2023 have 44 HLM. This is a significant number for a small trade union.

Most trade unions only have a very small number of those gaining the highest accolade that any trade union can give. The National Chair, General Secretary, Scottish Chair, Northern Ireland Area Chair and one Honorary life member were tasked with this review.

One thing remains clear is that this is the highest award anyone can be given by the POA, and great thought needs to go into the criteria going forward.

Taking on board the elements we were tasked with considering, and after seeking legal advice on the current criteria, the review group and the NEC have concluded that the existing eligibility criteria are no longer fit for purpose. That there needs to be a review from a blank piece of paper going forward, to be brought back before Conference either in 2025 or indeed 2026.

By doing so we can be confident that we actually have new criteria in place that are not only fair and equitable but also are compliant with current legislation. To facilitate this process in the interim we propose retiring the existing eligibility criteria and focusing our consideration of HLM on the proper application of the wording of Rule 6.1 itself.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

We must protect the status of the award going forward so the only recommendation that is made is that a sub committee consisting of no more than 3 existing HLM who will be selected by the NEC upon application supplemented by no more than 3 branch officials from the field with the same criteria for selection. The other members of the sub committee will be determined by the National Chair and General Secretary who will consist of a cross section of National Officials. A full report of criteria and benefits and if required potential rule changes will be placed before Conference 2025 or Conference 2026 depending on how long the sub committee take for a final document which must be endorsed by the full NEC before coming to Conference.

# **CONFERENCE PAPER 2**

## **Conference Paper 2 - Future Generation POA Leaders**

Conference passed Annual Conference Motion 70/2023 giving permission to look at a feasibility study of suitable educational and political training to ensure we are planning for the future of the POA. The feasibility study will look at the costings over the next 10 years and this paper makes recommendations on how we take this work forward for future generations and indeed for existing branch officials and NEC/ FTOs.

Financing any future plans for educational work and political training is going to be costly and very difficult to estimate. It is clear there are pathways and below are some examples of training that can and should be facilitated;

- Press and Media Training
- Advanced Branch Official Training
- Political School Training
- Development in Educational Trade Union Training to Advanced level
- Employment Law Training
- International Funding for attendance in different countries around the world to not only promote the POA but to learn from International Unions.
- Bespoke courses for Leaders through General Federation Trade Unions and TUC.
- Attending Leadership courses potentially at Harvard University.
- Lead Negotiator Training

This list is not exhaustive but will ensure a framework of ideas going forward.

The last thing the POA need is another levy on the membership to pay for these fundamental courses to ensure we have fully trained leaders now and for the future. We need to plan and aim high but how we fund this now is extremely important but also to ensure there is an ongoing fund and to develop clear application routes for individuals within the POA.

The POA already have a pot of money that is ring fenced under the Trade Union Dispute fund. At the time of writing this Conference Paper in February 24 there is £380,000 in that fund. With 50p per member contributing each month. The likelihood of ever using that fund is pretty remote as if there was a trades dispute for any section of our members there would not be enough money to pay any sort of loss of a days wages because of strike action. In fact, this fund has not been used since its inception. In order for any strike fund to be successful you would need millions in it and that simply is not going to happen within the POA, or it would take generations for that fund to grow. Lots of trade unions when they do take strike action do not pay anything because it is so difficult to do and afford.

Before we go down the route of any feasibility and costings going forward a simple decision needs to be made can we transfer the name of this fund to an Educational Fund and the monies already there give us a head start in funding educational and political training for our potential Leaders of the future. If this is accepted by Conference, then there would need to be a rule change and this Conference Paper would need to go through on a two thirds majority. The Rule addition would read;

#### Rule 16.1 (j) An Educational Fund

Clearly education will be determined on a moving basis as progress is made so we will have to be adaptable. For example, if we are to have our own bespoke training we will have to negotiate what they are with GFTU and TUC and once designed the costings will become clearer but at least we will have an oven ready fund to tap into where it doesn't cost the membership further increases in subscriptions. We know that the Leading Change Programme by the TUC costs £1900 per person. Other courses cost similar. The POA have good contacts in the media where we can get media training done and our branch officials used to going into a studio where television or radio and how to deal with the awkward questions. Good training is essential to promote the POA in a professional light even under pressure from hostile interviewers.

Conference we have an opportunity to train those who wish to be trained to take that next level within the POA. The first step is adopting this Conference Paper then we can work on putting the training and Governance in place. If the POA are investing in the future, we must ensure that all practical steps are taken to protect the POA as well so there will need to be protection put in place with clear legal advice on what we can do and cannot do. It would be reckless for example to put someone through a very costly course and upon completion they left their employment either within the Union or indeed with their respective employer using the qualifications gained at POA expense. So, protections will need to be built into any framework that we design. This is an exciting proposition to ensure that we have some of the best trained Leaders in the trade union movement and it is something we can produce.

