

The next generation: rising stars for 2015



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Westbourne
Change opinion

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FOREWORD

Political power is on the move. The next generation: rising stars for 2015 proves the point.

Since Westbourne's launch in 2010, we have recognised that the tide is flowing out of Parliament and Whitehall. Ministers do not 'decide' in the way they used to. Whitehall is financially broke and tied in EU ribbons. The voters no longer defer to parties and politicians. And, most of all, the major political parties have lost their hegemony.

At Westbourne we do not mourn these changes. The role of the modern public affairs professional is not to simply wine and dine establishment connections. The job is now about figuring out where the power has gone, who are now the key players, what are the key drivers of decision-making, and devising strategies for achieving business objectives. We celebrate transparency, engagement and accountability. We relish the job of helping our clients navigate modern government affairs.

That's what we mean by 'Change Opinion'.

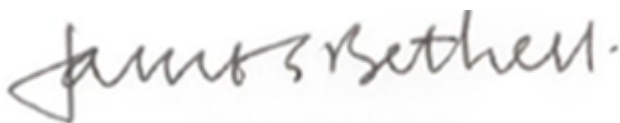
There is no clearer example of these changes than the fascinating battle over the 2015 General Election. In the past, observers could rely on single-graph headline polling and crude demographic groups for helpful insight.

Times have changed. Most strikingly, modern voters have traded consistent tribal habits for strident consumer choice, the parties have lost their financial, ideological and grass-roots duopoly of political support, and partisan media-owners are diluted by peer-to-peer communications. As a result, individual MPs can now make a huge impact in their home patch, moving the needle of opinion by 10 per cent or more against the national swing. Smaller parties may hold the balance of power.

In such a world, it is essential that any meaningful assessment of the election battle should be based on a seat-by-seat analysis of the battleground constituencies. Of course, the tone is set by the presidential battle at the despatch box, on the motorway poster sites and on the evening news. But the important battles are fought on the door-step between increasingly sophisticated candidates with loosening affiliations with their parties.

This report gives a clear picture of the constituencies that count and the people who are winning the ground war. Report author Lewis Baston, is like a pointillist painter creating a dazzling landscape with dozens of individual touches of his brush.

It is only when we get up close that we can see the artist's technique.



James Bethell
Director, Westbourne Communications

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

General Elections in the United Kingdom may appear to be a single national contest between the Conservatives and Labour as to which party will form the next government. A few decades ago, little extra explanation was required – the national movement between the two main parties would determine who won the relatively small number of marginal seats that were closely contested between the parties, and therefore who would have a majority in parliament.

The picture in 2015 is only superficially similar. Barring a political event of asteroid-strike level of improbability, either Ed Miliband or David Cameron will be the tenant of Downing Street after the 2015 election (and quite possibly a period of coalition negotiations). But on the ground, much is different. One of the two parties has to win, but winning is not what it was, and neither are the two parties. They are hollowed out as social institutions capable of commanding loyalty among the public. The national contest between the reds and the blues is not like Chelsea v Manchester United at the height of their powers, more like a mid-table end of season Ipswich Town v Blackburn Rovers match in a half-empty stadium with a crowd eyeing the exit gates.

Both major parties seek an overall majority. But the 20 gains the Conservatives need, and the 68 Labour needs, are very hard to find when one looks at the constituencies they would have to be winning in order to form that majority government. Expectations have increasingly focused on the likelihood of a second hung parliament.

But what sort of hung parliament is it likely to be? And who are going to be the MPs taking part? Who would be Ed Miliband's back bench supporters and who would be ministers in his government by 2020? And which of the new Conservative entrants are the stars of the future?

Uniform swing between the main parties can only be the very roughest of guides to which constituencies will change hands. In the 2010 election, the national swing of 5.1 per cent meant that seats where Labour had a lead of less than 10.2 percentage points over the Conservatives in 2005 would turn blue if they followed 'uniform swing'. In the event, the Conservatives were a bit more successful at winning seats from Labour than the national swing would have indicated. They won 23 seats where a swing larger than 5.1 per cent was required, but failed in 9 where a national-average swing would have won. They therefore gained 87 seats from Labour rather than the 73 that uniform swing would have delivered.

There are a number of other variables that will affect constituencies, even the seats that are still basically Conservative v Labour contests. These include:

- **Incumbency.** In most elections there is an electoral benefit for incumbent MPs – particularly those who are just finishing their first term in parliament and therefore earning their incumbency bonus for the first time. In seats where a Conservative candidate defeated a Labour MP in 2010, and is now facing the electorate against a new Labour candidate, there will be a 'double incumbency' bonus – Labour lose the people who gave the MP a personal vote in 2010 and the Conservative gains a bonus. But these bonuses have to be earned, and they will vary depending on the effort and characteristics of the Tory MP. In seats where MPs are standing down, incumbency effects are unwound (or never start up, as in the seats abandoned by several MPs after one term).

- **Personalities.** The personal political profile of MPs is much more varied than it was 50 years ago when rebellion against the party whip was fairly rare. But recent parliaments have seen huge numbers of rebellions and rebels taking part in them. A left of centre Lib Dem rebel such as Adrian Sanders in Torbay might be less damaged (or rewarded) as a result of feelings about the national coalition than key coalition figures like Nick Clegg and Danny Alexander. Strongly Eurosceptic Conservatives hope that their personal views will help keep potential UKIP voters with them instead.
- **Lib Dem votes in 2010.** Polling evidence shows that there is a large, cohesive chunk of people who voted Lib Dem in 2010 for left-of-centre reasons, who have been completely alienated by the coalition with the Conservatives. They have switched in bulk to Labour (though probably the SNP in Scotland). Labour should do better in constituencies where there is a large pool of Lib Dem votes to fish in, particularly in liberal urban areas.
- **Campaign mobilisation.** Labour's hope of counteracting the Conservatives' advantages in money, incumbency and media support is their 'ground game' – they have more activists available. This factor also matters for the newly mass-membership SNP. It will also make the difference between victory and disaster in different seats for the Lib Dems.
- **Tactical voting.** The Liberal Democrats in particular have often profited from tactical voting – the argument that, say, in Taunton Deane Labour cannot win and Labour supporters would be better off voting Lib Dem to keep out the Tories. To what extent can they still argue this to Labour voters? And can they persuade Tories to lend them a hand? Will the possible Green vote actually end up voting Labour in the key marginals to ensure a change of government? Will UKIP encourage tactical voting, either for or against the incumbent party?
- **'Left-behindedness'.** This inelegant term aims to encapsulate the sort of constituency where UKIP does well, and where people are most pessimistic about the future. UKIP votes have sprung up, at the expense of Labour as well as the Conservatives, in constituencies that combine low earnings, low educational achievement, low numbers of ethnic minority residents and large numbers of older people. It is in these places – which are to be found among marginals and purportedly safe seats for both Conservative and Labour – where some of the strangest results may take place.
- **Urban and rural.** Over the long term, there has been a polarisation between urban areas, which have tended to drift towards Labour compared to the national average, and rural areas which have trended Tory. If one assumes that Labour will beat the national swing in the big cities and fall below in the rural areas, one will tend to be right.
- **Ethnicity.** Demographic changes, particularly the proportion of voters from black and minority ethnic communities, can lead to political shifts. The high and growing BME proportion of the population in outer London has led to a big shift towards Labour.
- **Region.** There have been different trends in different regions within England. As well as the traditional North/ South divide, there is now the trace of an East/ West divide. In 2010 the Conservatives did consistently better in the eastern half of England compared to the west, with the exception of London.
- **Turnout.** Turnout in recent British elections has been around 60-65 per cent, compared to a pre-2001 norm of around 75 per cent. Participation has fallen most among particular groups, among them young people, people from the less advantaged social classes, and inner city dwellers. In general, high turnout is seen to help Labour. But in 2015, the UKIP and Green votes may also

depend on whether they can bring supporters who are only weakly interested in the political process to the polls.

General Elections are basically decided in the classic marginals, the seats that are close between Labour and the Conservatives. Despite all the new factors in 2015, the next election will be decided here as well. To win a majority, Labour needs to make a net gain of 67 seats. It may well gain about 10 from the Lib Dems – but stands to lose an unknown amount of ground to the SNP. In Labour's battle for a majority, winning seats like Norwich North and Milton Keynes South will be crucial.

For the Conservatives, the arithmetic is that they need 20 net gains to scrape a majority. They might well get 10 from the Lib Dems, but they need to find another 10 from somewhere, and the only way they can do this semi-realistically is to chisel away 10 of Labour's most vulnerable seats. It is very difficult to see how they can do more than that, barring a sudden and unprecedented swing in public opinion, a weird pattern to the UKIP vote, or a higher than expected Green vote.

The Lab-Con seats are also important even if we remain in the realm of hung parliaments. They determine who will be the largest single party, and therefore one of the principal claims to be able to form a government (Nick Clegg made this the prime consideration in 2010). The Conservatives had (as of 2010) 306 seats to Labour's 258, a margin of 48. To overhaul this, from Labour's point of view, gains from the Tories count twice as much as gains from the Lib Dems.

Several of the seats have long-established reputations as 'bellwethers' – seats that will always go with the national tide. There are no completely reliable bellwethers, because everywhere has its own local peculiarities. Some seats that have been very accurate in the past – Gravesham, South Derbyshire – produced larger than average Conservative majorities in the 2010 election and are likely to stay Tory even if Labour win. On the other hand, Lincoln (which has got every election since October 1974 'right') could go Labour despite a national Conservative lead, and Luton South (a predictor since 1951) stayed Labour in 2010. Of the current crop, Pendle and Keighley look like the best litmus tests, although we may find out that this is analogous to a stopped clock being right twice a day rather than the seats being genuinely typical.

The decline of two party politics means that an increasing number of constituencies cannot be fitted into the two party framework. The 18 seats in Northern Ireland obviously do not count, and it is probably no longer useful to see Scotland's 59 seats in this light either. The Liberal Democrats are a significant presence in the 57 seats they hold and their influence goes a bit beyond this number. A number of other constituencies are affected by the Greens, Plaid Cymru, Respect and various Independents and others. We do not yet know quite where the UKIP tide will come in, or how high it will reach, but there are 10 seats at least where they should be taken into account. We may be talking about 160 constituencies – out of 650! - that cannot be understood as two party battles, even if one of Labour or the Conservatives may end up on top.

This report examines the battlegrounds of the 2015 election, and who will emerge as MPs once the smoke has cleared.

CHAPTER 2: RETIREMENTS, REPLACEMENTS AND RETREADS

Introduction

Even in these turbulent political times, there are some seats that are extremely unlikely to desert the party that they supported in 2010. Many seats – particularly in the industrial Labour heartlands and the Conservative rural and suburban seats in the South East – have not changed hands since 1931 or even earlier. Very occasionally things go drastically wrong for a party defending an apparently ‘safe’ seat – Labour lost Merthyr Tydfil in 1970 and Blaenau Gwent in 2005 after disputes over candidate selection, and the Conservatives lost Tatton to Independent Martin Bell in 1997. The Lib Dems took apparently safe Tory (Solihull) and Labour (Manchester Withington) seats in 2005. But for the most part, being selected as candidate for a safe seat is the difficult part, and once selected that candidate is extremely likely to become the MP. It is therefore possible to predict who a fair number of the new MPs of 2015 will be.

But first, one should acknowledge those who are standing down. Sir Peter Tapsell’s decision to stand down marks the end of an era. The Father of the House has represented the seat based on Horncastle in rural Lincolnshire since 1966, but his first term in Parliament was in 1959-64 as MP for the marginal seat of Nottingham West. Tapsell is the last MP to have served in the House of Commons alongside Winston Churchill and Aneurin Bevan and one of very few to have completed fifty years’ service. Depending on their willingness to stand again, and the willingness of the electors of Manchester Gorton, Rushcliffe, Bolsover and Oldham West to return them to Parliament, there will be four MPs first elected in June 1970 still in office after the 2015 election. These are Gerald Kaufman (who becomes Father of the House on the strength of having taken the oath of office first), Ken Clarke, Dennis Skinner and Michael Meacher.

There are some notable retirements on the Labour side. Not many MPs can claim to have been a character in a film, but Sian James can – she featured prominently in *Pride* (2014). As well as Gordon Brown, several Blair or Brown Cabinet ministers are also standing down, including Jack Straw (only the second Blackburn MP since 1955, inheriting his seat from the inimitable Barbara Castle in 1979), Alistair Darling, Frank Dobson, Hazel Blears, Peter Hain and John Denham. The Conservatives also lose recent Cabinet members William Hague and Sir George Young, and Stephen Dorrell who was in John Major’s Cabinet. Former Lib Dem leader and elder statesman Menzies Campbell also leaves the House.

An unusual feature of the Conservative retirements is that more than one or two are retiring after a single term. Only two members of Tony Blair’s landslide ‘class of 1997’ stood down voluntarily in 2001 (Jenny Jones in Wolverhampton and Tess Kingham in Gloucester) but eight of the Conservative class of 2010 are stepping down, most of them in highly marginal seats. In what could be a close election, their party will miss the electoral bonus that usually goes to MPs standing for re-election for the first time. The reasons are varied and sometimes personal, but in several there seems to be an element of dissatisfaction with parliamentary life and a sense that their ambitions and interests would benefit from leaving Westminster. Former explorer and army officer Dan Byles leaves a majority of 54 votes in North Warwickshire; Laura Sandys, a pro-European Tory (and therefore a rare bird) and daughter of one of Macmillan’s Cabinet ministers, bids farewell to South Thanet; and perhaps most surprisingly Chris Kelly (often tipped to go far in politics) abandons Dudley South.

