# Rebecca Boumelha Regional Conference Report, 2-3rd Nov 2018

Thanks to comrades for sending me to Regional Conference – it was a lot more exciting and vibrant then I had anticipated!

## Votes

* There was some confusion over whether or not the nomination meeting at the GC for candidates for the Regional Board constituted a mandate. I along with some other GC delegates, thought that the rule that meant candidates had to have the nomination of their home constituency to vote on the ballot applied to this election, and therefore posed a complex situation where it wasn’t obvious that nomination automatically constituted a mandate. It was clarified that this rule didn’t apply to this election, and the EC agreed that the nomination vote should be taken as a mandate for this election, and that in future this clarification would be made before/during the GC nomination/mandating meeting.
* So I voted for Oxford’s own Michaela Collord and Ann Black, congratulations to both for getting elected! For the national policy forum places, I voted for Tom Hayes and Carol Hayton. Carol was elected, but commiserations to Tom for the result.

## Unite Demonstration

* We kicked off the first day with a huge demonstration outside conference, against the devastating decision by the Labour-held city council to close their final remaining two care homes. I understand that the demonstration led to the leader of the Council being taken off the conference agenda, and when conference began there were powerful calls from the podium for the Council and the Unions to sit down together to work out a solution.

## Discussion

* We heard speeches and panel discussions on conference floor on housing, the economy and engaging underrepresented groups. The quality of presentation and discussion was very high and there was a number of big names including Jennie Formby, Tan Dhesi Chi Onruwah and our own Anneliese Dodds and Marie Tidbull. But these panels/speeches took up the vast majority of the time that conference spent together and I thought more time could have been allocated to contributions from delegates, including on motions. Some of the most interesting and powerful speeches came from delegates, however most delegate interaction and speaking time was allocated to fringe events so it would be great to see this change at the next conference.

## Panels

* During the first breakout session, I spoke at the Young Labour panel, where it was so exciting to see about 30 young people from around the region come together to share ideas about the purpose and scope of Young Labour groups, and the difficulties of getting young people active – especially in rural areas or areas with large Tory strongholds, as much of the SE is.
* I also spoke at the CLPD/Unite/Momentum panel after the first day of conference, which was packed to the brim – they had to ask for more chairs, twice!

## Motions

* The key event of conference for me stemmed from a motion from Brighton Pavilion CLP welcoming the NEC statement on inclusive All Women’s Shortlists, Women’s Officers and minimum quotas for women, and calling on the Regional Board to develop this work.
* The regional conference arrangements committee (CAC, which decides the agenda for conference), rejected the motion on the basis that it dealt with Party processes, not policy, and wasn’t of relevance to the South East.
* Brighton Pavilion delegates waged a campaign to get the motion heard at conference, which resulted in a transphobic incident where campaigners were verbally abused and the perpetrator was asked to leave by security.
* After this, a group of delegates led by Brighton Pavilion asked the CAC to consider reinstating the motion, and when that was rejected asked for a vote to be put to conference asking for the motion to be reinstated. When a vote was denied, delegates occupied the stage for about half an hour and in the end agreement was reached via a delegate vote that the motion would be debated on the Sunday during the Equalities session.
* The next day, powerful speeches were given overwhelmingly in favour of the motion and it passed with only a couple of votes against. Success!
* The other motions (on transport, housing, education, health and employment) were still able to be discussed in the time allocated, and nearly all passed unanimously.

## Conclusion

* I had expected a quiet conference, but even regardless of the campaign around trans rights I found regional conference to be bustling with energy, enthusiasm and ideas and a really powerful space to build networks and talk politics. I think more time could have been allocated to delegates on conference floor – just an afternoon to tackle 5/6 motions, and the time we had to ask questions of panellists. But overall, I came away bolstered by the experience and the new comrades I made, confident that the new Regional Board team can harness the developments of the democracy review to build a vibrant regional structure.