The NEC recommend that we take the first steps on this education process to ensure we have the best Leaders now and in the future.

# **CONFERENCE PAPER 3**



## **Conference Paper 3 –**

### **Strategic Aims and Objectives 2024 - 2029 - 5 Year Plan**

With a General Election on the horizon, Conference recognises that the POA needs to set out its key aims and objectives in order that the National Executive Committee can take those objectives that you have set as the ruling body in this parliamentary timeframe in attempt to achieve our key points.

Setting out in this Conference Paper are our aims and objectives over the next 5 years which will give us the foundation to plan, formulate, implement and evaluate our ongoing strategy and indeed identify what is actually important to our members. The key points are taken from previous policy decisions of Conference and they are as apt today as they were when they were set by Annual Conference.

In no order of priority, the Executive seek clear guidance and acceptance on the main issues.

The Executive understand that in order not to be reactive to any political or economic challenges that the Union needs to be proactive. By getting our strategic aims and objectives correct in our approach over the next 5 years could lead to success in the future.

Conference also accepts that re-evaluating the aims and objectives as set out in this conference paper is crucial to ensure we do not miss new challenges that affect the collective membership.

Under our Rules and Constitution, it is accepted that the aims and objectives might not fit all countries where the POA have membership within the United Kingdom. For example, Scotland has its own parliament with devolved responsibilities on Justice and Prisons and indeed has its own Conference under our Rules and Constitution which deals with Scottish issues that affect our members in Scotland. This is also the case in the Isle of Man where they have their own Government. The same applies in Northern Ireland where there is power sharing in Stormont. Whilst Wales have an assembly Justice is not devolved and sits in Westminster.

Conference also acknowledges the wide diversity of our membership in health under our secure psychiatric hospitals, immigration and indeed private prisons.

Therefore, Conference accepts it is necessary to keep the headings generic under our strategic aims and objectives. The following aims and objectives over the next 5 years should be to improve and achieve on the following;

- Pay/ Terms and Conditions.
- Break the link between Pension Age and Retirement Age.

- Improve Staffing levels/training and professionalisation.
- Reduce violence in the workplace with clear health and safety policies.
- To campaign for a Royal Commission into Prisons and the Criminal Justice System.
- To restore the right to strike for Prison Officers who currently do not have it.

Conference accepts that this gives us a sound methodology for strategic planning if we are to “Turn the Tide” in our favour.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Conference accepts that our decision makers when the ruling body is not sitting is the National Executive Committee and they will be responsible for this work. It is recognised that many of our aims and objectives will be of a political nature and best use of our political fund needs to be used correctly. The POA is party neutral but politically active and those monies in our political fund will be used to achieve our political objectives. Conference recognise that it is essential that the NEC, branches and membership utilise our collective skills and engage at all levels including influencing all the main political parties. The POA is part of the Justice Union Parliamentary Group under Trade Union Co-Ordinating Group where essential work is carried out. We have a parliamentary and political consultancy funded from the political fund. The political consultancy deals with the following;

- Advising and assisting the POA in the coordination of its parliamentary campaigns.
- Providing the POA with a full range of up-to-date relevant parliamentary information and the legislative timetable and advising on the most effective parliamentary strategy.
- Advising and instructing the POA on the detail of parliamentary procedures, to assist the union in maximising the effectiveness of parliamentary interventions.

The details of the above will assist the strategic aims and objectives for 2024 to 2029 and will include the following;

- Assistance in arrangements for parliamentary interventions and debate, parliamentary questions and EDM's, tabling of amendments including lobbying for support.
- Preparation of letters to Ministers, Shadow Ministers, MPs and peers including diary liaison, room booking preparation, a distribution of agendas, issuing reminders, pre meetings and follow-ups when necessary.
- Arranging of Strategy Meetings and the development of action plans.

- Monitoring of legislation, ministerial statements and select committees.
- Assisting in arranging Parliamentary Lobbies, Receptions, and specific briefing meetings for MPs and Peers.
- Arranging for Parliamentary Reports to Annual Conference and Executive meetings as well as commissioning parliamentary articles for the POA magazine as required.
- Media and press liaison when required.

Conference, the POA over the next five years needs to continue to be proactive. There needs to be involvement from the whole POA membership and this Conference Paper is the foundation to achieve our strategic aims and objectives to improve the working conditions for our members and their families.