A handful of retirements arise because the MP is under a cloud – either from political misjudgements like Aidan Burley (Cannock Chase), deselection by their local party (Anne McIntosh, Thirsk & Malton), or personal misfortunes and misconduct in its varied forms (Brooks Newmark, Mike Hancock, Eric Joyce for instance).

Despite frequent, usually adverse, comment there only a handful of prospective new MPs for safe seats who are ‘keeping it in the family’ – fewer than in 2010. The only case so far of a safe seat going to a noted political family is Aberavon, where Stephen Kinnock (son of Labour leader Neil Kinnock and past MEP Glenys Kinnock) is the Labour candidate. Boris Johnson (Uxbridge & South Ruislip) is of course the brother of Jo Johnson, the current MP for Orpington, and the son of Stanley Johnson, a former MEP. Another political dynast is Victoria Prentis (Banbury), whose father is Tim Boswell, who represented the neighbouring seat of Daventry from 1987 to 2010. Richard Burgon (Leeds East) is nephew of Colin Burgon (MP for Elmet 1997-2010) but a long-term local activist. There are some candidates in marginal seats who have family relationships, like Will Straw (Labour, Rossendale & Darwen) and Peter Keith (Cleethorpes).

REPLACEMENTS IN SAFE SEATS

Conservatives

Safe Conservative seats			Retiring MP	New candidate
Aldridge-Brownhills	WM		Richard Shepherd	(SUSPENDED)
Banbury	SE		Tony Baldry	Victoria Prentis
Bexhill & Battle	SE		Greg Barker	Huw Merriman
Braintree	EE		Brooks Newmark	(SUSPENDED)
Bury St Edmunds	EE		David Ruffley	Jo Churchill
Cambridgeshire South	EE		Andrew Lansley	Heidi Allen
Cambridgeshire South East	EE		Sir James Paice	Lucy Frazer
Charnwood	EM		Stephen Dorrell	
Croydon South	LN		Sir Richard Ottaway	Chris Philp
Hampshire North East	SE		James Arbuthnot	Ranil Jayawardena
Hampshire North West	SE		Sir George Young	Kit Malthouse
Havant	SE		David Willetts	Alan Mak
Hertsmere	EE		James Clappison	Oliver Dowden
Leicestershire South	EM		Andrew Robathan	Alberto Costa
Louth & Horncastle	EM		Sir Peter Tapsell	Victoria Atkins
Richmond (Yorks)	YH		William Hague	Rishi Sunak
Suffolk South	EE		Tim Yeo	James Cartlidge
Thirsk & Malton	YH		Ann McIntosh	Kevin Hollinrake
Tonbridge & Malling	SE		Sir John Stanley	Thomas Tugendhat
Uxbridge & South Ruislip	LN		Sir John Randall	Boris Johnson
Wealden	SE		Charles Hendry	Nusrat Ghani
Worcestershire Mid	WM		Peter Luff	Nigel Huddleston

The outgoing MPs from rock-solid safe Conservative seats comprise 21 men and 1 woman, and all are white British. The new candidates are 12 men and 7 women (three seats still have to select candidates), including four candidates from ethnic minorities, consolidating progress that the party made in widening its representation in 2010. However, the legal profession and the financial sector will continue to be as well-represented as ever.



Heidi ALLEN (Cambridgeshire South), suitably enough for an MP for the hinterland of Cambridge, combines academic scientific knowledge (a degree in astrophysics) with business experience, as managing director of a small but growing manufacturing business (bike paint) and also of larger businesses. She has been an elected member of the council in St Albans, sharing the well-heeled ward of Marshalswick South with a fellow PPC, Seema Kennedy (see below). She is highly regarded for her ability and personality and may go far.



Victoria ATKINS (Louth & Horncastle) is a barrister who has specialised in prosecuting fraud and organised crime. She stood for the Conservatives in the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in 2012 for Gloucestershire. Her background suggests that she will specialise in crime, policing and the legal system.



James CARLIDGE (Suffolk South) is a housing specialist, having founded Share to Buy in 2004 to promote shared ownership and first-time buyers. He sits on the local South Suffolk district council of Babergh.



Jo CHURCHILL (Bury St Edmunds) is a Lincolnshire county councillor for Grantham and was an aspirant in several other seats before being selected for Bury. She is a director of a small business (scaffolding) and a committed campaigner for breast cancer research.



Alberto COSTA (Leicestershire South) is a graduate of Glasgow University and a lawyer who has worked for the Treasury Solicitors. He contested the SNP seat of Angus in 2010.



Oliver DOWDEN (Hertsmere) is one of the few political insider candidates to have secured a safe Conservative seat in this round of selections, although it should be noted that he is a local in Hertsmere. He has been Deputy Chief of Staff to David Cameron in Number 10, and is an experienced figure in Conservative campaign headquarters and in public affairs.



Lucy FRAZER (Cambridgeshire South East) came out on top in a messy selection process (not her fault, but the local party's) – but all ended happily as her rival Heidi Allen was selected for the next-door constituency. Frazer is a high flyer; the second woman to be President of the Cambridge Union, a successful commercial lawyer who became QC at an early age. Frazer has hitherto been Hampstead-based, but Cambridgeshire does not mind non-local candidates, particularly if (like Frazer and Allen) they have 'future star' written all over them.



Nusrat GHANI (Wealden) won an open primary selection for this safe Sussex constituency, having cut her teeth in the Labour stronghold of Birmingham Ladywood in 2010. Her background is in charitable work, the City and the BBC World Service.



Kevin HOLLINRAKE (Thirsk & Malton) will be the successor to deselected MP Anne McIntosh. While many aspiring Tory politicians have some sort of business background, his is deeper than most, having founded an estate agent chain (Hunters) and seen it grow. He is proudly local, from the Yorkshire village of Easingwold.



Nigel HUDDLESTON (Worcestershire Mid) is an amiable family man who contested Luton South in 2010 and has a safer berth in 2015. He has worked in management consultancy and for Google, and also has a long-standing professional interest in the travel industry. He has strong American connections. He may not thank me for saying so, but he is pretty moderate and 'One Nation' in contemporary Tory terms.



Ranil JAYAWARDENA (Hampshire North East) is one of the more locally-rooted of the new candidates, being deputy leader and head of strategy at Basingstoke & Deane council and a member of the council since 2008. His career has been in financial services, for Lloyds Banking Group.



Boris JOHNSON (Uxbridge & South Ruislip) may need little introduction. He has previously served as MP for Henley (2001-08) and Mayor of London (since 2008) and will no doubt feature prominently in the politics of the next Parliament.



Alan MAK (Havant) – like several other Conservative winners –hails from Yorkshire although this Hampshire seat is a secure base for him. He is a young and ambitious politician; his background is as a City of London lawyer and after that in business start-ups and private equity. He identifies as a Thatcherite. He will be the first British MP of Chinese origin (Anna Lo has served in the Northern Ireland Assembly).



Kit MALTHOUSE (Hampshire North West) is a familiar face in London government, although possibly not as familiar as his colleague in Uxbridge. He was elected to Westminster council in 1998 and served for a time as deputy leader, and was elected to the London Assembly as constituency member for West Central in 2008. He was appointed Deputy Mayor for policing in 2008 and for growth and jobs in 2012 and is widely regarded as one of the powers behind the throne in the Johnson administration in London. His proven record in several policy areas should make him an important figure in post-election Conservative politics.



Huw MERRIMAN (Bexhill & Battle) contested North East Derbyshire in 2010 but is fighting a seat closer to his Sussex home this time – as well as being a much better Conservative prospect. He is a district councillor and party activist in neighbouring Wealden. His professional background is in law and business but he has a strong interest in politics and farming.



Chris PHILP (Croydon South) is one of the higher-flying new entrants on the Conservative side, and certainly ‘one to watch’. He won a hitherto safe Labour council ward in 2006 and came within 42 votes of the most mathematically improbable Conservative gain in the 2010 election as candidate in Hampstead & Kilburn. He is a serial entrepreneur and former chairman of the Bow Group.



Victoria PRENTIS (Banbury) is a barrister by profession and has spent most of her legal career working for the government in various capacities, latterly at a senior level. She was head of justice and security at the Treasury Solicitor's Department and appeared for the government at the inquiry into the 7/7 bombings in London in 2005. She is probably in tune with local feeling in the Banbury area in opposing the HS2 proposal.



Rishi SUNAK (Richmond Yorkshire) has a professional background in international business and private equity and a blue-chip educational background at Winchester, Oxford and Stanford. He is an enthusiastic advocate of free markets and has strong affinities for the United States (where he met his wife).



Tom TUGENDHAT (Tonbridge & Malling) is a Middle East and defence expert who has latterly served in the army as military assistant to the Chief of Defence Staff. Having joined the Territorial Army he served in Iraq and Afghanistan. He read theology at Bristol University and learned Arabic in Yemen; he worked as a journalist in Beirut and founded a Lebanese management consultancy. He brings a slight whiff of James Bond to the Conservative benches.

Labour

Safe Labour seats	R		Retiring MP	New candidate
Aberavon	WA		Hywel Francis	Stephen Kinnock
Ashton-under-Lyne	NW		David Heyes	Angela Rayner
Blackburn	NW		Jack Straw	Kate Hollern
Bootle	NW		Joe Benton	Peter Dowd
Bradford South	YH		Gerry Sutcliffe	Judith Cummins
Bristol South	SW		Dawn Primarolo	Karin Smyth
Coventry North East	WM		Bob Ainsworth	Colleen Fletcher
Dulwich & West Norwood	LN		Tessa Jowell	Helen Hayes
Edmonton	LN		Andy Love	
Greenwich & Woolwich	LN		Nick Raynsford	Matthew Pennycook
Gower	WA		Martin Caton	Liz Evans
Holborn & St Pancras	LN		Frank Dobson	Keir Starmer
Leeds East	YH		George Mudie	Richard Burgon
Lewisham Deptford	LN		Dame Joan Ruddock	Vicky Foxcroft
Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney	WA		Dai Havard	Gerald Jones
Neath	WA		Peter Hain	Christina Rees
St Helens North	NW		Dave Watts	
St Helens South & Whiston	NW		Shaun Woodward	Marie Rimmer
Salford & Eccles	NW		Hazel Blears	Rebecca Long-Bailey
Sheffield Brightside & Hillsborough	YH		David Blunkett	Harry Harpham
Sheffield Heeley	YH		Meg Munn	Louise Haigh
Stoke-on-Trent North	WM		Joan Walley	Ruth Smeeth
Swansea East	WA		Sian James	Carolyn Harris
Workington	NW		Tony Cunnigham	
York Central	YH		Hugh Bayley	

Labour's 24 safe seats in England and Wales (Scotland is a rather different environment) coming vacant in 2015 are populated by 17 men and 7 women. The replacement candidates are 7 men, 13 women and four selections still to be made. Somewhat to the party's embarrassment, there are no further BME candidates in safe seats although there are some with strong prospects of making gains from other parties in marginal seats. Eight of these retirees served at some point between 1997 and 2010 as Cabinet Ministers (plus two more in Scotland and one in a marginal seat).

Very few of the new MPs are drawn from the politically well-connected special adviser type; particularly in Wales Labour has selected a lot of local women candidates with 'real world' experience who have come into politics through the trade unions or local authorities.



Richard BURGON (Leeds East) is a trade union lawyer and local campaigner; like many of Labour's new MPs (and a fair few Tories) he was first in his immediate family to go to university. He stands rather to the populist left of the party, describing himself as a socialist.



Peter DOWD (Bootle) is leader of the local authority, Sefton borough, under Labour control for the first time ever since 2012. He won a somewhat scratchy selection contest.



Liz EVANS (Gower) is a local Swansea candidate, born and bred, who has worked in a range of public and private sector jobs and has lately been an elected official in the PCS union.



Colleen FLETCHER (Coventry North East) takes over from Bob Ainsworth. Coventry born and bred, she has been a councillor since 2000 and chairs the Labour Group on the city council.



Vicky FOXCROFT (Lewisham Deptford) has been a member of staff for the Unite union, working particularly on low pay issues, and a local councillor in Lewisham. She led the successful campaign to save Lewisham Hospital's A&E department.



Louise HAIGH (Sheffield Heeley) has local Sheffield origins, and has specialised mostly in coalfield community regeneration projects and campaigns, youth work and child protection, and in corporate social responsibility.



Harry HARPAM (Sheffield Brightside & Hillsborough) follows David Blunkett; like Blunkett he has local government experience, in his case as a councillor since 2004 and deputy leader. He was a striking miner in the 1984/85 strike. He says: "I'm standing to be our MP because time and again people say they don't want politicians who are 'all the same'. I'm an ordinary bloke who used to work down infor the pit for a living."



Carolyn HARRIS (Swansea East), like her colleague Liz Evans in Gower, is a thoroughly local candidate and an ally of outgoing MP Sian James, having managed her constituency office. She is said to be one of the more left-of-centre members of the 2015 intake.



Helen HAYES (Dulwich & West Norwood) was elected councillor in College ward on Southwark Council, a normally Tory ward in the deep south of Dulwich, in 2010. She set up a business at the age of 23 and since then has worked in town planning and architecture, and specialises in those issues, housing and economic development.



Kate HOLLERN (Blackburn) succeeds Jack Straw, and is an established local figure as a Blackburn councillor for 20 years and council leader for 10 years.



Gerald JONES (Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney) is deputy leader of Caerphilly borough council.



