

### UNIT CONVENTION RECOMMENDATIONS - December 2013

Unit	Subject	Recommendation	Response
EU71 – East Lancashire	Bahá'í Centres	Could the National Spiritual Assembly generate a policy for the establishment of local Bahá'í centres. A Bahá'í centre does play a vital role in the progress of the Bahá'í Faith, as a recent Universal House of Justice message indicates. We need guidelines and procedures to establish these buildings.	The need for Bahá'í centres will emerge organically out of the process of growth and consultations amongst the three protagonists of the Plan in an area – the individuals, the community and the institutions.
EU56 – Norfolk	Chaplaincy	Those friends involved in volunteering in hospital and prison Chaplaincy have noticed how powerful it is for creating opportunities for meaningful conversations with others. We ask the National Spiritual Assembly whether it is aware of any other particularly fruitful ways, or further specific institutions, within which Bahá'ís could volunteer.	There are many organisations at a local level within which Bahá'ís can individually make a genuine contribution to the care and welfare of the wider community. These are best ascertained locally. Of course the purpose of such involvement must be to genuinely assist in the work of the organisation, and should not be driven by other motives.
EU44 – Bedfordshire	Cluster boundaries	That consideration be given to adding Milton Keynes to the Two Shires cluster on the basis of proximity, established patterns of activity and shared facilities such as shopping and entertainment, and the current development of Milton Keynes town into Bedfordshire (MKSM development = South Midlands Milton Keynes).	This has been forwarded to the Council for England for its consideration, in consultation with the relevant cluster agencies.
EU50 – Warwickshire, South Solihull	Cluster boundaries	Convention is very happy to be furnished with the list of clusters without a programme of growth. However, in view of their special circumstances, both the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands should be lifted out of the 'England' list, and be given special emphasis from now on. In addition, could an explanatory note be added to a cluster	This suggestion is noted with appreciation.  The comments on the Isle of Man and Channel Islands have been

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		name where it is not immediately clear what area of the country the name refers to, e.g. ‘Solent’ (Hampshire and Isle of Wight)	passed to the Council for England for its consideration.
NU78 – Northern Ireland, West	Communications	Regarding communications in Northern Ireland and the need for the Friends to be aware of what is happening and to feel part of a community beyond their own immediate locality, Convention feels that something has gone seriously wrong. The Bahá’í Council newsletter “CommuNIqué” has over time gone from 8 pages six times a year to four pages twice a year, a reduction of almost 85% in amount of content, and the quality, timeliness, and usefulness of what content there in has shown a significant decline. The Council’s electronic list bahai-ni is good for announcing events but is not a communications medium of depth or substance when it comes to reporting events, sharing learning and insights, or otherwise encouraging the Friends, and of course does not carry photographs. Convention feels there is a great need for the Friends to receive these things: as things stand there is ignorance, discouragement, and a feeling of being cut off from, and not being a part of, the wider Bahá’í community even of Northern Ireland and of little real connection with the institutions.	The National Assembly appreciates the challenge that the Council for Northern Ireland is experiencing in producing a regular newsletter at this time, which is an important role of the Council. This Recommendation has been shared with the Council and it has been asked to explore realistic steps forward to overcome this challenge, with the assistance of the National Assembly as necessary.
EU52 – Warwickshire North, Coventry	Communications	To make use of social media by forming sister communities as a means to learn and exchange experiences from each other; to establish a social network forum to share experiences between friends from other clusters. To establish a more frequent flow of information and sharing experience via the UK journal.	The National Assembly is reviewing both its use of social media and its communications strategy in light of this Recommendation.
EU26 – Ealing	Communications	Unit Convention requests that national events only be publicly announced once the venue and date of the event are confirmed.	This recommendation is noted. However it is currently the intended practice.

