



National Management Executive End of Term Report – Owen Meredith March 2009

Main Areas of Responsibility:

- **Student Development** (*Fresher's Packs*)
- **Working Life**
- **Regional:** Staffordshire, Shropshire, Herefordshire, Warwickshire & Worcestershire, Birmingham & Solihull
- **Development in Wales**

It has been a great honour to serve on the National Executive of Conservative Future for the past 12 months and seeing the organisation grow stronger. We have recruited record numbers of new members; played a vital role in winning parliamentary by-elections; and have seen increased activity, campaigning and events up-and-down the country. We have also reorganised ourselves to ensure CF as a strong and vibrant organisation continues into the future.

My time in CF started in 2004 at University, joining at fresher's fair, just like many of our members. Before long I found myself getting more and more involved, becoming Treasurer, then Chairman, Area Chairman and finally elected to the NME. Having taken that route, I have the greatest respect for the contribution of so many individuals whose efforts on the ground up and down the country, make CF the diverse and effective force it is.

Therefore I would like to start this report by thanking not only those people, but also the CFers who go out delivering, attend events and support the party in many other ways without looking for any recognition. You really are the people that make CF successful and worthwhile.

This year has confirmed to me that CF is a fantastic organisation and one that I am immensely proud to have been part of for so long. I hope that in my term on the executive I have used my experiences to make CF stronger. It is in this positive vein that I have today written to Michael Rock to resign my position on the NME, having completed the one year term I was given a democratic mandate to serve.

MAIN REPORT:

Manifesto Review

Nearly 18 months ago, before a long and gruelling election campaign, I wrote the manifesto on which you kindly elected me. In reporting back to you today, at the end of that term, I believe it is only right to remind you of the promises I made when seeking election and report back on what I have done to achieve them:

Pledge	Action	Deliverable	Achieved?	Additional Comments/ Further Actions
A designated NME member as a contact point and representative for each branch.	Agreed at first NME meeting to divide the country into regions with an NME member responsible for each.	Each branch had a designated NME member to speak up for them and to contact with difficulties.	Yes	Further to this, the development of a regional structure and Regional Co-ordinators has enhanced representation.
A designated NME member for Area Chairmen to contact.	Regular contact with Area Chairmen in my region to discuss concerns and take on board any issues.	Area chairman more connected with the NME	Yes	
Regular area meetings with Branch Chairmen and Area Chairmen.	Filtered 'best practice' guidance to Area Chairman without micro-managing how each area should be run.	Many areas have area/regional meetings to coordinate activities and support branches.	Progress	This pledge should have been clearer. Making such meetings happen is not actually deliverable from the NME. The solution has been to offer best practice advice rather than dictating to AC's how to run an area.
A closed web forum for discussion and sharing ideas among CF branches.	Regular communication with CCHQ IT staff to establish the ownership of conservativesdirect.com as a platform to run this.	The new conservativefuture.com site serves to perform the function of sharing ideas and news among branches and members.	Yes	My proposal was for CF to takeover the Conservatives Direct platform. Ownership of this platform could not be established, and developing a closed site from scratch was unaffordable. CF.com offers most of what I proposed for the site.
Reform of the website to include local information, and a post code search.	Richard Jackson took on the portfolio of web development, starting with the executive blog and eventually gaining access to revitalise conservativefuture.com	Users can now access a Google map of the UK which shows branch locations and search by post code for their nearest branch and contact information	Yes	View the map online: http://executive.cfbranch.com/about/join/
Inclusion of up-to-date contact information and more local branch content on conservativefuture.com	The NME have now taken ownership of the site and content on conservativefuture.com. The NME, Regional Chairmen, Branches and members can now submit articles to the site via the blog format.	The content of conservativefuture.com is now more relevant, written by CFers and has updates, news, and reports from branches, regions, areas and the NME.	Yes	conservativefuture.com now receives over 4,000 unique visitors a month.
Develop a "Why Join" section of the Conservative Future website.	Requested members to input ideas for the 'why join' section.	Work in Progress is now online (http://executive.cfbranch.com/about/join/) and will be updated soon.	Yes	This feature will develop over time as members share their views on why to join CF.
Stronger, better and more regular communication with members.	Initially we were unable to get the CF e-bulletin back up and running; this obviously was disappointing to us as it had proved a vital communication tool in the past. We have now restored the CF Monthly Newsletter, as well as developed communication via the website, facebook, etc.	Communication with members has improved and evolved. Through the 'cfbranch' website more branches have been supported in getting online with new websites to improve local communication.	Yes	Communication can only be as strong as the database we are using. We need branches to feed membership details into the centre more, and need CCHQ to commit the resource to manage this data.