Stephen KINNOCK (Aberavon) is the son of the former (1983-92) leader of the Labour Party, Neil Kinnock. Educated at comprehensive schools and Cambridge, he has worked extensively in Europe, for the British Council, and as adviser to international companies on energy and other policies. He is the partner of the Prime Minister of Denmark, Helle Thorning-Schmidt.



Rebecca LONG BAILEY (Salford & Eccles) is a solicitor who has specialised in health care cases, and has been involved in Labour politics in Cheshire. She comes from a working class background and her family roots are around the Salford docklands (now the home of the BBC) where her father worked. She had strong support from Ian Stewart, the mayor of Salford, and other Salford political figures.



Matthew PENNYCOOK (Greenwich & Woolwich) is a Greenwich councillor and a south Londoner in his personal background. His policy interests are in low pay, in-work poverty and international relations.



Angela RAYNER (Ashton-under-Lyne) brings a 'real world' background to parliament; she was a care worker for old people who became interested in trade unionism and politics 10-15 years ago as a result of her experiences. She has recently been a Unison official.



Christina REES (Neath) is a councillor in Bridgend and in her working life is a squash coach. Her ex-husband is former Welsh Secretary Ron Davies.



Marie RIMMER (St Helens South & Whiston) has been a councillor in St Helens for 30 years and was leader of the council for some time. Described by her predecessor Shaun Woodward (for whom she made way in 2001) as a 'fighter', she has entered a not guilty plea to an allegation of assault at a polling station during the Scottish referendum campaign. The case will be heard in March.



Ruth SMEETH (Stoke-on-Trent North) contested the marginal Staffordshire seat of Burton in 2010. She has worked in campaigning, against racism through the Hope Not Hate organisation and for Israel, and is a strong supporter of trade unions.



Karin SMYTH (Bristol South) comes to politics with a background in health management and policy.



Keir STARMER (Holborn & St Pancras) was Director of Public Prosecutions from 2008 to 2013 after an illustrious legal career since being called to the Bar in 1987. He has an extensive background in public and human rights law as well as criminal law. He would seem a near-automatic choice for rapid promotion in a Labour government or shadow ministerial team, particularly in a law-related position.

Other parties

Safe seats for other parties	R		Retiring MP	New candidate
Bath	SW	Lib Dem	Don Foster	Steve Bradley
Hazel Grove	NW	Lib Dem	Sir Andrew Stunell	Lisa Smart
Dwyfor Meirionnydd	WA	Pl Cymru	Elfyn Llwyd	Liz Saville Roberts



Steve BRADLEY (Lib Dem, Bath) is of Northern Ireland origins and came to Bath as a student (he was president of the Student Union). He has worked in marketing for multinational companies.



Liz SAVILLE ROBERTS (Plaid Cymru, Dwyfor Meirionnydd) has been on Gwynedd council since 2004 and works on the development of the Welsh language in further education colleges. She inherits a safe seat and will become Plaid's first woman MP at Westminster.



Lisa SMART (Lib Dem, Hazel Grove) has worked in the financial sector (and stood as a GLA candidate in 2012) but stresses her local credentials. She is currently a charity Chief Executive. The Lib Dems have been embarrassed by their lopsided parliamentary delegation (50 men and 7 women), which she will help address. Lisa Smart is one of the graduates of the Lib Dem Candidate Leadership Programme intended to train and develop parliamentary candidates.

NEW CANDIDATES IN SEATS THAT *COULD* CHANGE HANDS

Marginal and semi-marginal Con seats	R		Retiring MP	New candidate
Boston & Skegness	EM	UKIP target	Mark Simmonds	Matt Warman
Cannock Chase	WM	+Lab target	Aidan Burley*	Amanda Milling
Cardiff North	WA	Lab target	Jonathan Evans*	Craig Williams
Dudley South	WM	+Lab target	Chris Kelly*	Mike Wood
Erewash	EM	+Lab target	Jessica Lee*	Maggie Throup
Hove	SE	Lab target	Mike Weatherley*	Graham Cox
Northampton South	EM	Lab long shot	Brian Binley	David Mackintosh
South Ribble	NW	Lab target	Lorraine Fullbrook*	Seema Kennedy
South Thanet	SE	UKIP target	Laura Sandys*	Craig Mackinlay
North Warwickshire	WM	Lab target	Dan Byles*	Craig Tracey

A * indicates standing down after one term.

Seven men and three women are standing down in the seats, and the overall gender balance is unchanged.



Graham COX (Hove) is a Brighton & Hove City councillor and a retired police officer, latterly serving as superintendent in Hove.



Seema KENNEDY (South Ribble) is a solicitor and runs a property company. Her political interests are in old age, social care and associated issues. She is a councillor in St Albans (for the same ward as Heidi Allen) and contested the safe Labour seat of Ashton-under-Lyne in 2010.



Craig MACKINLAY (Thanet South) is an accountant and local councillor – and former member of UKIP – who is trying to hold the line against Nigel Farage.



David MACKINTOSH (Northampton South) has been leader of Northampton borough, a council the Conservatives gained in 2011. Like his predecessor Brian Binley he therefore has a local focus and has worked on economic development, LEPs and so on.



Amanda MILLING (Cannock Chase) was a councillor in Rossendale, Lancashire before being selected in Cannock and works in market research.



Maggie THROUP (Erewash) contested and narrowly lost Solihull in 2010. She has worked in PR and marketing, and before that as a laboratory scientist.



Craig TRACEY (Warwickshire North) is an insurance broker who has run a firm in Lichfield since 1996, and also runs a small public affairs firm. He now lives in the constituency, and was campaign manager in Tamworth in 2010. He was the West Midlands director of Conservative Way Forward, a Thatcherite grouping.



Matt WARMAN (Boston & Skegness) has been Technology Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, and if elected will bring more knowledge about science and technology than most MPs can muster.



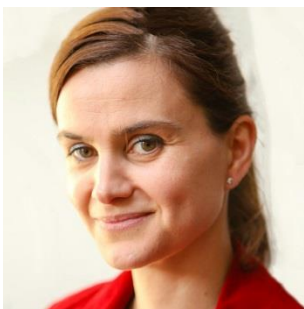
Craig WILLIAMS (Cardiff North) is a Cardiff councillor with a very local focus to his campaign – the second item on his priorities is ‘Fix potholes on our roads’.



Mike WOOD (Dudley South) is a Dudley borough councillor representing Stourbridge East, and his policy interests are education and law and order.

Marginal and semi-marginal Lab seats	R		Retiring MP	New candidate
Southampton Itchen	SE	Con target	John Denham	Rowenna Davis
Great Grimsby	YH	UKIP target	Austin Mitchell	Melanie Onn
Hampstead & Kilburn	LN	3-way	Glenda Jackson	Tulip Siddiq
Batley & Spen	YH	Con long shot	Mike Wood	Jo Cox
Ellesmere Port & Neston	NW	Con long shot	Andrew Miller	Justin Madders

The gender balance shifts dramatically in this group of seats, from 4 men 1 woman, among the retirees, to 4 women 1 man among the probable successors.



Jo COX (Batley & Spen) has local origins in the town of Heckmondwike, and has worked on international aid with campaigns and charities, anti-slavery, and the Labour Women’s Network.



Rowenna DAVIS (Southampton Itchen) is an interesting and engaging candidate, who is trying hard to make up for her non-local origins by immersing herself in community concerns in Southampton. She is a frequent broadcaster, former Southwark councillor for The Lane ward and writer of a sympathetic book about ‘Blue Labour’.



Justin MADDERS (Ellesmere Port & Neston) is opposition leader on Cheshire West & Chester council, representing part of Ellesmere Port; he has worked as an employment lawyer for unions and employees since 1998.



Melanie ONN (Great Grimsby) is local born and bred from a working class family, and is most interested in economic justice issues such as the living wage, and somewhat to the left. Her non-elite credentials are helpful in defending the seat against UKIP.



Tulip SIDDIQ (Hampstead & Kilburn) is a former Camden councillor and Cabinet member; articulate and ambitious, and from a celebrated political family, she has worked solidly to inherit this marginal seat from Glenda Jackson.

Scottish seats vacated by Lab MPs	R		Retiring MP	New candidate
Aberdeen North	SC	SNP target	Frank Doran	Richard Baker
Edinburgh South West	SC	SNP long shot	Alistair Darling	
Glenrothes	SC	SNP target	Lindsay Roy	Melanie Ward
Falkirk	SC	SNP target	Eric Joyce^	Karen Whitefield
Kirkcaldy & Cowdenbeath	SC	Safe Lab	Gordon Brown	
Stirling	SC	SNP target	Anne McGuire	Johanna Boyd

^Eric Joyce sits as an Independent MP.

The outgoing MPs are five men and one woman; while two selections are still to be made, one man and three women are lined up for the chancier-than-usual task of inheriting a Scottish Labour seat.



Richard BAKER (Aberdeen North) has been an MSP since 2003 in North East Scotland, and is a son of the manse.



Johanna BOYD (Stirling) is leader of Stirling council, having previously been in the legal profession. She is a keen advocate of localism and devolution.



Melanie WARD (Glenrothes) has worked and campaigned on many issues including combating poverty and international issues – she lived for three months in Hebron in 2013.



Karen WHITEFIELD (Falkirk) was previously MSP for Airdrie and Shotts from 1999 until the surprise loss of the seat in the SNP landslide of 2011. She is from a working class Lanarkshire background – with Labour politics in her DNA as grand-daughter of Cabinet Minister Margaret Herbison - and was the object of some (sexist and snobbish) criticism in the early days of the Scottish Parliament (a ‘shoal of Karens’). She has proved a political survivor and emerged triumphant after a more than usually disputatious selection process in Falkirk.

Marginal and semi-marginal LD seats	R		Retiring MP	New candidate
Berwick-upon-Tweed	NE	Con target	Sir Alan Beith	Julie Pörksen
Brent Central	LN	Lab target	Sarah Teather	Ibrahim Taguri
Dorset Mid & Poole North	SW	Con target	Annette Brooke	Vikki Slade
Fife North East	SC	SNP long shot	Sir Menzies Campbell	Tim Brett
Gordon	SC	SNP target	Malcolm Bruce	Christine Jardine
Redcar	NE	Lab target	Ian Swales	Josh Mason
Portsmouth South	SE	Con target	Mike Hancock [^]	Gerald Vernon-Jackson
Somerton & Frome	SW	Con target	David Heath	David Rendel
Taunton Deane	SW	Con target	Jeremy Browne	--

[^] Hancock sits as an Independent MP.



Tim BRETT (Fife North East) has sat on Fife council since 2003 and has led the Lib Dem group there since 2012. His professional background is in health and social care.



Christine JARDINE (Gordon) defends the seat against Alex Salmond. She is a journalist turned university lecturer.



Josh MASON (Redcar) is deputy leader of the Lib Dem group on Redcar & Cleveland council.



Julie PÖRKSEN (Berwick upon Tweed) has worked in fair trade agriculture and international development.



David RENDEL (Somerton & Frome) was MP for Newbury in Berkshire from 1993 until 2005, and contested that seat in 2010.



Vikki SLADE (Dorset Mid & North Poole) is a local councillor in Poole and a small business owner.



Ibrahim TAGURI (Brent Central) has worked for the party and for hospice charities.



Gerald VERNON-JACKSON (Portsmouth South) was leader of Portsmouth City Council from 2004 until 2014, having been first elected in 2003. He is a senior Lib Dem in the world of local government, and leader of the party group on the Local Government Association.

RE-TREADS

Several former MPs are hoping to return to Parliament. Fifteen former MPs who lost their seats in the 2010 election are standing again in 2015: twelve Labour, two Lib Dems and one Independent (Dr Richard Taylor of Wyre Forest). All are fighting the constituency in which they stood in 2010, although in several cases the seat they had represented before 2010 was significantly different because of boundary changes. Their chances vary – Andrew Dismore has a Conservative majority of 106 to overcome in Hendon and must be favourite to do it, and Dawn Butler is a near-certainty in Brent Central. However, Anne Snelgrove in Swindon South needs a decent national swing to Labour, and Paul Clark (Gillingham and Rainham) needs a landslide swing of over 9 per cent.

There are four more former MPs standing. Labour's Kerry Pollard is standing again in St Albans, which he represented from 1997 until 2005. The other three have been adopted for different seats. David Rendel, the former Lib Dem MP for Newbury, is defending a slender majority in Somerton & Frome; John Grogan, who retired from Selby in 2010, returns to the political fray as the Labour candidate in the target marginal of Keighley. Last but not least, Boris Johnson is attempting re-entry by fighting the Uxbridge and South Ruislip constituency in succession to Conservative MP Sir John Randall. Uxbridge was once marginal, and was close in 1997, but Johnson should have no trouble there.

The re-tread MPs are mostly former backbenchers, whips and junior ministers; a few were heavily criticised for their expenses in 2009-10 but – as with many in that scandal – the facts of the cases were a lot less dramatic than the headlines suggested. Some of the re-treads are strong local figures, particularly David Drew and Bob Blizzard, while others found careers in the middle ranks of government rudely interrupted by the voters (Mike O'Brien and Dawn Butler). Of the Lib Dem re-treads, if Julia Goldsworthy manages to return to Parliament she would be a formidable presence in a much-diminished party, thanks to her ability and her stint as a Treasury special adviser in 2010-14.