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SU89 – Highland & Western Islands	Communications	<p>To request that correspondence coming from the National Assembly is kept simple, without ambiguity and jargon. The letter sent for consultation at this Unit Convention was felt to be an example of difficulties:</p> <p>a) The readers were referred to a recent document ‘Insights from the Frontiers of Learning’ which all but one present had no knowledge of.</p> <p>b) The second paragraph of the unit convention letter was understood in different ways by those present, and resulted in distress for some, whose understanding was that devotional gatherings, children’s classes and junior youth groups can only be conducted by those progressing through the Training Institute courses.</p> <p>c) The jargon term ‘programme of growth’ resulted in confusion and no-one had a definitive understanding of the meaning of this term.</p>	<p>These comments are noted by the National Assembly.</p> <p>Perhaps it would be helpful to make a distinction between jargon and the language that is being used by the Universal House of Justice to guide the community forward with a common understanding. In light of this, individuals are encouraged to better strive to understand the terms we are encouraged to use through study of the guidance and its application in our service.</p>
EU59 – Leicestershire	Communications	Please have a summary/precis of main ideas with each letter. This will help readers to get an overview of the content before reading and thus facilitate better understanding of the document.	This suggestion is noted by the National Assembly.
EU59 – Leicestershire	Communications	Please review the process by which the friends choose to receive Bahá’í News in electronic format only, as currently people are still getting a hard copy after sending an email saying they don’t want it.	Noted and this suggestion will be passed to the Department of the Secretariat of the National Assembly for its attention.
EU60 – Nottinghamshire	Communications	Unit asks that NSA consider sending their letter to Convention in other languages, particularly Farsi.	Efforts will be made to ensure that a Persian translation of any future letter from the National Assembly to Unit Conventions will be made available to the friends.

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EU65 – Yorkshire South	Deepening	For training to be provided for the whole community, but particularly the Local Spiritual Assemblies on the Administrative Order. The aim would be to deepen us in the principles of the Administrative Order, the practical application of these principles and concepts, how the institutions should function, how to consult, how to vote.	The National Assembly cannot develop materials that are as comprehensive as requested, but it is developing materials that will assist Local Assemblies and individuals to better understand the qualities and duties of Assembly members and the role and functioning of Assemblies.
EU26 – Ealing	Education	Unit Convention requests that the National Spiritual Assembly looks into the feasibility of opening a free school, with the caveat that government policies on this may change after the general election in 2015	Whilst the National Assembly appreciates the spirit of this recommendation, it does not feel that it is timely for the Bahá'í community to consider such a project given its present focus and limited resources.
EU32 – City, Barking, Newham, Tower Hamlets	External Affairs	The friends in the Unit would like to request guidance from the National Spiritual Assembly with regards to the choice of materials (information) and approach that should be used when engaging with local councillors and dignitaries	<p>This recommendation was referred to the Office of Public Affairs, which responded as follows:</p> <p>As communities continue to participate in the processes of expansion and consolidation, opportunities will naturally arise to engage further into the life of society. As the Universal House of Justice states in its 2008 Ridvan message, it will be important that the approaches we take, the methods we adopt, and the instruments we</p>

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			<p>employ, achieve the same degree of coherence that characterize the pattern of growth we are striving for in our core activities.</p> <p>The Office of Public Affairs warmly invites communities to keep in touch and to turn to the Office when questions arise so that learning can be shared and, where necessary, support provided.</p> <p>It may be useful to study the Riḍván messages of 2008 and 2010, and the 28 December 2010 message for further guidance.</p>
EU52 – Warwickshire North, Coventry	Five Year Plan	The Local Spiritual Assemblies, Area Teaching Committee and the Auxiliary Board Members to work in close collaboration to initiate, organise and take responsibility in coordinating teaching events, and to announce and inspiring friends within the clusters to attend and gain experience from each other.	This is currently the intended aim in all clusters where an Area Teaching Committee is established.
NU78 – Northern Ireland, West	Five Year Plan	Regarding Stars of the West, a cluster identified as one that has not yet had a programme of growth, Convention feels, noting the extreme shortage of available human resources, that a pioneer family moving into the cluster is an essential to its growth and activity.	This recommendation has been passed to the Council for Northern Ireland. If, following consultation with the relevant institutions in Northern Ireland such a need is confirmed, the Council may wish to consult and work with the UK Pioneering and Travel Teaching

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			Committee to identify a suitable pioneer.
EU46 – Buckinghamshire	Five Year Plan	Ask the National Spiritual Assembly to encourage the friends to visit other communities when travelling for holiday or for work, for the purpose of sharing ideas and inspiring one another, provided this visiting activity is conducted in an appropriate way. One method to facilitate this activity might be for local communities to publicise their activities on a national level with a contact person for each Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of or Group.	Such movement and visits should be naturally encouraged as part of community life and where individuals would like to make such visits, and if they do not have a personal contact already, they are able to contact the National Office for contact details of the Local Assembly /Group Secretary or Auxiliary Board members in order to help facilitate this.
EU40 – Essex West	Five Year Plan	Ask National Spiritual Assembly to introduce policy of basing children's activities on child's school year rather than age. This would enable those who are young in the year to be included with their peers.	<p>This recommendation was referred to the Training Institute Board, which responded as follows:</p> <p>The Training Institute Board agrees that it makes sense to base participation in activities on the school year and there is currently no policy to contradict this. We ask that anyone responsible for organising activities for this age group use their local knowledge to respond to the needs in the community and make the best</p>

