

ROCK4CF

Business Plan

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Business Plan for a bigger, better and bolder Conservative Future

Introduction

In December of last year I announced my candidacy for the National Chairman of Conservative Future. I also released my Manifesto of Principles; detailing my views on CF and the direction it would take under my leadership. Now, as we enter the final stage of the elections, I am now releasing my Business Plan; a professional, well-thought out and progressive document showing, in detail, my plans for CF and how we can restore it to the status it deserves to have.

For years I have watched our organisation fail, in terms of influence and expansion. The Conservative Party is on its way back, revitalised by David Cameron. CF has improved over the last 18 months but not significantly enough to make the kind of impact I think CF should have upon the next General Election. We need to take a progressive, methodical and business-like approach to CF: these are the underlying ethics of my Manifesto and Business Plan.

I don't believe in the current system of control – the NME ruling over, contributing little to the organisation nationally and focusing more on there CV's. We need to return power to the people who 'actually' run CF – the active members around the country. I want a change the setup by running a CF with a base-upwards approach; branch Chairman and Area Chairman playing the key roles with the NME acting to support and advise – rather than control. I hope you share this vision and will support me during the election, and afterwards when we make Conservative Future bigger, better & bolder.

Michael David Rock

1. Strong & supported Conservative Future branches

Support the branch network with the NME in regional positions

I propose to split the country into 6 sections, each with around 7 Area Chairmen (see appendix). An NME member will represent each area. Their role will be to advise and support the Area Chairmen & provide feedback (regional meetings – see section 4) back to CCHQ. This places the running of CF on local branches and not the NME.

Re-build ties with CF Scotland

I don't propose to re-join CF Scotland with the rest of the country, but do realise that English, Welsh and Northern Irish CF members do work and study in Scotland. I want a closer working relationship between the National Chairmen and for to create a two-way flow of information so CF Scotland's events to also be advertised on the national CF website and vice-versa.

Re-establish links with the local association by giving CF Chairmen key role

The NME will work with local associations to have the CF Chairman made an officer of the association, plus having a seat on the MP selection board. This will show the importance of CF, build links with the association and will give local CF members a voice when selecting their MP.

CF Consultants: established branches supporting newer branches

Our current Branch Chairmen constitute an incredible resource that we should utilise far more effectively. We need to leverage the knowledge within CF to further advance and improve our organisation. Established, experienced branch Chairmen and Area Chairmen will be paired with new branches. They will act as a contact for help, advice and general support. New branch Chairmen will be encouraged to communicate with their 'CF Consultant' for advice, localising the support network and avoiding the 'orders from London' syndrome.

2. Increasing financial resources for Conservative Future

Establish membership gain level for the year

I will consult with Michael Lunn and others in CCHQ to predict the likely membership gain for the year. This will act as a performance related reward: if the organisation manages to go above this figure then I will push for extra resources for CF in the following year. We only deserve extra resources if we get results; a business approach that we should follow.

NME to help Area Chairman & Branch Chairman obtain local sponsorship

Local teams should organise events then use the NME to help them attract sponsorship from the local area. In the long term, it is much better for branches to build up contacts with local businesses, which can be maintained for many years. The NME will advise on contacting potential sponsors as well as keeping a record of the sponsors at CCHQ, in case branches lose that information.

NME to attract sponsorship for the CF National Days

For the CF National Days, we can then take advantage of national sponsors and the NME will work to contact them and get them on board. This money can help to advertise the events and work nationally, which will attract media coverage and more members.

3. The Conservative Future website & general communication

CF website must be primarily an information source

The Party have already commissioned a new website that will launch later this year. I am sure this will be of high quality, but I want to make sure it focuses on the things we need and avoids gimmickry. Under my leadership I will make sure the website is primarily a reference point of call for all CF events in the country and it will contain an up-to-date list of all CF branches and their active contact details.

We will also integrate branch event feeds into the main site; for branches that have Blogs they post the event on there site and it is automatically displayed on the main CF website. For those without a form will be setup for easy posting of events.

NME & Area Chairman to post regularly on the website

The NME & Area Chairman will all have to post updates on the website regularly. See section 4 for more on this measure for accountability.