Nobody has done what used to be a fairly common practice and switched from being the recently defeated former MP for a marginal constituency to representing a safe seat. Chris Leslie, John Cryer and Stephen Twigg did this in 2010. Several Conservatives tried this under cover of boundary changes in 1997 before even losing their marginal seats, often to no avail (although David Amess and Peter Bottomley performed the manoeuvre successfully). While Keighley is a better bet for Labour than John Grogan's old seat of Selby, it is a Tory-held marginal; David Rendel is hardly inheriting a safe majority in Somerton & Frome either. Alex Salmond has switched from a safe SNP to a Lib Dem defended marginal.

	Constituency contested in 2015	Pty	Previous term	Majority
Butler, Dawn	Brent Central	Lab	2005-10	LD 1,345 (3.0%)
O'Brien, Mike	North Warwickshire	Lab	1992-2010	Con 54 (0.1%)
Dismore, Andrew	Hendon	Lab	1997-2010	Con 106 (0.2%)
Palmer, Nick	Broxtowe	Lab	1997-2010	Con 389 (0.7%)
Blizzard, Bob	Waveney	Lab	1997-2010	Con 769 (1.5%)
Marris, Rob	Wolverhampton SW	Lab	2001-10	Con 691 (1.7%)
Drew, David	Stroud	Lab	1997-2010	Con 1,299 (2.2%)
Hall, Patrick	Bedford	Lab	1997-2010	Con 1,353 (3.0%)
Ryan, Joan	Enfield North	Lab	1997-2010	Con 1,692 (3.8%)

Keeble, Sally	Northampton North	Lab	1997-2010	Con 1,936 (4.8%)
Snelgrove, Anne	Swindon South	Lab	2005-10	Con 3,544 (7.5%)
Clark, Paul	Gillingham & Rainham	Lab	1997-2010	Con 8,680 (18.6%)
Pollard, Kerry	St Albans	Lab	1997-2005	Con 12,245 (23.2%) (Lab 3 rd)
Younger-Ross, Richard	Newton Abbot	LD	2001-10	Con 523 (1.1%)
Goldsworthy, Julia	Camborne & Redruth	LD	2005-10	Con 66 (0.2%)
Taylor, Richard	Wyre Forest	Ind	2001-10	Con 2,643 (5.2%)
Rendel, David	Somerton & Frome	LD	1993-2005 (for Newbury)	LD 1,817 (3.0%)
Grogan, John	Keighley	Lab	1997-2010 (for Selby)	
Johnson, Boris	Uxbridge & South Ruislip	Con	2001-08 (for Henley)	
Salmond, Alex	Gordon	SNP	1987-2005 (for Banff & Buchan)	

CONCLUSION: ONES TO WATCH

Several of the new MPs will be doughty advocates of their constituencies and effective representatives, but will probably not end up in leadership roles in their parties. Others will probably rise quickly to ministerial positions and be public faces of their parties. It is striking what a high proportion of the best new entrants in each party are women, and the face of politics will continue to be feminised in the 2015 parliament.

- Heidi Allen and Lucy Frazer, the two new Conservative women from Cambridgeshire, are both probable future stars of the parliamentary party. Matt Warman, if he is elected, should also be on the front bench before long, as should Tom Tugendhat. In general, the Conservative intake in the safest seats is of high calibre.
- Keir Starmer is the obvious frontrunner among the Labour intake, although it is well worth watching the careers of Rowenna Davis, Helen Hayes, Stephen Kinnock and Rebecca Long Bailey.
- The Lib Dem intake will be small, but Lisa Smart (and Julia Goldsworthy if she makes it) will come to prominence within it as the party pushes forward female MPs.

CHAPTER 3: THE LABOUR PARTY

THE FIRST FORTY

		R	Maj. %	Lab	Defender	Lad-brokes	LSB
1	Warwickshire North	WM	0.1	Mike O'Brien	Craig Tracey	Lab	Lab
2	Thurrock ◊	EE	0.2	Polly Billington	*Jackie Doyle-Price	UKIP	Lab
3	Hendon	LN	0.2	Andrew Dismore	*Matthew Offord	Lab	Lab
4	Cardiff North ◊	WA	0.4	Mari Williams	Craig Williams	Lab	Lab
5	Sherwood	EM	0.4	Léonie Mathers	*Mark Spencer	Lab	Lab
6	Norwich South ◊	EE	0.7	Clive Lewis	*Simon Wright	Lab	Lab
7	Stockton South	NE	0.7	Louise Baldock	*James Wharton	Lab	Lab
8	Broxtowe ◊	EM	0.7	Nick Palmer	*Anna Soubry	Lab	Lab
9	Lancaster & Fleetwood	NW	0.8	Cat Smith	*Eric Ollerenshaw	Lab	Lab
10	Bradford East ◊	YH	0.9	Imran Hussain	*David Ward	Lab	Lab
11	Amber Valley	EM	1.2	Kevin Gillott	*Nigel Mills	Lab	Lab
12	Waveney ◊	EE	1.5	Bob Blizzard	*Peter Aldous	Lab	Lab
13	Wolverhampton South West	WM	1.7	Rob Marris	*Paul Uppal	Lab	Lab
14	Morecambe & Lunesdale	NW	2.0	Amina Lone	*David Morris	Lab	Con
15	Carlisle	NW	2.0	Lee Sherriff	*John Stephenson	Lab	Lab
16	Stroud	SW	2.2	David Drew	*Neil Carmichael	Lab	Con
17	Weaver Vale	NW	2.3	Julia Tickridge	*Graham Evans	Lab	Lab
18	Lincoln ◊	EM	2.3	Lucy Rigby	*Karl McCartney	Lab	Lab
19	Brighton Pavilion ◊	SE	2.4	Purna Sen	*Caroline Lucas	Green	Green
20	Plymouth Sutton & Devonport	SW	2.6	Luke Pollard	*Oliver Colvile	Lab	Lab
21	Dewsbury	YH	2.8	Paula Sherriff	*Simon Reevell	Lab	Lab
22	Warrington South ◊	NW	2.8	Nick Bent	*David Mowat	Lab	Lab

23	Brent Central	LN	3.0	Dawn Butler	Ibrahim Taguri	Lab	Lab
24	Bedford	EE	3.0	Patrick Hall	*Richard Fuller	Lab	Lab
25	Brighton Kemptown	SE	3.1	Nancy Platts	*Simon Kirby	Lab	Lab
26	Pudsey ◊	YH	3.4	James Hanley	*Stuart Andrew	Lab	Con
27	Brentford & Isleworth	LN	3.6	Ruth Cadbury	*Mary Macleod	Lab	Lab
28	Hove ◊	SE	3.7	Peter Kyle	Geoffrey Cox	Lab	Lab
29	Enfield North	LN	3.8	Joan Ryan	*Nick De Bois	Lab	Lab
30	Hastings & Rye	SE	4.0	Sarah Owen	*Amber Rudd	Lab	Lab
31	Manchester Withington	NW	4.2	Jeff Smith	John Leech	Lab	Lab
32	Burnley	NW	4.3	Julie Cooper	*Gordon Birtwistle	Lab	Lab
33	Ipswich ◊	EE	4.4	David Ellesmere	*Ben Gummer	Lab	Lab
34	Dundee East	SC	4.5	Lesley Brennan	Stewart Hosie	SNP	SNP
35	Dunbartonshire East ◊	SC	4.6	Amanjit Jhund	Jo Swinson	SNP	SNP
36	Halesowen & Rowley Regis	WM	4.6	Stephanie Peacock	*James Morris	Lab	Lab
37	Nuneaton	WM	4.6	Vicky Fowler	*Marcus Jones	Lab	Lab
38	Gloucester ◊	SW	4.8	Sophy Gardner	*Richard Graham	Con	Con
39	Northampton North ◊	EM	4.8	Sally Keeble	*Michael Ellis	Lab	Lab
40	Bury North	NW	5.0	James Frith	*David Nuttall	Lab	Lab

These seats have majorities of up to 5 per cent over Labour, so on uniform national swing (of 2.5 per cent) Labour could win them all while the Conservatives have a national lead of around 2 per cent. However, swing is unlikely to be uniform: we can expect it to be considerably higher in seats Labour needs to win from the Lib Dems, and against Labour in seats contested with the SNP. First time incumbents (marked with a * in the table), if past performance is any guide, are likely to beat the national swing by up to 2 per cent, so if this holds good in 2015 a number of these will be harder to win than the raw figures might suggest – Labour probably needs to do better than a swing of 2.5 per cent to topple incumbents like Ben Gummer (Ipswich). But on the other hand, the conversion of a fairly large proportion of the 2010 Lib Dem vote to Labour will help Labour get above-average swings in seats where there is a large but shallowly established Lib Dem vote, such as Plymouth Sutton & Devonport.

Labour needs to win the bulk of these constituencies in order to be sure of being the largest single party in a hung parliament and therefore, probably, in government. All else being equal, a mere 25 gains from the Conservatives would be enough to overtake them (283 seats to 281 Conservatives) but other things may not be equal. If Labour loses a number to the SNP, and the Conservatives gain some from the Lib Dems, Labour will need a few more gains from somewhere to make up the difference.

The seats are currently 32 Conservative, 6 Lib Dem, 1 SNP and 1 Green. The betting odds in January 2015 suggest that the result in 2015 will be 35 Labour, 2 SNP, 1 Green, 1 UKIP and 1 Conservative. The author's best guesses in each seat are 33 Labour, 4 Conservative, 2 SNP and 1 Green.

In addition to the ones listed here, Labour has already gained the previously Conservative-held marginal seat of Corby in a by-election in 2012.

There are full profiles of constituencies marked with a \diamond in the online appendix.

The candidates elected in this scenario would include 10 're-treads' (past MPs returning to office) and a fairly diverse set of candidates some of whom have long records in local politics (such as Ruth Cadbury and David Ellesmere) and some of them arriving with fairly short political careers, often with strong local credentials (Lee Sherriff, Vicky Fowler). There are a handful of people who have been special advisers (Billington, Bent, Kyle) and one other national party insider (Baldock), but local government and the law are best represented.

Labour is presenting a majority-female slate in the top 40 constituencies (22 women, 18 men), assisted by the use of all-women shortlists in several of them. The defending MPs and candidates are 34 men and 6 women (4 Conservatives and 1 each for Lib Dem and Green), so any swing to Labour will increase women's representation in the House of Commons on top of that which is taking place as a result of retirement and replacement. Unlike the safe seats selecting new candidates, the marginals have a reasonably high proportion of black and minority ethnic candidates, 7 out of the 40 (17.5 per cent) – these are Lewis, Hussain, Lone, Sen, Butler, Owen and Jhund.

The First Forty: candidate profiles



Louise BALDOCK (Stockton South, 7) is a tough, committed candidate with strong local working class credentials. Like several other Labour candidates, she left school without a degree but returned to education in her 20s. The only 'Oxbridge' in her background is the area of Stockton of that name where she worked in management in a company that ran petrol stations. A long time trade unionist, she became active in the Labour Party and worked in Leeds as an assistant to MPs and was a councillor in Liverpool 2006-14, latterly as Chair of Finance. She has also been on the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party. If elected, it is easy to see her being elected Chair of the Parliamentary Party and taking on a role as shop steward for Labour MPs.



Nick BENT (Warrington South, 22) contested the constituency in 2010. He was a Special Adviser to Tessa Jowell at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and otherwise in his working life has been an energy consultant to companies. He lives in the constituency and now works part time at Tutor Trust, a charity he set up that provides individual tuition to disadvantaged young people. He is a committed Christian.



Polly BILLINGTON (Thurrock, 2) was a member of Ed Miliband's leadership election campaign team and after he won she worked in his private office as a special adviser before being selected in Thurrock. She lives in the constituency at Grays. Her background is as a broadcast journalist, working for the BBC in *Newsnight* and *Today*; she was born in London. She is very personable, confident and engaging and is a good match for the constituency in many ways, although the rise of UKIP has put its previous status as one of the more surefire Labour gains into much doubt.



Bob BLIZZARD (Waveney, 12) – see Chapter 2 – was MP for the constituency 1997-2010.



Lesley BRENNAN (Dundee East, 34) is, because of the strength of the SNP in Dundee in particular, probably the least likely of the first 40 to make it to Westminster. This is a shame, as she has a considerable amount to offer as an economist, specialising in the economics of public services, and someone with 'real life' experiences – if she won, she would probably be the first MP to have 'croupier' on her CV. She is a councillor in Dundee.



Dawn BUTLER (Brent Central, 23) – see Chapter 2 - was MP for Brent South 2005-10.



Ruth CADBURY (Brentford and Isleworth, 27) is a senior local politician in the borough of Hounslow, first elected to the council in 1986, and represents Brentford ward. She is a member of the chocolate making family (great granddaughter of the founder) and is a Trustee of the Barrow Cadbury Trust, a philanthropic charity. In Hounslow she has specialised in planning, and also in making the planning system more accessible.



Julie COOPER (Burnley, 32) became leader of Burnley council when Labour regained control in 2012, and stood down in 2014. She has been a Burnley councillor since 2005. She is a teacher, and with her husband formerly owned a small business (a pharmacy). Ideologically mainstream, and interested in urban regeneration.



Andrew DISMORE (Hendon, 3) – see Chapter 2 – was MP for the constituency 1997-2010.



David ELLESMERE (Ipswich, 33) has been leader of Ipswich council since Labour regained control in 2011 and has been leader of the Labour group since 2006. Professionally he is a software developer. Like other council leaders turned candidates, he is a mainstream, practical and hard-working candidate with good local knowledge.



