



Dear Prospective Candidate,

Thanks for expressing interest in being endorsed by the Independent Network. You've started an important and exciting journey.

We've put together this pack to provide you with some more information on who we are, why endorsing candidates is so important and the application process. We have provided as much information as possible to make it easy for you to apply, although we welcome feedback and additions.

Although we state that there is no deadline, we can help you the sooner you apply.

Please ensure you have also read the Electoral Commission's guidelines for candidates: [www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)

If you think there's anything missing from this pack or have any comments, please contact us as we appreciate all feedback.

Kind regards,

Livia Oldland  
Researcher  
Independent Network



The Independent Network (IN) was established by a group of like-minded individuals that were quite simply fed up with party politics; they advocated that we need elected representatives that listen to people, not parties.

The Independent Network was formed only a few weeks before the 2005 general election. In those crucial weeks, the Independent Network was able to support over a dozen independents and run an effective media campaign.

Since the 2005 election, the Independent Network has been building up support and volunteers. After the expenses scandals in April of 2009, support for Independents has been growing. Last September, we held a meeting with supporters deciding the future strategy for the Independent Network. Key decisions from the meeting were electing a new executive committee and adopting a set of principles - a process initiated by Martin Bell.

## **Objectives**

Our main aim is to provide support to independent candidates who are not members of political parties.

We have previously provided template letters, research, logo, media campaign and a common identity and logo for Independent politicians. In the 2010 election we hope to give further national assistance; campaign guidance, volunteers, events, a profile page on our website and an online/social networking campaign.

The Independent Network is open to all those who support non-party politics. Some of our supporters have included current elected representatives in central and local government, community organisations, celebrities as well as Independent Prospective Parliamentary Candidates.

The Independent Network does not impose any political views on the individuals it supports, or that support the Independent Network. However, affiliates of the association must be non-discriminatory and agree to The Bell Principles.

## **Structure**

We're a loose organisation of individuals and organisations that support Independent politicians. For legal purposes, the IN has a Private Limited Company and we're also considering registering as a third party with the Electoral Commission.

Members of the Secretariat deal with the administrative, day-to-day running of the organisation. They are also responsible for all media and campaign enquiries. We have an executive committee comprising of three members. The executive are responsible for guiding the organisation.

## **Funding**

We receive no public funding and rely on private donations from individuals. The more donations we receive, the more assistance we will be able to give to candidates.



## Key People

### The Executive

#### **Steven & Daisy Ford**

Retired GP and Independent PPC for Hexham. Steven lives in Haydon Bridge, Northumberland and is married with two children. He and his wife are currently volunteers for Sustrans (sustainable transport charity) and a local radio station. He is also the president of the Haydon Bridge Community Association. He was previously a parish councillor and from 1989 to 2008 provided a regular medical page in a local paper.

Daisy is currently studying for an MSc at Newcastle University and supporting her father to become an Independent MP in Hexham. She previously worked for a Corporate Social Responsibility organisation in County Durham and completed a research internship at the think tank CentreForum. She studied her undergraduate degree at Durham University and during the 2005 election directed a non-party campaign to encourage the student vote.

**Neville Watson** – Neville is the Director of a sales and communications company and is the Independent PPC for Tottenham. He is married with three children. He is a regular contributor to the BBC on community issues and is the Chairman of a UK based national charity, The Associations of Jamaicans UK Trust. He currently leads a voluntary coaching and mentoring practice for men in prisons and psychiatric wards.

**Jim Thornton** – Jim is a chartered engineer and a property manager in Hertfordshire. He is the founder of East Herts People, an organisation that supports independent candidates and independent Councillors. He is a governor of two schools and was previously a councillor from 1999 to 2007 at East Herts District Council.

### The Secretariat

**Brian Aherane** – Brian was first involved in independent politics as a student union representative at Durham University. Brian and colleagues at his company developed the structure and constitution of the Independent Network in 2005 and ran a successful PR campaign. Brian directs the Secretariat and is the Director of the Independent Network Campaign LTD.

**Rob Jessel** – Rob works for Brian and has been involved with the Independent Network since 2007. He is currently the secretary of the organisation.

**Livia Oldland** – Livia is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Independent Network. She previously worked for East Herts People, a local campaign organisation that supports Independent candidates in local elections in East Hertfordshire. She has also worked for Save the Children and the Liberal Democrats.



## Applying for Endorsement

Our aim for 2009/2010 is to support as many Independent candidates as possible. We are endorsing candidates to provide a mark of quality for Independents; that these candidates will make excellent elected representatives. We hope that endorsement will add credibility to candidacy and boost election campaigns. The Executive committee formalised and agreed the endorsement process in October.