Comments facility will be used for members to question the NME

The website should also have a comments facility so that CF members all over the country can ask questions and comment on the actions being taken. We should be open with the developments and improvements that will occur under my leadership.

CF bulletin to improve and reach more people

The CF Bulletin does not reach enough CF members. It should automatically be sent to CF members so the focus must be to make it useful and interesting. I do not want the email to contain pages of information, rather a summary of the developments and news and provide links to the CF website and specific events/actions that are occurring.

Move signup process online to CF website

I will also push the Party and CCHQ to have an online signup system on the site; currently visitors are directed to the main Party site for this. We have a separate CF website and people should be able to join our organisation with ease, having an offsite membership system is madness.

Free hosting for CF branches during and after the elections

Under the offer I have with MiLon hosting, I am providing free websites for all CF branches (www.rock.cfbranch.com). I am committed to opening up CF during and after this election to as many members, in as many areas as possible. I will continue to offer this service until every CF branch has an online presence but I will push for it to become a mainstay for the future.

CF website will be the primary resource for CF members

Currently the NME sends CF information to be posted on CF Diary of ConservativeHome. The NME should take responsibility for the promotion and presentation of CF as a national organisation. All information will be on the CF website and not sent to CF Diary.

4. Accountable NME & Area Chairman

NME & Area Chairman to post regularly on the website

We need to encourage a culture of communication and information sharing: accountability is a by-product of this environment. I intend to have a very simple system built into the website showing number of posts and time since the last post. This is a clear and simple way for CF members to see how reliable the person is and if they are posting regularly. I will hold myself to this same measure.

CF Constitution will be changed

I will work with the Party board to draw up an updated constitution with a measure for the ability of the NME to remove unreliable Area Chairman. This will be determined by the amount of activity locally, feedback from region meetings and regularity of posting on the CF website.

NME will lead reviews to fill vacant Area Chairman positions

Currently there are 7 vacant Area Chairman positions. It is disgraceful that the NME have not managed to fill these roles in the past 19 months since the last election! If elected I will aim to fill all Area Chairman roles within one month of the handover.

Regional meetings with the Area Chairman and NME

To maintain accountability, and for feedback, the 6 regions will hold regular (see calendar in appendix) meetings run by the Area Chairman. The NME member for the region must attend (or send a representative) and the meeting minutes should be made available to local members. Expenses should be paid for these meetings.

Fight for a fairer and active role on the National Convention

Currently CF only gets 42 seats on the 900 strong National Convention. It is important that we have a voice in the convention and that our elected representatives all get to attend. With only 42 seats this is not possible and so if elected I will push to have the number raised to 50 seats for CF. This may not sound like much, but this will allow every Area Chairman and all members of the NME to attend and take part. A small and simple measure that will greatly increase the accountability of our organisation.

5. Distinguishing Conservative Future Members

User friendly system to collect membership data

Membership systems should be as simple, intuitive and effortless to use as possible, they are the pinnacle of using technology to make one's life easier. As the internet spreads further and further, and with access at unprecedented levels, a strong, stable system to collate and manage membership data will be top of the priority list.

It is essential that CF can access and retrieve that information in as many ways as possible, using a criteria based system, mailing lists will be easily compiled, leaving juggling spreadsheets and paper forms firmly in the past, exactly where they belong.

Lobby the Party to change the age limit for CF

By the age of 30 many people are just getting on with adult life: starting to earn a higher wage, finishing paying off student debt, and looking to the future. Moving the age limit to 35 is merely increasing our networking capacity: the Young Republicans currently runs to the age of 40.

My proposals in this Business Plan will help to increase the retention of CF members as well. Most people over 25 do not realise they can still get involved with CF, and regard the events as student-oriented only. The few Working Life held this year have been tremendously popular so we need these to be organised, promoted and run properly.

Change the CF membership prices to increase our size

We need to remove barriers to membership: I will push for free membership until the age of 25, followed by £10 a year until you move out of the CF membership bracket.