Branches to regularly upload membership data to CCHQ, creating a stronger national organisation	I have been working with CCHQ since last May, when I began work on the fresher's proposals, to get an accurate and managed CF database running. However, this has budget implication and as yet has not been allocated resources by CCHQ.	For most CF branches fresher's sees an influx of new members. Membership forms were produced in triple carbon copy in order to ease the data flow to the centre and Associations while taking the admin burden away from branches.	Progress	While the specifics of this pledge have not been met, I have made progress changing the membership forms and pushing for CCHQ to allocate resources to a central database. A national database is vital to ensure members do not fall through the 'graduation gap' and leave the Party.
A redesign of "national campaign days" to have CF campaigning across the UK on 10 days a year.	Patrick Sullivan took on the campaigns portfolio. However, I have pushed strongly for National Campaign Days to be locally run, on an area or regional basis in order to encourage local members to come out and campaign. This has proven more successful than single national days.	Campaign days now (generally) involved a number of different regional events taking place on the same day, getting more people involved, locally!	Yes	
New Centres for CF, built up around the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff, the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh and the Northern Irish Assembly in Stormont.	Worked with the NME and Chairman to devise a regional structure to allow autonomy for regions to run themselves, and develop CF locally.	Implemented a regionalised structure with Regional Co-ordinators to facilitate this development.	Progress	There is continued development needed here under the management of Regional Co-ordinators.
Seeking funding to run membership recruitment campaigns.	Drafted a proposal and budget for CF, which will be passed over to the NME.	Not delivered.	No	
Building on the Working Life conference, and further developing the 'non-student' elements of CF.	Conducted a consultation and review of Working Life. Developed a fully costed proposal for the way forward for Working Life. See online: http://executive.cfbranch.com/2008/11/01/working-life-the-future/	Abolished Working Life conference due to lack of interest from members. Set out plans for the 'Working Life Network' and development of Working Life as a brand.	Progress	See: http://executive.cfbranch.com/2009/02/20/whats-happening-working-life/
A joint commitment from the new CF team, to deliver excellent national events.	CF has teamed up with YBF to have national training days. Additionally, we have supported the Salisbury Club (set up by Ben Howlett) which provides excellent national events to raise funds for CF.	CF presence at the Party Conference was notably improved, with a CF Activist Training Day and other national events at Spring Forum, and Parliamentary by-elections.	Yes	Running national events that attract members from across the country is extremely difficult. Organising two significant events each year (at Spring Forum and Conference) provides an appropriate background for national events. The new regional structure increases CF's ability to pull in big name speakers to local events, and helps deliver a higher standard and greater variety of events.
Communication from the NME, regular reports.	Have posted by-monthly reports on conservativefuture.com every other month since election.	An overview of key activities is available for CF members to view and question me on.	Yes	

DELIVERED: 67%

PROGRESS: 27%

MANIFESTO IMPLEMENTED: 93%

Brief Overview of the Year's Main Activities

In reviewing the year, I do not want simply to repeat here what I have already mentioned in previous reports and on the NME blog; but here are a few key points from the year:

- **Freshers**
The major focus for me at the start of the year was the Student Campaign. This year we worked hard to put together a comprehensive fresher's pack, whilst providing support for university branches to make the 2008 campaign the best ever.