Vicky FOWLER (Nuneaton, 37) is probably tired of people (and search engines) confusing her with Vicki Fowler, who was a fictional character on EastEnders from 1986 to 2004. The real Vicky Fowler is a local politician in Nuneaton, elected to the council in 2011 but who stood down in 2014 to concentrate on the Parliamentary seat. She is a teacher, personal tutor and a keen hockey player.



James FRITH (Bury North, 40) gained the Elton seat on Bury council, from the Conservatives in 2011. He runs a small business working with young people and his political priorities reflect these interests.



Sophy GARDNER (Gloucester, 38) is an interesting candidate. She served in the Royal Air Force for 19 years and retired at the rank of Wing Commander in 2011. She is a veteran of Afghanistan and Iraq. She now runs a small business assisting military charities with their communications. If elected, she would be a natural choice for a defence-related ministerial job although she is keen to emphasise that her abilities are general rather than confined to military matters. Gloucester is a difficult seat but if she wins she will be warmly welcomed at senior levels.



Kevin GILLOTT (Amber Valley, 11) is a local political figure, having been a Derbyshire county councillor since 1997 and deputy leader since Labour regained control of Derbyshire in 2013. He is also responsible for children's services. He also sits on the neighbouring North East Derbyshire district council. Professionally, he has worked in legal services and qualified as a solicitor.



Patrick HALL (Bedford, 24) – see Chapter 2 – was MP for the constituency 1997-2010.



Jamie HANLEY (Pudsey, 26) is a solicitor specialising in industrial negligence cases; from a working class background in the west of Leeds he was the first of his family to go to university. He is locally active, being leader of the Labour group on the Horsforth Town (parish) council. He contested the seat in 2010.



Imran HUSSAIN (Bradford East, 10) is notable as the candidate who lost the Bradford West by-election to George Galloway in 2012 on a massive swing. He has been deputy leader of Bradford council since 2010, and is a non-practising barrister. Politically, he is a moderate party loyalist and is Bradford born and bred from an influential family.



Amanjit JHUND (Dunbartonshire East, 35) was born in Glasgow and is a doctor, specialising in hepatology, and also an entrepreneur who is now working on hospital design and management. Labour's MP for the seat after 1987, Sam Galbraith, is fondly remembered in the area and was a neurosurgeon, so there is a local tradition to uphold. Jhund contested Windsor in 2010.



Sally KEEBLE (Northampton North, 39) – see Chapter 2 – was MP for the constituency 1997-2010.



Peter KYLE (Hove, 27) is a charity worker in the area of youth unemployment and in the 1990s did charitable work for children in war zones. He has Whitehall experience as a Cabinet Office special adviser for a year. He is highly regarded in Labour circles.



Clive LEWIS (Norwich South, 6) is a candidate tipped for success, not only in the constituency election but also in his political career afterwards. He was born in London and grew up on a council estate in Northampton and was active in the National Union of Students. He has lived in Norwich since 2001, working as a BBC television reporter in the East of England and also doing voluntary work.



Amina LONE (Morecambe and Lunesdale, 14) is well-regarded in Labour circles and may go far – if she wins the rather strange and insular seat she is contesting. She is a Manchester city councillor, a single mum, and director of the Social Action and Research Foundation which is a think tank dealing primarily with issues relating to poverty.



Rob MARRIS (Wolverhampton South West, 13) – see Chapter 2 – was MP for the constituency 2001-10.



Léonie MATHERS (Sherwood, 5) is from Hucknall, the largest town in the constituency. She left school at 16 but returned to education in her 20s, taking A Levels and going to Leeds University: ‘I’ve had nothing handed to me on a plate’ she says. She is a friend and ally of Yvette Cooper and Ed Balls, having worked on Ed’s campaign in 2010 when he saw off a strong Conservative challenge.



Mike O'BRIEN (North Warwickshire, 1) – see Chapter 2 – was MP for the constituency 1992-2010.



Sarah OWEN (Hastings and Rye, 30) is currently a member of Lord Sugar's parliamentary staff and has worked on Labour's policy on small business. She has also worked in the NHS at Hastings's Conquest Hospital and as an emergency planner for the London Fire Brigade. She is from Hastings and is active in Chinese for Labour and business links with China (her mother is Malaysian Chinese).



Nick PALMER (Broxtowe, 8) – see Chapter 2 – was MP for the constituency 1997-2010.



Stephanie PEACOCK (Halesowen & Rowley Regis, 36) is a former history teacher and currently an employee of the GMB union. Her main political concern is low pay, and spoke for Labour on the issue on a political broadcast on Channel 4. She has been on the party's National Executive Committee. She grew up and lives in the constituency, another example of the 'local political insider' phenomenon (see also Oliver Dowden, Conservative in Hertsmere, plus Nick Bent and Luke Pollard here).



Nancy PLATTS (Brighton Kemptown, 25) contested Brighton Pavilion in 2010 – while she lost, she surprised many observers by keeping Labour in a competitive second place to the Greens. Professionally, she has worked for a number of charities and campaign groups including the Daycare Trust, which helped inspire the Labour government's Sure Start programme.



Luke POLLARD (Plymouth Sutton and Devonport, 20) has a recent background in the travel industry, working for the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), and maintains that interest. Before that he has worked in various campaigning, communications and charitable roles, including for the Labour Party, Sainsbury's and Cancer Research. He is local in Plymouth, being born there – his father worked in the Royal Navy and the dockyards. He stood in the South West Devon constituency, part of which is in Plymouth, in 2010. He has a considerable social media presence.



Lucy RIGBY (Lincoln, 18) was a high-flying commercial solicitor in her previous career, working for Slaughter & May and the Office of Fair Trading, and before that in The Hague working on the criminal court for war crimes in former Yugoslavia. She was elected to Islington council in 2010 and selected for Lincoln in 2012; she now lives in Lincoln. She is one of the more obvious potential new MPs of ministerial calibre.



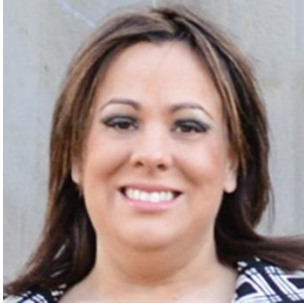
Joan RYAN (Enfield North, 29) – see Chapter 2 – was MP for the constituency 1997-2010.



Purna SEN (Brighton Pavilion, 19) is an interesting candidate – she is currently Deputy Director of the Institute of Public Affairs at the London School of Economics and she has a background of academic research and active engagement in a range of human rights issues including domestic and sexual violence, racial equality and gay rights. She has worked for the Commonwealth Secretariat and Amnesty International.



Lee SHERRIFF (Carlisle, 15) is a local candidate who grew up in Carlisle and has an unpretentious working class background, working in the Jaeger store in the city until 'I was made redundant, with the store I was working in at the time closing due to the recession. Since then I have worked as a support worker in mental health and disability services which have provided me with a valuable insight to the benefits and health system.' She was not very political until 2010. She was elected to Carlisle council in 2012 and her selection, ahead of more traditional candidates, was somewhat contentious. If elected would be Cumbria's first woman MP.



Paula SHERRIFF (Dewsbury, 21) is the younger sister of Lee Sherriff, the candidate for Carlisle. Her career has been in the public services, first as a police employee working in crime management and victim support, and then in dermatology for NHS contractor Virgin Care. She promises to be a full time MP: 'We need Labour MPs who have lived real lives, who have done real jobs, who know what it's like to worry about paying the bills and making the money last until pay day.'



Cat SMITH (Lancaster and Fleetwood, 9) became active in politics when she studied at Lancaster University from 2003, and in this heavily student constituency with a Green presence her profile as an energetic campaigner from the left of the Labour Party is an asset. She would be the sort of able, rebellious MP who might have to choose early on between being a free backbencher and accepting a government job with all the compromises that entails.



Jeff SMITH (Manchester Withington, 31) is a working class local candidate who has been a Labour councillor in Manchester since 1997 for the Old Moat ward within this constituency. He has been head of children's services and since 2011 he has had the poisoned chalice of heading finance and coping with the enormous cuts inflicted on Manchester's budget. He has, like other Labour candidates, a background in education and social housing.



Julia TICKRIDGE (Weaver Vale, 17) worked for ICI for many years, a connection with a constituency that is a centre of the chemical industry, but has also worked in careers guidance and used her language skills. She would be an unusually polyglot MP, speaking German, Italian and French, and probably sought after socially as a wine expert. She was elected to the local authority in 2011. She is down to earth, empathetic and pleasant. She has a particular interest in cystic fibrosis, having cared for her son who has had the condition.



Mari WILLIAMS (Cardiff North, 4) is former Deputy Head teacher and is seeking to represent Cardiff North, the area where she grew up. She notes that her 'career in the public sector has given me experience and perspective of the world outside politics'. She is also an active member of the Fabian Society, and sat on the National Executive until recently. She is a keen cyclist and swimmer. Likeable, intelligent, and a good public speaker, she is likely to quickly rise up the ranks of the Parliamentary Labour Party if she is elected in 2015. The omens look good for her.

THE FRONTLINE FORTY

		R	Maj.	Lab	Defender	Lad-brokes	LSB
41	Kingswood	SW	5.1	Jo McCarron	*Chris Skidmore	Con	Con
42	Erewash	EM	5.2	Catherine Atkinson	Maggie Throup	Lab	Lab
43	Blackpool North & Cleveleys	NW	5.3	Sam Rushworth	*Paul Maynard	Con	Con
44	City of Chester ◊	NW	5.5	Chris Matheson	*Chris White	Lab	Lab
45	Arfon ◊	WA	5.6	Alun Pugh	Hywel Williams	PC	PC
46	Croydon Central	LN	6.0	Sarah Jones	*Gavin Barwell	Lab	Con
47	Worcester	WM	6.1	Joy Squires	*Robin Walker	Tie	Con
48	Keighley ◊	YH	6.2	John Grogan	*Kris Hopkins	Lab	Lab
49	Wirral West ◊	NW	6.2	Margaret Greenwood	*Esther McVey	Con	Lab
50	Cannock Chase ◊	WM	7.0	Janos Toth	Amanda Milling	Lab	Lab
51	Loughborough ◊	EM	7.1	Matthew O'Callaghan	*Nicky Morgan	Con	Con
52	Harrow East	LN	7.1	Uma Kumaran	*Bob Blackman	Con	Con
53	Warwick & Leamington	WM	7.2	Lynnette Kelly	*Chris White	Con	Con
54	Birmingham Yardley ◊	WM	7.3	Jess Phillips	John Hemming	Lab	Lab
55	Swindon South ◊	SW	7.5	Anne Snelgrove	*Robert Buckland	Con	Con
56	Ealing Central & Acton	LN	7.9	Rupa Huq	*Angela Bray	Lab	Lab
57	Pendle ◊	NW	8.0	Azhar Ali	*Andrew Stephenson	Con	Lab
58	Stevenage	EE	8.0	Sharon Taylor	*Stephen McPartland	Con	Lab
59	Elmet & Rothwell	YH	8.1	Veronica King	*Alec Shelbrooke	Con	Con
60	Edinburgh West	SC	8.2	Cameron Day	*Mike Crockart	SNP	Lab
61	Watford ◊	EE	8.2	Matthew Turmaine	*Richard Harrington	Con	Con
62	Carmarthen W & S Pembrokeshire	WA	8.5	Delyth Evans	*Simon Hart	Con	Con
63	Vale of Glamorgan	WA	8.8	Chris Elmore	*Alun Cairns	Con	Con

64	Argyll & Bute ◊	SC	8.9	Mary Galbraith	Alan Reid	SNP	SNP
65	Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale & Twd	SC	9.1	Archy Dryburgh	David Mundell	Con	Con
66	Carmarthen East & Dinefwr	WA	9.2	Calum Higgins	*Jonathan Edwards	-	PC
67	Norwich North ◊	EE	9.2	Jessica Asato	Chloe Smith	Con	Lab
68	High Peak	EM	9.3	Caitlin Bisknell	*Andrew Bingham	Con	Con
69	Milton Keynes South ◊	SE	9.4	Andrew Pakes	*Iain Stewart	Con	Lab
70	Rossendale & Darwen	NW	9.5	Will Straw	*Jake Berry	Con	Con
71	Cleethorpes	YH	9.6	Peter Keith	*Martin Vickers	Con	Con
72	Somerset North East	SW	9.6	Todd Foreman	*Jacob Rees-Mogg	Con	Con
73	Great Yarmouth ◊	EE	9.9	Lara Norris	*Brandon Lewis	UKIP	UKIP
91	Redcar ◊	NE	12.4	Anna Turley	Josh Mason	Lab	Lab
93	Hornsey & Wood Green ◊	LN	12.5	Catherine West	Lynne Featherstone	Lab	Lab
97	Cardiff Central ◊	WA	12.7	Jo Stevens	Jenny Willott	Lab	Lab
103	Cambridge ◊	EE	14.9	Daniel Zeichner	*Julian Huppert	LD	Lab
104	Bermondsey & Old Southwark	LN	19.1	Neil Coyle	Simon Hughes	LD	LD
105	Bristol West	SW	20.5	Thangam Debbonaire	Stephen Williams	LD	LD
106	Leeds North West	YH	26.5	Alex Sobel	Greg Mulholland	LD	LD

These seats have majorities over Labour of between 5 and 10 per cent (i.e. vulnerable to a swing between 2.5 per cent and 5 per cent), or are Lib Dem seats that are vulnerable to Labour on larger but still reasonable swings (Labour would need a significantly larger swing to unseat Nick Clegg in Sheffield Hallam).

