

Report From Member Support Convener

Doug Daniels

If there was any justice in the world, the much-loved John Clark would be giving this report, not me. It was he who was elected to the role back in Spring 2019, and in just a few months, he had already made it his own, as we all knew he would, because nobody was better suited for the job. We find ourselves on the cusp of independence, and that's all because of the hard work and dedication of activists like John, and so many before him, who gave their everything for the cause. Remember to raise a glass to them when we get there – it won't be long now.

As I was already on the NEC as a regional member for the North East, I was asked to step in and try to build on John's work.

That was trickier than it sounded, and it wasn't helped by some virus floating about, ruining everyone's plans for the year.

So what have I done? Well, the role was created partly to try and address the age-old problem of internal communications, particularly for branch and CA Conveners, so I've tried to answer as many queries as possible via email or in our various private Facebook groups, and keep folk updated about what's going on with selections and so on. I also produced a few briefings, such as one on #BothVotesSNP a while back, which seems to have been useful as I've seen it being shared on social media a fair bit. (Getting people to give us both their votes – as they did in 2011, when we got an SNP majority – is vital if we're to secure another referendum, so if you know anyone who's thinking about voting for someone else on the regional list, ask them why they hate Scotland.) And I'm in the Governance Review Group that Keith Brown recently set up to do a health check on recent internal reforms, and I would strongly encourage branches and CAs to engage with that process as much as possible.

There are three main things I think the Member Support Convener should concentrate on next year, whether that's me or someone else. The first is obviously internal communication, because there's been a bit too much room for gossip, hearsay and misinformation to percolate in the press and social media in recent months and years – the quicker members know what's happening, the better.

The second is member engagement. We've all found new hobbies this year, and one of mine has been reading books about the history of the SNP. It's highlighted things we used to be brilliant at – often by necessity rather than design – that we perhaps don't seem to do so much these days. With eight elections or referendums in the past six years, it's easy to fall into the trap of forgetting to do proper membership engagement activities when we're not in campaign mode. We need to be tapping into the huge pool of unused talent in the party so we're ready for that last big push towards independence, and the Member Support Convener should be able to assist branches that need a hand with that.

Finally, as much as we all want to get back to being able to meet in large groups again, there are things we've picked up during the current crisis that can dramatically improve how we work as a party. One example – why go back to 100% physical meetings when we could be utilising the technologies we're all using now to make those meetings accessible to all the people who have suddenly found they're able to get involved when previously they were prevented from doing so? Why restrict guest speakers to just those who are able to be there in-person when seeing someone on a screen no longer looks weird? The Member Support Convener needs to work with branches to develop best practices and how-to guides to harness these things to help branches keep the stuff that's working well just now and adapt it into our usual ways of operating.

In the meantime, let's all keep sticking to the covid-19 rules, so we can get back to having SNP raffles as soon as possible. Those unwanted Christmas presents aren't going to shift themselves.

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