If you would like to apply for endorsement, please provide us with the following to: [secretariat@network.org.uk](mailto:secretariat@network.org.uk)

**A CV**  
**100 Word Personal Statement**  
**Photo** – (300 bpi JPEG)  
**Two References** (from people unrelated to you)  
**A Campaign Plan**  
**Manifesto**  
**Third party endorsements**  
**Specialist Subjects/Expertise** (e.g. international development, NHS, education)  
**Priority Policies**  
**Party Membership** (are you / have you ever been a member of a political party?)

### Third Party Endorsements

Let us know if you have received endorsements from other organisations. Examples of these could be winning community awards, Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks, obtaining a UK honour and if you have ever held positions in public office.

### Previous Convictions

We request that all candidates inform us of any unspent convictions. We also ask you to make us aware of anything in your past that may harm your campaign.

### Specialist Subjects/Expertise

Some individuals may have a particular interest or knowledge in key policy areas. This expertise may inspire other candidates' policies. However it is also useful for the IN to have a pool of identified experts whom we can offer to the media for interview on particular policy areas. For instance some candidates may have experience and understanding of the NHS, the law, community relations, environment, economy and so on. As the IN is a network, please tell us your expertise and share your knowledge with other candidates.

### Party Membership

If you have previously been a member of a political party please tell us. If you still have membership and wish to stand as an independent, we suggest you leave the party as soon as possible.

### **Manifesto – Top Tips**

Make sure your manifesto includes your views on key topics, such as health, education, foreign policy and economy.

As you're standing as an Independent you will not have the brand of a political party and will need to state your views on a wide range of issues; Dr Taylor's manifesto was eight pages long.

Independent candidates tend to focus campaigns on their local area or a single issue, but don't forget that your constituents will need you to make national decisions.

On your campaign literature don't state your whole manifesto, but instead focus on the key issues of your campaign.

## **Campaign Plan**

If you're planning to stand for election, you need to create a campaign plan. Campaign plans are essential; they will focus your resources and time. You should consider the following:

**Budget** – Can you afford the deposit? How will you fundraise?

**Timescale** – When will you send out election literature? When will you hold public events? Postal votes? Electoral Commission deadlines?

**Target Audience** – As the famous saying goes, if you market to everyone, you market to no-one. Which age group? What kind of voter (floating voter/ex-labour voter/trade unionists)? How many constituents?

**Message** – Why are you different from the other candidates? What's unique about your policy? Why should people vote for you? Manifesto?

**Promotion** – How will you get yourself known? Media (print and online)? Social networking? Public appearances. Local community groups? Hustings?

**Opponents** – Negative/positive campaigning. What are your opponents' strength/weaknesses? What's the current majority? How is your campaign different?

**Supporters** – How will you identify people who will vote for you? How will you involve volunteers? On Election Day how will you get people out to vote?



**If you are writing a Campaign Plan the following questions may be helpful:**

1. Have you obtained a copy of the Electoral Roll?
2. Have you analysed a map of your constituency to identify priorities for the campaign?
3. How do you intend to fund your campaign?
  - a. What is your budget?
  - b. How will you fundraise?
  - c. Can you afford the deposit (£500 for parliamentary)?
4. How many leaflets do you intend to deliver? You should ensure that all electorates receive a leaflet before the postal vote.
5. If you are intending to deliver more than one leaflet, how will you do this?
6. How will you campaign?
  - a. How much door knocking will you be doing?
  - b. Will you be organising public meetings/hustings?
  - c. How will you influence the maximum number of voters in the minimum amount of time?
  - d. How will you work with the local media?
  - e. Will you communicate with the political press?
  - f. Will you have your own website and blog?
  - g. Will you use social media sites? Facebook? Twitter?
  - h. Will you use political stunts?
7. Will you be appointing an Election Agent?
8. How will you involve volunteers in your campaign? How will you recruit them?
9. Are you aware of the importance of statutory wording on posters and leaflets?
10. Are you clear on what is and what is not an election expense?
11. What strengths and weaknesses have you identified in the current MP?
12. What strengths and weaknesses have you identified in the other candidates?
13. What are the main issues for the voters?
14. What Unique Selling Points (USPs) will you be pushing for your own candidature?
15. What are the positive reasons to vote for you?

## The Bell Principles

In a strategy meeting of the IN this September, the former Independent MP Martin Bell suggested a set of principles for Independent elected representatives. IN members were so impressed by the principles they agreed to adopt them.

The Bell Principles were edited by the executive for clarity. They are seen as a 'living document' and will be constantly reviewed and updated to ensure they're relevant for future generations.

The Bell Principles build upon Lord Nolan's Principles of 1995. All endorsed candidates must abide by to the Bell Principles.