NME will work to forge bonds between higher education branches and associations

Obviously all higher education branches are located within a constituency and most will have 'links' to a close association. The type of help the local association gives differs from money and rooms to nothing at all! To improve membership retention, it is vital that we create a link between the branch and the association so that members have somewhere to go when they leave higher education and 'Student Life'. This will involve the Area Chairman needing to make contact the local associations and finding out what help can be given.

6. Conservative Future events & campaigning

CF will hold 6 National Days in the year, each comprising of 6 regional events

On a CF National Day six events will occur in the six areas of the country (see appendix). They will be organised by the respective Area Chairman with the respective NME member overseeing and providing support.

These days do not include special CF National events that will be held for specific campaign events and the Christmas parties, which will be organised so we have national coverage, not just the one in London.

The 6 regional events, on each National Day, will not all be campaigning

I envisage that the six events on any 'National Day' will be different; some will be campaigning sessions, some social action projects or protests. This will help to broaden CF's appeal and make membership more substantial. This will mean the equivalent of a minimum of 24 campaign days a year that will involve many more people than at present. The format of all these days is down to the Area Chairmen, who will obviously need to liaise with their respective local board.

CF social action projects to make a difference to our communities

The level of Social Action within CF is currently very poor. The Area Chairman will work to find local projects for the local members to get involved with on the National Day. This also allows the CF branches to build links with the project enabling them to possibly help or more than one occasion. Having the power and choice back with the Area Chairman allows us to make a difference with these projects, and not just a one-off photo op.

CF protests to get us involved with specific national or local campaigns

The second option of CF Protests allows for members to support a specific campaign. This can be from a national issue like ID cards or a local issue like the Post Office closures. These have far more impact on local people than being canvassed for votes.

I will outsource training to other 'like minded' organisations

We are fortunate that many 'like minded' organisations have worked with CF members in the past: running training in all areas of political activity, providing opportunities to travel abroad to see other political groups and having a Speakers Panel so that high class speakers can be obtained. We should utilise their expertise: outsource it to these groups. This will provide professional training to our members and avoid incidents such as the failed Working Life conference last year.

CF Democracy in Action tours to show CF members the workings of politics

As a political organisation it seems only right that we should help to educate our members about the forms of Government in the UK. The NME will therefore organise, with our Conservative elected politicians, for tours of Parliament, the Welsh Assembly, the Scottish Parliament & the Conservative Party Campaign Headquarters. These events will be separate to National Days and will be advertised on the CF website.

Attach a day onto the start of Party Conference for a CF Conference

I want to extend the Party Conference by attaching a CF day to the start of the conference. It is hard for most CF members to give up weekends for separate conferences and so I feel it is better to extend the main Party Conference and not steal another weekend when branches could be campaigning! The Party will already have the facilities in place and so

this will drastically cut down on the costs and improve attendance figures. I propose to make the CF Conference on the Saturday and plan the day around the National Convention.

The exact format will need to be worked with the Party, but the day will include: activist training sessions, speeches from members of the political world, smaller forum sessions for CF members to share views with the NME & Area Chairman and a social to finish off the day. If CF members survive this they will still have the main Party Conference to look forward to!

Appendix

6 Areas for NME members to represent

Area 1

- Cumbria
- Lancashire
- Merseyside
- Cheshire & the Wirral
- Greater Manchester East
- Greater Manchester West
- Northern Ireland

Area 2

- Cleveland & Durham
- Tyne, Wear & Northumberland
- Yorkshire North & East
- Yorkshire South
- Yorkshire West
- Nottinghamshire

Area 3

- Birmingham, Solihull & Coventry
- Black Country
- Staffordshire
- Worcester & Warwickshire
- Hereford & Shropshire
- Wales North
- Wales Mid & West
- Wales South Central
- Wales South East
- Wales South West

Area 4

- Derbyshire
- Lincolnshire
- Leicestershire, Northamptonshire & Rutland
- Norfolk & Suffolk
- Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire
- Cambridgeshire & Bedfordshire

Area 5

- Devon & Cornwall
- Somerset
- Wiltshire & Dorset
- Hampshire & Isle of Wight
- Berkshire
- Bristol & Gloucestershire

Area 6

- London North West
- London North East
- London South East
- Surrey
- Kent
- Sussex
- Essex
- Hertfordshire