These forty seats are the ones that will make a difference between Labour scraping into power and having either a small but workable majority if the SNP does not gain many seats, or else having a choice of parliamentary alliance between the depleted Lib Dems and a large SNP delegation. Labour, at the time of writing, looks unlikely to sweep the lot, and this is probably where the results will be spottiest, with Labour gaining some seats but falling short in others despite similar-sized majorities.

As with the top 40 seats, Labour's slate is majority female (21 women, 19 men). The defending candidates are 33 men and 7 women (two of whom are replacement candidates for MPs who are standing down after a single term). There are four ethnic minority Labour candidates (Ali, Kumaran, Huq and Debbonaire).

The Frontline Forty: candidate profiles



Azhar ALI (Pendle, 57) is a Lancashire County councillor, representing Nelson South division in Pendle since 2013. He is Cabinet member for health and wellbeing. His selection was criticised by the Conservative MP for the seat, Andrew Stephenson, who questioned its integrity. One can expect a needle match in the 2015 election. He is a familiar figure locally, having led the borough council before 2003.



Jessica ASATO (Norwich North, 67) is a force of nature – ambitious, energetic, personable and intelligent. Although fairly young she has held a formidable list of Labour Party related offices, including Chair of the Fabian Society, various roles in the New Labour campaign group *Progress*, and adviser to Tessa Jowell. She is in favour of electoral reform. It would be an astute move if she wins, for Ed Miliband to give her a ministerial job as soon as possible.



Catherine ATKINSON (Erewash, 42) is a barrister resident in the constituency who has a wide-ranging practice including personal injury, employment, criminal fraud and public family cases. She has been based at 9 Gough Square since 2008. She stood as the Labour candidate in the safe Conservative seat of Kensington & Chelsea in 2005 and is originally from west London.



Caitlin BISKNELL (High Peak, 68) is leader of High Peak district council since 2011. Her political base is Buxton, the main town in the seat, which she represents at district and county level. She has been a journalist, press officer and educational manager. She contested the seat in 2010.



Neil COYLE (Bermondsey and Old Southwark, 104) was first elected to Southwark council for Newington ward in the constituency in 2010, gaining the seat from the Lib Dems. He worked in a senior role for the Disability UK charity.



Cameron DAY (Edinburgh West, 60) is a young candidate with a better chance than most in Scottish Labour of gaining a seat. He is an Edinburgh councillor who contested the seat in 2010. He is often known as Cammy and Labour slogans sometimes have to be used carefully here: 'the cost of Cameron day' campaign for instance.



Thangam DEBBAIRE (Bristol West, 105) has worked for 25 years for victims of domestic violence. Before that she was a professional musician.



Archie DRYBURGH (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale, 65) is a former Army soldier and training officer and despite his somewhat aristocratic sounding name comes from a mining family in Fife. He spent 27 years working in a safety capacity for the nuclear industry, but since 2007 has concentrated on his role as a Dumfries and Galloway councillor.



Chris ELMORE (Vale of Glamorgan, 63) has been a Vale of Glamorgan councillor since 2008 and Cabinet member for young people and schools since 2012.



Delyth EVANS (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire, 62) works for a charity helping unemployed women and ex-offenders overcome barriers to employment, for instance by lending them interview clothes. She was a regional Assembly Member for Mid and West Wales from 2000 to 2003 and in the past has worked in the media and as a speechwriter to John Smith, Labour leader 1992-94. She is a first-language Welsh speaker.



Todd FOREMAN (Somerset North East, 72) is a solicitor specialising in banking regulation and the financial sector. He is of American origin, born in Kansas and moved to the UK in 2001, taking UK citizenship in 2006. He was a councillor in Kensington & Chelsea from 2010 to 2014.



Mary GALBRAITH (Argyll and Bute, 64) contested East Dunbartonshire in 2010 and the Argyll & Bute Scottish Parliament seat in 2007. She is originally from rural Kintyre and has worked variously as an English teacher (she is also interested in the Gaelic language), an economist and a business IT consultant.



Margaret GREENWOOD (Wirral West, 49) is a former English teacher turned website designer, and a keen environmentalist and campaigner on the NHS.



John GROGAN (Keighley, 48) – see Chapter 2 – was MP for Selby 1997-2010.



Calum HIGGINS (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr, 66) is a Carmarthenshire councillor representing Tycroes, near Ammanford, and was a trainee barrister when selected.



Rupa HUQ (Ealing Central and Acton, 56) is a senior lecturer based at Kingston University, and the author of a book on the sociology and history of the suburbs. She contested Chesham & Amersham in 2005, was elected to Ealing council in 2010 and was Deputy Mayor for a term. She is amiable but highly focused. Her sister is the television presenter Konni Huq; Rupa also has an interest in music and popular culture.



Sarah JONES (Croydon Central, 46) is a former head of campaigns for the charity Shelter and her working history demonstrates an interest in health, housing and sport. She is a long term local resident and her campaign says: "Sarah will campaign on housing and the NHS, where she has the experience to know what change needs to happen. As a working mum, she will bring a fresh approach to politics and will fight Croydon's corner every step of the way."



Peter KEITH (Cleethorpes, 71) is the husband of the previous Labour MP for the constituency (1997-2010) Shona Mclsaac (former Home Secretary Jacqui Smith jokingly dubbed them the 'Cleethorpes Clintons'). He is a sales director for a publishing company and had been Mclsaac's election agent.



Lynnette KELLY (Warwick and Leamington, 53) was on the city council of neighbouring Coventry for 10 years and was on the board of its Local Enterprise Partnership. She is an academic researcher on questions about refugees and has also worked with refugees from Bosnia in particular.



Veronica KING (Elmet and Rothwell, 59) is of local Leeds origins but has worked for the most part in national voluntary sector organisations and was a key staffer in the Ken Livingstone mayoral campaign in 2012.



Uma KUMARAN (Harrow East, 52) is, like several other Labour aspirants, a particular enthusiast for the NHS and has worked in NHS management and support, and as a ministerial adviser (although not a full Special Adviser). She most recently worked at Islington Council helping them to deliver affordable homes. She is a local candidate – having been born and raised in Harrow, where she continues to be a school governor at a local primary school.



Jo MCCARRON (Kingswood, 41), a resident of Hanham in the constituency, became politically active in community campaigns in the area such as opposition to a proposed new road, and then joined Labour. She is a professional artist, mostly of English landscapes in a somewhat Impressionist style.



Chris MATHESON (City of Chester, 44) is well regarded in Labour circles. He works for Unite, particularly on inward investment to the North West, and lives in Chester.



Lara NORRIS (Great Yarmouth, 73) is a Labour organiser and staffer for MPs, and a bubbly, sociable person. She came to the party via community campaigning in Hemel Hempstead, and is a Unite candidate.



Matthew O'CALLAGHAN (Loughborough, 51) has an exotic background in academia, international development and business. It is quite likely that he is the only former Professor of Animal Nutrition at the University of Costa Rica to seek election to the British parliament. He was latterly head of business development for Fison's Pharmaceuticals based in Loughborough. He has also been on the councils of Leicestershire County (as leader of the Labour Group) and Charnwood District.



Andrew PAKES (Milton Keynes South, 69), originally from the area, contested Milton Keynes North in 2010. He was on Southwark council from 2006 to 2010 and worked in public affairs. He is a past President of the National Union of Students and active in SERA, the Labour-oriented environmental organisation, and the Co-Operative movement.



Jess PHILLIPS (Birmingham Yardley, 54) is a Birmingham city councillor for Longbridge ward (elected 2011). Her working background is in social and respite care and she manages a charity “offering refuge and support to victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, child sexual exploitation and human trafficking.” She has a council role as advocate for victims of crime. Like Jo McCarron, she is a graduate of Labour’s Future Candidates Programme.



Alun PUGH (Arfon, 45) contested the constituency in 2010. He comes from a coal mining family in the Rhondda, and obviously feels strongly about state provided further and higher education which enabled him to become a College Principal. From 1999 to 2007 he was in the Welsh Assembly, first for Clwyd West and then as a regional member in North Wales. He was minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport in the Welsh Cabinet after 2003.



Sam RUSHWORTH (Blackpool North and Cleveleys, 43), originally from Blackpool, was a researcher and tutor at the University of East Anglia in international development before his selection. He has worked in community campaigns in Norfolk and Lancashire.



Anne SNELGROVE (Swindon South, 55) – see chapter 2 – was MP for the constituency 2005-10.



Alex SOBEL (Leeds North West, 106) is a former Labour staffer and activist in anti-racist causes.



Joy SQUIRES (Worcester, 47) comes from a rural working class background in Shropshire and became a university lecturer in Aberystwyth and Wolverhampton, and was involved in a charity called 'Partners for Change' that implemented Sure Start in parts of the West Midlands. She is a Worcester city councillor (her husband also represents the same ward, Arboretum) and chairs the scrutiny committee.



Jo STEVENS (Cardiff Central, 97) is a solicitor for Thompson's, the trade union linked firm which handles a large number of employment law and industrial injury cases.



Will STRAW (Rossendale and Darwen, 70) is the son of former Cabinet Minister Jack Straw, who stands down from neighbouring Blackburn. He is a journalist and think tank contributor (IPPR) and founded the *Left Foot Forward* website.



Sharon TAYLOR (Stevenage, 58) has been leader of Stevenage council since 2006 (she was first elected to the council since 1997). She contested the seat in 2010 after the retirement of its 1997-2010 MP Barbara Follett (who remains influential in Stevenage Labour). Professionally, she is a senior manager with the Hertfordshire police.



Janos TOTH (Cannock Chase, 50) fights this high swing seat, and contested Aldridge-Brownhills in 1997. He has one of the more informative candidate biographies on his website; he has served in management in a number of capacities for public and private sector employers including npower and the Prison Service, and his parents were refugees from oppression in Hungary and Poland.



Anna TURLEY (Redcar, 91) started her career as a civil servant but became a special adviser to David Blunkett and Hilary Armstrong. Her policy interests are local government, equality and social inclusion, and she has worked since government as an IPPR North policy fellow and an adviser to (and on) local government including a spell as Deputy Director of the New Local Government Network. Despite what sounds like a typical 'insider' CV, Anna Turley is a warm and down-to-earth person, with roots in County Durham. The mixture of Whitehall experience, charm and intelligence suggests Turley might be one of the first members of the 2015 intake to get a ministerial job.



Matthew TURMAINE (Watford, 61) is a councillor in Watford and works in broadcast media production, for BBC Worldwide in particular.



Catherine WEST (Hornsey and Wood Green, 93) was leader of neighbouring Islington council from 2010 to 2013. Before becoming leader she worked in welfare and housing, particularly with refugees. She speaks five languages and lived for a year in China. She was born in Australia and has lived in North London since 1998.



Daniel ZEICHNER (Cambridge, 103) came, like many residents, to Cambridge as a student and found himself drawn back to the city, although he was on South Norfolk district council from 1995 to 2003 and contested Mid Norfolk three times in 1997-2005. He works for UNISON. He is a keen constitutional and electoral reformer. He fought Cambridge in 2010.

THE FURTHER TARGETS

		R	Maj.	Lab	Defender	Lad-brokes	LSB
74	Dudley South ◊	WM	10.1	Natasha Millward	Mike Wood	Tie	Lab
75	Dover	SE	10.5	Clair Hawkins	*Charles Elphicke	Con	Con
76	Colne Valley ◊	YH	10.6	Bin Joshi Barr	*Jason McCartney	Con	Con
77	South Ribble	NW	10.8	Veronica Bennett	Seema Kennedy	Con	Con
78	Peterborough	EE	10.8	Lisa Forbes	Stewart Jackson	Con	Con
79	Stafford	WM	10.9	Kate Godfrey	*Jeremy Lefroy	Con	Con
80	Stourbridge	WM	10.9	Peter Lowe	*Margot James	Con	Con
81	Harlow	EE	11.2	Suzy Stride	*Robert Halfon	Con	Con
82	Aberconwy ◊	WA	11.3	Mary Wimbury	*Guto Bebb	Con	Con
83	Ilford North ◊	LN	11.5	Wes Streeting	Lee Scott	Con	Lab
84	Preseli Pembrokeshire	WA	11.6	Paul Miller	Stephen Crabb	Con	Con
85	Brigg & Goole	YH	11.7	Jacky Crawford	*Andrew Percy	Con	Con
86	Crewe & Nantwich	NW	11.8	Adrian Heald	Edward Timpson	Con	Con
87	Bristol North West	SW	12.0	Darren Jones	*Charlotte Leslie	Con	Con
88	Battersea	LN	12.2	Will Martindale	*Jane Ellison	Con	Con
89	Finchley & Golders Green	LN	12.3	Sarah Sackman	*Mike Freer	Con	Con
90	Calder Valley	YH	12.4	Josh Fenton-Glynn	*Craig Whittaker	Con	Con
92	Crawley	SE	12.5	Godfrey Daniel	*Henry Smith	Con	Con
94	Reading West	SE	12.6	Victoria Groulef	*Alok Sharma	Con	Con
95	Rugby	WM	12.6	Claire Edwards	*Mark Pawsey	Con	Con
96	Burton	WM	12.7	Jon Wheale	*Andrew Griffiths	Con	Con
98	Basildon South & East Thurrock	EE	12.9	Mike Le-Surf	*Stephen Metcalfe	Con	Con
99	Tamworth	WM	13.1	Carol Dean	*Chris Pincher	Con	Con

100	Redditch ◊	WM	13.2	Rebecca Blake	*Karen Lumley	Con	Con
101	Chatham & Aylesford	SE	13.9	Tristan Osborne	*Tracey Crouch	Con	Con
102	Swindon North	SW	14.0	Mark Dempsey	*Justin Tomlinson	Con	Con

The 26 target seats where a swing of more than 5 per cent from the Conservatives is required for a Labour victory are, on the basis of the polls being relatively close between the main parties, difficult territory for Labour. If Labour were to achieve a consistent and substantial poll lead during the election, many of these seats would be in play. As it is, there are only two where it seems probable that Labour will win, although in several more there is a significant but less than 50 per cent chance. The movements of opinion involving other parties – the rise of a UKIP vote in 2015 and the collapse of the Lib Dem vote from 2010 – may cause some peculiar outcomes even this far out, although the odds favour the Tories.