### THE BELL PRINCIPLES

We will

- abide wholeheartedly by the spirit and letter of the Seven Principles of Public Life set out by Lord Nolan in 1995: *selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership*
- be guided by considered evidence, our real world experience and expertise, our constituencies and our consciences
- be free from the control of any political party, pressure group or whip
- be non-discriminatory, ethical and committed to pluralism.
- make decisions transparently and openly at every stage and level of the political process, enabling people to see how decisions are made and the evidence on which they are based
- listen, consulting our communities constantly and innovatively
- treat political opponents with courtesy and respect, challenging them when we believe they are wrong, and agreeing with them when we believe they are right
- resist abuses of power and patronage and promote democracy at every level
- work with other elected independents as a Group with a chosen spokesperson
- claim expenses, salaries and compensation openly so the public can judge the value for money of our activities.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **When is the deadline for applying for endorsement?**

There is no deadline for endorsement, but the sooner we have your application, the more support and guidance we can provide.

### **What are the benefits for endorsed candidates?**

First and foremost endorsed candidates will have the benefits of being vetted by an external organisation. Endorsed candidates will also have access to their own page on our website, use of our logo, advice, guidance and resources (as they become available). More importantly, endorsed candidates will be part of a national network and be able to share resources, expertise and experience with other candidates. They will also be part of a national identity and media campaign for independents.

### **I haven't publicly declared that I am standing as an Independent candidate, can I still apply?**

We understand that some individuals may want to wait until nearer the election to publicly declare. We will treat all applications as strictly confidential and we won't publicise your candidacy unless you want us to. Please tell us on your application if we are able to discuss your candidacy with external organisations.

### **What issues do I need to consider before deciding to stand?**

Running for election can be a life changing experience that may have huge consequences for your personal life and career. You should consider the impact on the following:

- **Finances** – Running an election campaign is expensive
- **Time** - How much spare time do you have?
- **Social life** – How will your friends and family view your decision to stand as an independent? Will your friends and family support your campaign?
- **Work** – If elected, how can you balance your new duties and personal life?

### **Why do you need to know about unspent convictions and my past?**

If you're standing as a candidate, you will need media coverage, but you don't want this to be for all the wrong reasons. If you have any unspent convictions or anything in your past that may be detrimental to your campaign, you must let us know.

### **Do you have a limit on the number of candidates you can endorse?**

No, we plan to endorse as many candidates as possible; the more candidates we have, the bigger our campaign will be. More than one person can apply for the same constituency; we will negotiate between the candidates. But we may also choose to endorse more than one candidate per constituency.

### **Why was the Independent Network Formed?**

Public frustration and disillusionment with careerist politicians and party politics has created a role for more Independent candidates in public office. The objective of the IN is to demonstrate that independent candidates are a credible alternative to party political candidates. The absence of a national identity for independent candidates and representatives undermines the perception that voting Independent can actually make a difference. The IN aims to address this perception.



### **Isn't the Independent Network a political party?**

No, we are an organisation that supports Independent politicians. The Independent Network as an organisation is policy-free and politically neutral; we do not impose any opinions on our members or have any whips. But this does not mean that individuals don't have their own views; our members come from across the political spectrum.

### **What's your association with Jury Team?**

We have no links with the Jury Team, but have previously spoken to members of the organisation.

### **How do I donate to the Independent Network?**

The Independent Network is a non-profit organisation that relies on donations from members of the public. The more funds we receive the more we will be able to help Independent candidates and drive a national campaign. You can donate here: <http://www.independentnetwork.org.uk/Donation.html>

### **How can I help local Independent candidates in my area?**

We're currently building a bank of volunteers that can help local independent candidates. Independent candidates need assistance from delivering leaflets to elections assistance. Please email us your contact details to be included in our volunteer database: [secretariat@independentnetwork.org.uk](mailto:secretariat@independentnetwork.org.uk)

### **Why are independent candidates important to the political process?**

By reducing the influence of the party whip and returning more Independent elected members to local government, parliament, EU, Unions and other democratic organisations

- Constituents' interests will be properly represented in public office, without the conflict that often exists with the pressure applied by the party whip to toe the party line on issues.
- There can be a more effective process of reasoned deliberation, introducing more diverse opinions on issues, rather than the adversarial nature of party politics.
- Decision making at all levels will be shaped by the informed opinion of those affected.

### **Can Independents really be successful elected representatives?**

Not many people realise that there are already many successful Independent politicians in power:

- 2 Independent elected MPs: Dai Davies and Dr Taylor
- 183 cross-bench peers in the House of Lords
- 7.5% of Councillors in England and Wales are Independent
- Scotland has a long history of independent politicians in local government
- 3 independent mayors in local authorities
- Ken Livingstone was elected as an Independent Mayor of London in 2000
- Many National Union of Students (NUS) representatives are elected on a Independent platform.

This is even more impressive when you remember that minority parties such as the Greens, BNP and UKIP have far fewer elected representatives and no MPs in Parliament.