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			<p>decision they can in consultation with relevant Institute coordinators or Auxiliary Board members. The curriculum is set by the Ruhi Institute, and it states clearly in the Book 3 notes to collaborators that the age brackets are as follows: age 5-6 for grade 1, age 6-7 for Grade 2, and age 7-8 for Grade 3. For implementation, we recommend that organisers always consult with their local coordinator. At this point in our development, numbers are not large enough to require a policy.</p>
<p>NU82 – Northern Ireland, Southeast</p>	<p>Five Year Plan</p>	<p>The NSA to consider ways in which Bahá'ís in NI clusters in border areas of ROI and NI could be facilitated to collaborate together with the aim of developing programmes of growth in adjoining cluster.</p>	<p>This recommendation was passed to the Bahá'í Council for Northern Ireland to consider on an urgent basis, with a view to making appropriate plans with the communities concerned and assisting them to translate these plans into action.</p>
<p>EU60 – Nottinghamshire</p>	<p>Five Year Plan</p>	<p>Unit asks that the NSA/ Council for England increase the capacity, by enlarging, of our ATC and consider appropriate consultation with agencies based within the cluster, eg LSAs, to support the member's selection process.</p>	<p>This suggestion has been passed to the Council for England for its consideration and action as it deems appropriate.</p>
<p>EU65 – Yorkshire South</p>	<p>Five Year Plan</p>	<p>For the NSA to encourage the clusters where programs of growth are yet to be launched to contact the Bahá'í students at the Universities in</p>	<p>This suggestion has been passed to the Regional Councils for their information.</p>

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		order to gain their support and encourage their involvement in establishing a programme of growth.	
EU31 – Hackney and Islington	Five Year Plan	The two communities of Hackney and Islington would like to offer their efforts to establish a ‘learning partnership’ (see above) with two of the clusters (one per community) that still need to launch a Program of Growth during the next two years, until the end of the current 5-year plan. Provisionally, due to previous knowledge and association of these communities by some of the friends, clusters in Wales and Northern Ireland, were identified, however both communities are happy to leave this decision to the guidance of the NSA. In brief, following our consultations this ‘learning partnership’ would entail: friends from both communities visiting each other during expansion and consolidation phases, as well as holiday periods; keeping communication lines open to share learning and experiences, helping build bonds of friendship that will offer mutual support to the friends. The nature of this relationship will of course continue to evolve and develop over time.	These recommendations were passed to the Bahá’í Council for England to consider on an urgent basis, with a view to making appropriate plans with the communities concerned and assisting them to translate these plans into action.
EU21 – Kingston-Upon-Thames and Richmond-upon-Thames		We agreed that we would like to twin with one of the communities that were highlighted as having potential for Intensive growth. The closest would be Solent. This would involve, for example, inviting the cluster to join of our our expansion phase activities, should they feel they would benefit from being involved in a neighbourhood where activities are taking place. If the National Spiritual Assembly believes that this would be useful for the Solent cluster, we are happy to make arrangements once we have the relevant contact details.	
EU26 – Ealing		Unit Convention requests that the National Spiritual Assembly gather and distribute information from the goal clusters in which a program of growth needs to be started as to what their specific needs are. Unit	



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EU20 – Southwark		<p>Convention requests that the National Spiritual Assembly devise an exchange program whereby individuals from the goal clusters are invited to clusters with IPGs, as was done before during the learning stages of the door to door campaign, which the ABMs and Counsellor were also involved with.</p> <p>The community would like to offer to twin with another cluster or community which does not yet have an established programme of growth</p>	
EU80 – Belfast, Lisburn Area	National Assembly functioning	The Unit would like to express its sincere gratitude to the National Spiritual Assembly for its loving guidance and encouragement in assisting the UK Bahá'í community to rededicate their lives to service of the Plan.	Noted with appreciation.
EU44 – Bedfordshire	National Convention	That the National Assembly reconsider its decision to exclude non-Bahá'í carers from attending National Convention premises, particularly when the venue is a hotel open to non-Bahá'í guests, as last year and particularly in light of the Equalities Act. It is not intended that non-Bahá'ís would attend the Convention itself, only be present at the venue to assist those in their care.	It is not the policy of the National Assembly to exclude non-Bahá'í carers from attending the National Convention premises. The exclusion is only from the Convention itself.
SU86 – Central, West Scotland	Pioneering	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The unit would like to ask any National institution/committee to encourage potential students to investigate the Glasgow area when applying to universities. It was reported that there are several myths about the Glasgow area which discourage potential students from investigating education here.</li> <li>2. The unit would like to ask the "pioneering committee" in its current guise to encourage potential pioneers to consider the West Highland region.</li> <li>3. The unit would like to ask that the Year of Service Desk, in its current guise, establish links with the communities in the unit in order to understand the needs of the clusters within the unit and for</li> </ol>	This recommendation has been passed to the Council for Scotland and the UK Pioneering and Travel Teaching Committee for their reflection and implementation as they deem fit.