Natasha MILLWARD (Dudley South, 74) is the possible beneficiary of a first-term Tory MP retiring and a strong local UKIP organisation. She is of local origins (Gornal) and works as a Unison organiser.



Wes STREETING (Ilford North, 83) is contesting a seat that is undergoing radical demographic change and had a low swing in 2010. He has been President of the National Union of Students and Head of Education at Stonewall, and for PwC, and is closely associated with the *Progress* group. He was elected to Redbridge council in 2010.

CHAPTER 4: THE STEEP PATH TO A CONSERVATIVE MAJORITY

The main Conservative targets from Liberal Democrat

Con/LD target		R	Maj. %	Con challenger	LD defender	Lad-brokes	LSB
1	Solihull ◊	WM	0.3	Julian Knight	Lorely Burt	Con	Con
2	Dorset Mid & Poole North	SW	0.6	Michael Tomlinson	Vikki Slade	Con	Con
3	Wells ◊	SW	1.4	James Heappey	*Tessa Munt	Con	Con
4	St Austell & Newquay	SW	2.8	Steve Double	*Stephen Gilbert	Con	LD
5	Somerton & Frome	SW	3.0	David Warburton	David Rendel	Con	Con
6	Sutton & Cheam ◊	LN	3.4	Paul Scully	Paul Burstow	LD	LD
7	St Ives	SW	3.7	Derek Thomas	Andrew George	LD	LD
8	Chippenham	SW	4.7	Michelle Donelan	*Duncan Hames	Con	Con
9	Cheadle	NW	6.2	Mary Robinson	Mark Hunter	LD	LD
10	Cornwall North	SW	6.4	Scott Mann	Dan Rogerson	LD	LD
12	Eastbourne	SE	6.6	Caroline Ansell	*Stephen Lloyd	LD	LD
14	Taunton Deane ◊	SW	6.9	Rebecca Pow	TBA	Con	Con
15	Berwick-upon-Tweed ◊	NE	7.0	Anne-Marie Trevelyan	Julie Pörksen	Con	Con
16	Eastleigh	SE	7.2	Mims Davies	*Mike Thornton	LD	LD
18	Aberdeenshire West & Kincardine	SC	8.2	Alexander Burnett	Robert Smith	SNP	Con
19	Torbay ◊	SW	8.3	Kevin Foster	Adrian Sanders	LD	LD
20	Cheltenham	SW	9.3	Alex Chalk	Martin Horwood	LD	LD
21	Brecon & Radnorshire	WA	9.6	Chris Davies	Roger Williams	LD	Con
25	Portsmouth South ◊	SE	12.6	Flick Drummond	Gerald Vernon-Jackson	Con	Con

The Conservatives can hope to make some significant gains from the Liberal Democrats. On the basis of national polls the Conservative vote is a few points (perhaps 4-5) down on where it was in 2010, while the Lib Dems have plummeted perhaps 14 points or more. The net outcome is a sizeable swing

of around 5 per cent from Lib Dem to Conservative which should make constituencies where the Tories are less than 10 per cent behind the Lib Dems likely to turn blue.

However, uniform swing rarely applies to Lib Dem seats – in 1979 they held Truro (vulnerable on a 0.4 per cent swing) and lost neighbouring Cornwall North (which needed a swing of 10 per cent). Several of their vulnerable seats have first-term incumbents who will have built up local credibility, which is extremely important for Lib Dems. The pattern of gains and missed targets is likely to be very irregular.

The candidates



Caroline ANSELL (Eastbourne) is a councillor in Eastbourne and a long-term local Conservative activist. She is a teacher and a school inspector. Her principal interests are education, health and infrastructure – she advocates a second runway at Gatwick, for instance.



Alexander BURNETT (Aberdeenshire West and Kincardine) is based in Banchory in the constituency and his main interests are rural employment and sustainable energy. He founded the Long Forest Chalet Resort in the unlikely setting of the hills of Azerbaijan, described (*Daily Mail*, 2001) as ‘the remotest and most improbable holiday resort in the world’ and returned from the country in 2007.



Alex CHALK (Cheltenham) is a barrister and former Hammersmith and Fulham councillor who has returned to his home town and stresses his local credentials (in a town where ‘local’ carries much weight).



Chris DAVIES (Brecon and Radnorshire) is a rural auctioneer and estate agent, and manager of a veterinary practice, who contested the seat in the 2011 Welsh Assembly election and was elected to Powys council in 2012. Like his Powys neighbour Glyn Davies he would be particularly interested in rural affairs.



Mims DAVIES (Eastleigh) is a councillor in Haywards Heath in Mid Sussex, although she has moved to Eastleigh since being selected. She has worked most recently as a civilian employee of the police working on road safety.



Michelle DONELAN (Chippenham) contested Wentworth & Dearne in 2010. She is a long-standing Conservative activist and has the distinction of having addressed the Party Conference at the age of 15 – a year younger than William Hague. She works in marketing, most notably for AETN UK (a broadcast collaboration with Sky) and World Wrestling Entertainment.



Steve DOUBLE (St Austell & Newquay) is director of a local printing and direct mail firm, Bay Mailing, and a former councillor.



Flick DRUMMOND (Portsmouth South) contested the constituency in 2010 and Southampton Itchen in 2005. She has been an insurance broker and Ofsted inspector. She was a Winchester councillor in the 1990s before emigrating to the USA for a time.



Kevin FOSTER (Torbay) is a former Coventry councillor (2004-14); he was deputy leader of the council for two years and cabinet member for city development before Labour gained the council in 2010. He was group leader in opposition. He has returned to his native Devon (his father worked in the Plymouth dockyards). His career has been in the law and as assistant to Philip Bradbourn MEP.



James HEAPPEY (Wells) is a former soldier (serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kenya as well as in Whitehall), and a former parliamentary constituency staff member for Liam Fox. He now describes his professional role as “Experienced project and change manager with a track record of organisational, business process and IT change programmes at the strategic and operational levels. Developed and delivered successful internal and external communications strategies within a large multi-site organisation and in UK politics utilising both conventional and new media.” A career as a speechwriter probably does not beckon.



Julian KNIGHT (Solihull) is a journalist specialising in consumer matters, and Money and Property Editor at the *Independent*. He emphasises his working class background and aspirational qualities: “My life has been about struggling to overcome adversity and it means I understand the sacrifices individuals and families have to make to get on in this world.”



Scott MANN (Cornwall North) is a former deputy leader of the Conservative group on Cornwall Council, and works as a postman.



Rebecca POW (Taunton Deane) is from a Somerset farming family and has worked as a television reporter, scientist and for the National Farmers’ Union in Brussels. She has run a PR business.



Mary ROBINSON (Cheadle) is a former councillor (2007-13) in South Ribble, Lancashire and a small family business owner.



Paul SCULLY (Sutton & Cheam) is a former local councillor, and leader of the Conservative group, in Sutton; he gained Carshalton Central from the Lib Dems in 2006 but lost it in 2010. He was formerly an assistant to Andrew Pelling, the MP for Croydon Central 2005-10. He works in public affairs and set up a firm, Nudge Marketing, with Westfield among its clients. The Sutton Conservatives have often been 'out-localled' by Paul Burstow but have a more local candidate this time.



Derek THOMAS (St Ives), who contested the seat in 2010 and achieved a very high swing, seems to be a fairly left of centre Tory contesting the seat of a left of centre Lib Dem – opposed for instance to 'cuts and privatisation' in the local NHS. He is a local man, a former manager for a charity and runs a small stonemasonry business.



Michael TOMLINSON (Mid Dorset and North Poole) is a barrister who has specialised in local authority and housing work, and has been involved in local Conservative politics since moving to the area in the mid-2000s. He identifies as a Christian.



Anne-Marie TREVELYAN (Berwick-upon-Tweed) contested the seat in 2010. She is an accountant by profession, and is a predominantly local campaigner for rural Northumberland, speaking for upgrading the A1 through the seat and against wind turbines.



David WARBURTON (Somerton and Frome) is a classical musician and entrepreneur, who established a company (The Music Solution) in 1999 to provide downloadable music content. He has also founded companies in residential property and an online platform for independent shops. His election material is local, personal and community based and downplays national Conservative branding and themes: a rebel in the making?

Lesser Conservative targets from Lib Dem

Con/LD target		R	Maj. %	Con challenger	LD defender	Lad-brokes	LSB
11	Norwich South ◊	EE	6.4 (3rd)	Antony Little	*Simon Wright	Lab	Lab
13	Bradford East ◊	YH	6.9 (3rd)	Iftikhar Ahmed	*David Ward	Lab	Lab
17	Argyll & Bute	SC	7.6 (3rd)	Alastair Redman	Alan Reid	SNP	SNP
22	Devon North	SW	11.3	Peter Heaton-Jones	Nick Harvey	Tie	LD
23	Carshalton & Wallington	LN	11.5	Matthew Maxwell-Scott	Tom Brake	LD	LD
24	Berwickshire, Roxburgh /Selkirk	SC	11.6	John Lamont	Michael Moore	LD	LD
26	Edinburgh West	SC	12.7 (3rd)	Lindsay Patterson	*Mike Crockett	SNP	Lab
27	Kingston & Surbiton	LN	13.2	James Berry	Edward Davey	LD	LD
28	Cambridge ◊	EE	13.5	Chamali Fernando	*Julian Huppert	LD	Lab
29	Southport	NW	13.8	Damien Moore	John Pugh	LD	LD
30	Thornbury & Yate	SW	14.8	Luke Hall	Steve Webb	LD	LD

The Conservatives are unlikely to win these seats, either because there are stronger challenges to the local Lib Dems from Labour or SNP, or a large Lib Dem majority. However, if the Liberal Democrats perform particularly poorly a couple of them might slip over (Devon North or Carshalton & Wallington most likely).

The main Conservative targets from Labour

		R	Maj. %	Con challenger	Lab defender	Lad-brokes	LSB
-	Corby	EM	C3.6 (21.8)	Tom Pursglove	*Andy Sawford		Lab
1	Hampstead & Kilburn ◊	LN	0.1	Simon Marcus	Tulip Siddiq	Lab	Lab
2	Bolton West	NW	0.2	Chris Green	*Julie Hilling	Lab	Lab
3	Southampton Itchen ◊	SE	0.4	Royston Smith	Rowenna Davis	Lab	Lab
4	Wirral South	NW	1.3	John Bell	*Alison McGovern	Lab	Lab
5	Derby North ◊	EM	1.4	Amanda Solloway	*Chris Williamson	Lab	Lab
6	Dudley North ◊	WM	1.7	Afzal Amin	Ian Austin	Lab	Lab
7	Great Grimsby ◊	YH	2.2	Marc Jones	Melanie Onn	Lab	Lab

8	Morley & Outwood	YH	2.3	Andrea Jenkyns	Ed Balls	Lab	Lab
9	Telford	WM	2.4	Lucy Allan	David Wright	Lab	Lab
10	Walsall North ◊	WM	2.7	Douglas Hansen-Luke	David Winnick	Lab	Lab
11	Birmingham Edgbaston	WM	3.1	Luke Evans	Gisela Stuart	Lab	Lab
12	Halifax ◊	YH	3.4	Philip Allott	Linda Riordan	Lab	Lab
13	Newcastle-under-Lyme	WM	3.6	Tony Cox	Paul Farrelly	Lab	Lab
14	Middlesbrough S & East Cleveland	NE	3.6	Will Goodhand	*Tom Blenkinsop	Lab	Lab
15	Wakefield	YH	3.6	TBA	Mary Creagh	Lab	Lab
22	Derbyshire North East	EM	5.2	Lee Rowley	Natascha Engel	Lab	Lab
26	Westminster North	LN	5.4	Lindsey Hall	Karen Buck	Lab	Lab
33	Gower	WA	6.4	Byron Davies	Martin Caton	Lab	Lab
35	Birmingham Northfield ◊	WM	6.7	Rachel Maclean	Richard Burden	Lab	Lab

If the Conservatives do manage to win 10 seats from the Liberal Democrats, which is about what can be expected, they would reach 316 constituencies – provided they lost no seats to Labour. If they did this, it would probably be possible to run a minority government with DUP support and negotiated abstentions from the SNP and the Liberal Democrats.

But for an overall majority, they have to start eating into seats which voted Labour in 2010. Given how poor the background was for Labour in 2010, this seems unlikely – added to which, UKIP has made a big impact in several of the constituencies where the Conservatives fell not far short in 2010. They would also need to redeem their 2012 by-election loss of Corby. There is nowhere, as of January 2015, where the Conservatives appear more likely than not to make a gain from Labour, but the most plausible candidate is Southampton Itchen where local elections have been moderately encouraging and Labour loses the accumulated personal vote John Denham has amassed since 1992. There are another couple of high-end London seats where the Conservatives have been campaigning against the mansion tax proposal (Hampstead & Kilburn, Westminster North) and a handful of seats where either long term trends (Gower) or good local elections (Birmingham Northfield) have brought them into targeting range. But it does all look unlikely, and the Conservatives will probably end up losing some seats to Labour and UKIP even if they do reasonably well nationally.

