



Women's Equality Party Conference

26 November 2022

Title: **The Creation of an official WEP 'Virtual' Branch for members with no/limited geographical branches nearby.**

Proposed by: **WE Leicester Branch**

Proposer: **Jacqui Cottrell**

Type of motion: **Business motion**

(N.B. **Bold** text is new.)

Motion text:

1 A change to Article 6.10 of the Constitution:

2 "The Party has local and student branches run by Party Members" to become "**The Party has local**
3 **and student branches, and a virtual branch, all run by Party Members.**"

4 An addition to Article 7.8 of the constitution, the below to become Article 7.8.2, the current Article
5 7.8.2 to become Article 7.8.3 and so on:

6 "**7.8.2 The Party recognises that members are geographically diverse, and therefore**
7 **members can join our 'virtual' branch and/or a local group. This branch will have the same**
8 **status as local branches and so include the necessary roles required of a local branch**
9 **detailed in Article 7.8.5.**"

Motion rationale:

10 This motion proposes the creation of a branch that has no geographical location and is fully
11 virtual, therefore members from anywhere in the country will belong to the same virtual
12 branch.

13 I am using the term 'geographical' to refer to current branches based in different parts of the
14 country, and the 'virtual' branch as the new proposition as an alternative for members.

15 A virtual branch enables geographically diverse members to work together to bring change
16 that impacts on a national level allowing more people to feel as though they can make
17 change happen.

18 Many branches now have a very small number of active members, and often they are not
19 actually that 'local' to each other. Outside of cities, members may live 20-30 miles apart, in
20 different council areas. This means that it is challenging to do any local activism as too
21 many external sources are impacted, and it becomes infeasible.

22 When members move away or leave a branch for other reasons, often the branch closes
23 (such as Nottingham recently) as there aren't enough active members to make regular
24 meetings/activism worthwhile. In addition, many branches are too small to have enough
25 officers to make up a full contingent, or they have members/officers on paper but who are
26 rarely actively involved.

27 A Virtual branch would not impact on what happens with Hubs and would not need the
28 support of the Hub because by its very nature it would have collaboration and be able to
29 support itself with campaigning.

30 There is also the option to recognise that people may feel uncomfortable with the idea of
31 going to a meeting where they know nobody when they first join the party. I was very
32 apprehensive going to my first meeting as I am very uncomfortable walking in somewhere
33 where I do not know anyone. We also have other members in our branch who have said
34 that the reason it took them time to join was that nervousness. Others may find the idea of
35 going to a physical location challenging for health reasons. Yet more may think that the
36 'local' branch is so far removed from their own home location that they will gain nothing by
37 joining a local branch – that is another reason that I put off joining for so long as I never go
38 to Leicester and have no opinion on the politics in the city; my town is where I would want to
39 see changes but I'm the only Party member.

40 Branch meetings with two or three people feel ineffective. A Virtual Branch would likely
41 have a bigger membership which would mean that meetings would have more attendees
42 and be able to make more impact.

43 Local activism is really challenging with very small numbers of active members. A virtual
44 branch could mobilise better to change things that would benefit all communities, for
45 example organising a boycott on a company that has a Pink Tax is more effective if 100
46 people across the country take part, rather than five people in Leicester.