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		potential YoS applicants to consider time in the west of Scotland. In addition, the contact between YoS Desk and communities would help the communities better understand how Year of Service projects are defined and how the communities can help create the right circumstances to attract YoS applicants.	
EU71 – East Lancashire	Pioneering	Please consider more direct support for the Local Spiritual Assemblies by sending new pioneers to those which are under threat of falling, as the Bahá'í population ages.	The focus for pioneering is presently the establishment of programmes of growth in every cluster; it is this that will ultimately ensure that Local Spiritual Assemblies are formed and maintained in a sustainable manner.
EU18 – Wandsworth	Statistics	National Spiritual Assembly to help communities know purpose of collecting statistic and what the procedures are that are in place that assist with improving the accuracy.	Lack of clarity about statistics has been a concern of the institutions and agencies of the Faith for some time. Understanding the process of collecting data and improving accuracy is best done in practice. Therefore, we encourage Assemblies to consult with relevant cluster agencies about the purpose of statistics, about the means by which statistics are gathered at the local level, and their uses in reading the reality of their locality and in planning.
EU40 – Essex West	Summer School	Ask National Spiritual Assembly to advertise summer schools at least 6 months before the summer so people have choice to attend when planning annual leave in advance.	This request is acknowledged. The National Assembly is actively engaged in a process of refining the schools and the need for timely

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			<p>communication with the friends, including the logistical details, is appreciated and has been shared with the various agencies that collaborate with the Assembly in delivering the schools.</p>
<p>EU59 – Leicestershire</p>	<p>Training Institute</p>	<p>For the Ruhi materials (including teaching methods) to be made Specific Learning Difficulties friendly as this affects more than 10% of the population e.g. dyslexia, ASD, ADHD. Ruhi materials - audio (for visually impaired)</p>	<p>This recommendation was referred to the Training Institute Board, which responded as follows:</p> <p>The system of distance learning developed by the Ruhi Institute is a global framework, which by its very nature, is also flexible. It comprises of materials, curriculum, and a person trained to serve as a tutor. All tutors are linked into the system of coordination of the Training Institute. The format of delivering this training in a study circle lends itself to adapting to the needs of all individuals. There is a big effort being made to raise the capacity of tutors, and as this happens, the skills they develop will help to provide fully accessible environments for diverse participants in study circles.</p>

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			<p>With regard to Materials for Visually impaired - The Training Institute Board is making enquiries of the Ruhi Institute to see if they already have materials in Dyslexic friendly texts and formats, braille, large print and audio, and to learn of any other Institutes with experience of developing them in that format.</p>
EU61 – Lincolnshire	Unit Convention	Convention would like clarification of the National Assembly’s new guidance on hand delivered votes.	The National Assembly is pleased overall with how the new procedures have been adopted by the community, and has further revised the wording of the guidelines in light of feedback that it has received.
EU61 – Lincolnshire	Unit Convention	Convention asks for clarification from the National Assembly about the date of the Unit Convention as the internationally popular Lincoln Christmas market with 25,000 visitors to the city occurs each year during convention weekend. Convention agreed that this was probably why only a few friends attention convention and other send postal votes. Parking is almost impossible.	Where there is a clash between the Unit Convention and an event such as that described, the Hosts can arrange a venue in another suitable location in the Unit, either in the same town or elsewhere.
EU49 – Gloucestershire and Bath	Unit Convention	Unit Convention noted that other strong communities in the Unit would like to host the convention - could the hosting be shared among these, rather than always having the same host?	This suggestion was taken into consideration in selecting a host. Please also be advised that the Unit Convention report form includes a space at the end for the friends to recommend alternative hosts for next year.