For more information on this topic:

[Freshers' Packs Are On The Way!](#)
[Freshers Report Part I](#)

- **By-Elections**
During my NME term we had by-elections in 4 parliamentary constituencies. My major involvement was in Crewe and Nantwich where I helped co-ordinate the local support from my region in the West Midlands across the border to the Cheshire seat.
- **Campaigns/Campaign Days**
Patrick has been responsible for organising the national campaign days, however I have had some involvement with CF's other campaigns, such as NO2ID, the Boris campaign, etc....:

For more information on this topic:

[NO2ID Student Union Motion](#)
[CF Criticise Undemocratic Universities](#)
[A True Success Story - Boris Doubles Conservative Vote](#)
[CF Campaign To Stop Post Office Closures](#)

- **Conference**
This year's annual conference in Birmingham was fantastically well attended by CF, with training for activists on the day preceding conference and the 10th Anniversary CF Party. Our presence and contribution to the conference was significant.

For more information on this topic:

[Conference Round Up](#)

- **Events**
Over the course of the year I have supported countless fantastic events held by local CF Branches, Areas and Regions.

Below are blog posts detailing events from the first and last months of my term on the NME:

[Wirral West Question Time](#)
[London CF Launch](#)

- **Working Life**
This year part of my portfolio has been Working Life. As a recent graduate I was keen to look at Working Life and see how we could improve it and reach out to new audiences, as well as retaining the interest of graduates leaving their university CF branch.

To ensure we were delivering what members wanted, I conducted a consultation about the future for Working Life. The results then fed into my final report and proposals submitted to Justine Greening MP and the CF Steering Group. This is an on-going project that will be taken over by Christian May.

For more information on this topic:
[What's Happening With Working Life?](#)
[Working Life: The Future](#)
[Working Life Survey](#)

- **Wales**

Paul Rogers has been managing Wales CF for about 9 months, and we have seen some significant progress in co-ordination of CF across Wales. There is still a lot of work to do in making Wales CF as successful as it can be, but we have taken many steps towards in the past year.

For more information on this topic:
[The Future of Wales](#)

- **Reforms**

Perhaps the most controversial element of the last year have been the reforms to CF's structure. Much has been said in many forums about the merit of the reforms and how best CF can move forward, but after consultation with the members I was pleased that my NME colleagues passed a sensible package that secures the future for CF.

For more information on this topic:
[Reforms to the national organisation](#)

NME Tour

A key complaint in recent years has been that CF is London centric. In my manifesto I stated that there is a certain inevitability about a political organisation being London centric, but that I would work to rebalance this as much as possible.

One of the ways I planned to achieve this was making sure my own activities within CF were not London centric. To allow you to keep track of this, I set up the NME Tour Map, with which CF members can check out my visits over the last year.

This map is online, and while it doesn't cover all my visits, the bulk are on the map:



<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&msid=108757332863079157016.00044bc5e2fa53520c6a5&ll=54.851315,-2.329102&spn=10.510717,28.125&z=5>

In addition to this, I promised to create new regional focuses, to localise and 'de-Londonise' CF. From day one the current NME took on regional responsibilities to focus our minds outside of the Capitol, and in completing the reforms and introducing a permanent regional structure, CF's strength at regional level has been secured for the long term.

Final Word

In leaving the NME today, I want to make clear that I am not leaving CF or retiring to the shadows. I am 100% committed to supporting CF and helping the continued growth and success of the organisation.

I would like to thank CF members for their support and encouragement over the past year. There have been many challenges and difficult decisions, but I have enjoyed my time on the NME immensely and encourage CF members to get involved and stay involved. CF can and indeed must keep going from strength-to-strength, and I look forward to it playing a vital role in removing this disastrous Labour Government from office whenever the General Election is called.

If anyone has anything they would like to discuss with me, about this report or any other CF issues, please do not hesitate to contact me on 07816 156925 or by email: owen@owenmeredith.co.uk.