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SU89 – Highland & Western Islands	Unit Convention	<p>i) Unit Convention requests that there is more flexibility over the date of unit convention meetings. Would it be possible, for example, for a unit to choose its own date within a month set by the National Assembly?</p> <p>ii) Unit convention requests that the month of the meeting is before October, because of the severe weather and the seasonal change in public transport timetables.</p> <p>This particular meeting illustrated the difficulties in this cluster:</p> <p>a) Severe storms disrupted travel immediately before the meeting, making it look impossible to achieve;</p> <p>b) The length of the meeting was curtailed by differing times of arrival of ferries, buses and trains travelling long distances on disrupted routes.</p> <p>c) For some people in the cluster it was not possible to attend at all owing to travelling distances overseas and land.</p>	<p>The National Assembly wrote to the Local Spiritual Assemblies and Groups in this specific Unit to request their comments on the possibility of holding their Unit Convention earlier in the year. In light of feedback received, a suitable arrangement has now been made.</p>
EU60 – Nottinghamshire	Unit Convention	<p>Unit asks for more clarification of new instructions for postal ballots, including the 2 envelope system.</p>	<p>From the feedback received in relation to postal ballots, the instructions have been refined to make them clearer.</p>
EU66 – Stockport	Unit Convention	<p>Request to clarify reason why Unit Convention is held 5 months before National Convention, the Unit’s suggestion is to consider an alternative date e.g. during Ayyám-i-Há?</p> <p>Request to know whether all countries have Unit Convention at the same time.</p>	<p>As indicated in the National Assembly’s Articles of Association, annual notice must be given to delegates at least sixty days in advance of National Convention. Thus, well in advance of this minimum period of sixty days, all Unit Convention results must have been received from across the country and the National Assembly</p>

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			<p>must have had an opportunity to review and confirm the results at one of its meetings. Experience has shown that ample time is generally needed for all this to happen, not least because if there is a problem at a Unit Convention, it may need to be rescheduled. Other considerations are also involved, such as the impracticality of holding Unit Conventions in the holiday season, the need to arrange and hold training sessions for the delegates, and the need for delegates to make their plans for the Riḍván period well in advance in order to maximise attendance. For all these reasons, early December is felt to be the natural choice to hold Unit Conventions.</p>
<p>EU49 – Gloucestershire and Bath</p> <p>EU53 – Staffordshire</p>	<p>Unit Convention</p>	<p>Unit Convention noted concern about the inaccuracy of the electoral roll year on year, and asks the NSA to address this.</p> <p>Convention suggests that the National Spiritual Assembly conduct a survey of the believers in every unit a few months before the unit convention through the secretaries of the unit convention host community who would, with the help of local community and ATC secretaries, ensure that the list of adult believers was as up to date as</p>	<p>The lists of names for Unit Convention are derived from the National Assembly’s records database. Thus, the list will be as accurate as the database itself. The Department of the Secretariat continually endeavours to keep the Assembly’s records as up-to-date as possible, and relies on Local Assemblies and individuals to</p>

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		possible and provide feedback to the national office in time for the unit convention pack to be circulated.	inform it of changes in addresses and so forth throughout the year. If there are any changes to be made, please let the Department know by writing to records@bahai.org.uk. Recognising that there are still a number of discrepancies, however, a specific effort will be made this year by the Department to update records of the community in the months before the electoral lists are disseminated.
NU77 – Northumberland  EU65 – Yorkshire South	Youth	This unit request that the National Assembly may like to consider regional youth conferences as a strategy to assist the current Plan with emphasis on promoting friendship and rekindling acts of service.  For the NSA, or other relevant institution, to organise regional youth conferences to follow on from the youth conference, which would involve intensive training/study and then action.	While the gathering of youth remains a strategy to progress the Plan, this now needs to happen on a regional basis as needs arise. The National Assembly therefore encourages clusters and regions to organise these as needed.
EU46 – Buckinghamshire	Youth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Convention proposes a mini-youth conference in each cluster, or in a suitable area, as a follow up to the youth conference and resulting activities.</li> <li>2. Encourage the youth to share with the cluster the progress and results of their activities at every opportunity, and discuss what practical assistance the wider community can offer.</li> </ol>	It is felt that these suggestions are best addressed at a local level. Reflection meetings and the Nineteen Day Feast are wonderful opportunities for the youth to share what they have learnt and experiences from their activities and the support they might need to continue them.

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			<p>It is worth also noting in this connection that youth conference facilitators and many of the youth are encouraged to continue hosting special gatherings to study the youth conference materials with more groups of youth.</p>