The candidates



Lucy ALLAN (Telford) is an accountant and employment lawyer. She was a Wandsworth councillor from 2006 to 2012 and now lives in Telford.



Philip ALLOTT (Halifax) is a businessman (PR company) and author (of a historical novel reflecting his working class roots among the 'donkeymen' of North Yorkshire) who contested the seat in 2010, Bolton West in 2005 and Brent North in 2001.



Will GOODHAND (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) is a marketing executive with a sense of humour – as he has repeatedly demonstrated as he is best known for exchanging 'a enthusiastic hello peck on the lips' with Christine Hamilton, and an appearance on 'Beauty and the Geek' on Channel 4, under the latter heading.



Byron DAVIES (Gower) was elected a Welsh Assembly member for the South Wales West region in 2011. He was born in the area but worked as a police officer in London for the Metropolitan Police and the National Crime Squad, and has been an adviser to the European Union on combating organised crime and preparing candidate countries for accession.



Luke EVANS (Birmingham Edgbaston) is a General Practitioner in the constituency.



Rachel MACLEAN (Birmingham Northfield) is a local candidate who comes to politics from a publishing business she founded with her husband. She says she “is anything but a career politician, having come into politics later in life, after bringing up her family and experiencing some very tough times as the business went through rocky periods.”



Simon MARCUS (Hampstead & Kilburn) stood in Barking in 2010 and is proud of having beaten Nick Griffin of the BNP for second place to Labour. He is founder of a charity working with troubled and deprived young people in north London and was a member of a panel of inquiry into the 2011 riots. He writes that “My father was an immigrant and an NHS doctor. He and my grandparents grew up in poverty. They taught me never to forget their struggle and about values.” He is probably one of the most persuasive exponents of Iain Duncan Smith style ‘compassionate social conservatism’. He was elected to Camden council in 2012.



Tom PURSGLOVE (Corby) was elected to neighbouring Wellingborough council at the age of 18 in 2007. He is an anti-wind farm campaigner and assistant to Chris Heaton-Harris MP.



Royston SMITH (Southampton Itchen) was leader of Southampton council from 2007 to 2012 (save an interruption for a Lib-Lab coalition in 2008 which he denounced), and a council member since 2000, and contested this constituency in 2010. He is from the populist right of the Conservative Party. He has been an aircraft engineer, including for the RAF, but is now in communications. He has been recognised for heroism with a George Medal, arising from an occasion in 2011 when he wrestled a gunman to the ground on a submarine.

CHAPTER 5: THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

If you look at the national polls, the Lib Dems are doomed. They are down by more than 10 percentage points since the 2010 election and have been wiped out in many areas in local elections. But they argue that their support has held up better where they need to hold parliamentary seats, and there is some evidence for this. Instead of a drop to 20 seats or fewer, most observers expect them to end up with around 30 seats.

Uniform swing is usually least applicable to the Liberal Democrats, because their strength or weakness in a given constituency is often the product of local and personal factors, and the extent of campaigning, rather than national demographic or political trends. It is perfectly possible for the Liberal Democrat national vote to go up but the party to lose seats (as it did in 2010), and vice versa (as happened in 1997). Incumbency is a particularly powerful force for Lib Dem MPs. While they have new MPs in several marginals, and therefore should beat the national trends in seats like Wells and Burnley, they are also more damaged than the other parties when their MPs stand down (as in Taunton Deane and Redcar this time, for instance).

The Lib Dems have tended to win most of their seats from the Conservatives, and the Conservatives are targeting up to 20 Lib Dem held constituencies in an effort to win an overall majority. Many of these seats are in the South West of England, where UKIP is also strong: the Lib Dems can hope for UKIP to ride to the rescue and split the right wing vote in a number of these which looked like certain gains for the Tories – although the Lib Dems will also suffer from the loss of many protest voters to Farage's party. They also have to persuade people who are more sympathetic to Labour or the Greens to stick with them and cast a tactical vote in order to defeat the Conservatives, a harder argument to make than it was before the coalition. In Scotland (where they defend 11 seats) they have a powerful rival in the form of the SNP, which stands to gain most of them.

But the Lib Dems have also, in 2005 and 2010, won a number of seats (some white working class like Redcar, some multi-ethnic inner city like Bradford East) from Labour which they have to defend in very different circumstances in 2015. It was all very well running as a populist, vaguely left wing, opposition to a Labour government, but now they are answerable for a record in government in coalition with the Conservatives. Particularly in the seats they are defending from Labour, there will not be much of a national campaign – they are effectively fighting a large number of by-elections on the same day and will try to separate out the local and personal from the national context. The extent to which they succeed could be very important to the national result. They have some solace in that in many of them (such as Southport, Cheadle and even Chippenham) they have remained ahead in local government elections since 2010.

The main Conservative targets from Liberal Democrat

Con/LD target		R	Maj. %	Con challenger	LD defender	Lad-brokes	LSB
1	Solihull ◊	WM	0.3	Julian Knight	Lorely Burt	Con	Con
2	Dorset Mid & Poole North	SW	0.6	Michael Tomlinson	Vikki Slade	Con	Con
3	Wells ◊	SW	1.4	James Heappey	*Tessa Munt	Con	Con
4	St Austell & Newquay	SW	2.8	Steve Double	*Stephen Gilbert	Con	LD
5	Somerton & Frome	SW	3.0	David Warburton	David Rendel	Con	Con
6	Sutton & Cheam ◊	LN	3.4	Paul Scully	Paul Burstow	LD	LD
7	St Ives	SW	3.7	Derek Thomas	Andrew George	LD	LD
8	Chippenham	SW	4.7	Michelle Donelan	*Duncan Hames	Con	Con
9	Cheadle	NW	6.2	Mary Robinson	Mark Hunter	LD	LD
10	Cornwall North	SW	6.4	Scott Mann	Dan Rogerson	LD	LD
12	Eastbourne	SE	6.6	Caroline Ansell	*Stephen Lloyd	LD	LD
14	Taunton Deane ◊	SW	6.9	Rebecca Pow	TBA	Con	Con
15	Berwick-upon-Tweed ◊	NE	7.0	Anne-Marie Trevelyan	Julie Pörksen	Con	Con
16	Eastleigh	SE	7.2	Mims Davies	*Mike Thornton	LD	LD
18	Aberdeenshire West & Kincardine	SC	8.2	Alexander Burnett	Robert Smith	SNP	Con
19	Torbay ◊	SW	8.3	Kevin Foster	Adrian Sanders	LD	LD
20	Cheltenham	SW	9.3	Alex Chalk	Martin Horwood	LD	LD
21	Brecon & Radnorshire	WA	9.6	Chris Davies	Roger Williams	LD	Con
25	Portsmouth South ◊	SE	12.6	Flick Drummond	Gerald Vernon-Jackson	Con	Con

See Chapter 4 for details on the Conservative candidates in these seats.

Lib Dem targets from Conservative

		R	Maj. %	LD challenger	Con defender	Lad-brokes	LSB
1	Camborne & Redruth ◊	SW	0.2	Julia Goldsworthy	*George Eustice	Con	UKIP
2	Oxford West & Abingdon ◊	SE	0.3	Layla Moran	*Nicola Blackwood	Con	Con
3	Truro & Falmouth	SW	0.9	Simon Rix	*Sarah Newton	Con	Con
4	Newton Abbot ◊	SW	1.1	Richard Younger-Ross	*Anne-Marie Morris	Con	Con
5	Harrogate & Knaresborough	YH	2.0	Helen Flynn	*Andrew Jones	Con	Con
6	Watford ◊	EE	2.6	Dorothy Thornhill	*Richard Harrington	Con	Con
7	Montgomeryshire	WA	3.5	Jane Dodds	*Glyn Davies	Con	Con
8	St Albans	EE	4.4	Sandy Walkington	Anne Main	Con	Con

There have only been two elections ever (1970 and 1955) where the Lib Dems have failed to make any gains at all, and it is certainly possible that they could gain somewhere in 2015.

It is conceivable that the Liberal Democrats might pick off one or two of these seats from the Conservatives, particularly if UKIP polls well in the South West, but none of them can be called probable upsets. The best chances are:



Jane DODDS (Montgomeryshire) is contesting a seat that has lapsed from the Liberals only twice in over a century – in 1979 and then in 2010 when Lembit Öpik crashed to defeat. She therefore stands a chance, depending on how much the result in 2010 was a personal one – although the Conservative gain for the Assembly in 2011 suggests otherwise, and Glyn Davies is a popular MP. Dodds is a child protection social worker and a former councillor in Richmond.



Julia GOLDSWORTHY (Camborne and Redruth) – see Chapter 2 – was MP for Falmouth and Camborne 2005-10.



Layla MORAN (Oxford West and Abingdon) is a physics and maths teacher in Oxford. Her personal background is thoroughly international; she is from a diplomatic family and her mother is a Christian Palestinian from Jerusalem. She is from the rationalist left of the Lib Dems, like her predecessor Evan Harris.



Dorothy THORNHILL (Watford) was elected Mayor of Watford in 2002 and has been re-elected with large majorities ever since. In 2010, on the same day as the General Election, she won a nearly 9,000 majority over the Conservatives in the mayoral election. The Lib Dems have remained dominant in local elections. Libertarian, earthy and popular, Thornhill is their best hope of a parliamentary gain.



Richard YOUNGER-ROSS (Newton Abbot) – see Chapter 2 – was MP for Teignbridge 2001-10.

The Lib Dems also sometimes win seats that do not look promising on the arithmetic of the last election – in 2005 for instance they gained Manchester Withington from Labour and Solihull from the Conservatives, both of which looked like safe seats. The best candidates for such gains this time are a couple of Leicestershire seats where they are locally strong (Bosworth and Harborough) and Maidstone & The Weald, where experienced journalist and interviewer Jasper Gerard is the candidate.

Lib Dem v Labour constituencies

Lab/LD target		R	Maj. %	Lab challenger	LD defender	Lad-brokes	LSB
1	Norwich South ◊	EE	0.7	Clive Lewis	*Simon Wright	Lab	Lab
2	Bradford East ◊	YH	0.9	Imran Hussain	*David Ward	Lab	Lab
3	Brent Central	LN	3.0	Dawn Butler	Ibrahim Taguri	Lab	Lab
4	Manchester Withington	NW	4.2	Jeff Smith	John Leech	Lab	Lab
5	Burnley	NW	4.3	Julie Cooper	*Gordon Birtwistle	Lab	Lab
6	Dunbartonshire East ◊	SC	4.6	Amanjit Jhund	Jo Swinson	SNP	SNP
7	Birmingham Yardley ◊	WM	7.3	Jess Phillips	John Hemming	Lab	Lab
8	Edinburgh West	SC	8.2	Cameron Day	*Mike Crockart	SNP	Lab
9	Argyll & Bute ◊	SC	8.9	Mary Galbraith	Alan Reid	SNP	SNP
10	Redcar ◊	NE	12.4	Anna Turley	Josh Mason	Lab	Lab
12	Hornsey & Wood Green ◊	LN	12.5	Catherine West	Lynne Featherstone	Lab	Lab
13	Cardiff Central	WA	12.7	Jo Stevens	Jenny Willott	Lab	Lab
14	Cambridge ◊	EE	14.9	Daniel Zeichner	*Julian Huppert	LD	Lab
19	Bermondsey & Old Southwark ◊	LN	19.1	Neil Coyle	Simon Hughes	LD	LD
20	Bristol West	SW	20.5	Thangam Debbonaire	Stephen Williams	LD	LD

See Chapter 3 for details on the Labour candidates in these seats.

There is only one remotely realistic Lib Dem target from Labour.

LD/Lab target		R	Maj. %	LD challenger	Lab defender	Lad-brokes	LSB
3	Ashfield ◊	EM	0.4	Jason Zadrozny	*Gloria De Piero	Lab	Lab



Jason ZADROZNY (Ashfield) contested the seat in 2010 and came just short of inflicting a surprise Labour loss comparable to Redcar. He is a local politician who has been elected to Ashfield and Nottinghamshire councils since 2007 for the Sutton-in-Ashfield North ward. He was leader of Ashfield council for a short time prior to 2009.

Lib Dem seats vulnerable to SNP and Plaid Cymru

Nat/LD target		R	Maj. %	SNP or PC challenger	LD defender	Lad-brokes	LSB
1	Argyll and Bute	SC	12.7	TBA	Alan Reid	SNP	SNP
2	Gordon	SC	13.8	Alex Salmond	Christine Jardine	SNP	SNP
3	Ceredigion	WA	21.8	Mike Parker	Mark Williams	LD	LD
4	Inverness Nairn Badenoch Strathspey ◊	SC	22.0	Drew Hendry	Danny Alexander	SNP	SNP
5	Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross	SC	22.2	TBA	John Thurso	SNP	LD
6	Aberdeenshire West & Kincardine	SC	22.7	TBA	Robert Smith	SNP	Con
7	Edinburgh West	SC	22.8	TBA	*Mike Crockart	SNP	Lab
8	Dunbartonshire East	SC	28.1	TBA	Jo Swinson	SNP	SNP
9	North East Fife	SC	30.1	TBA	Tim Brett	SNP	SNP
9	Berwickshire, Roxburgh & Selkirk	SC	36.2	TBA	Michael Moore	LD	LD
9	Ross, Skye & Lochaber	SC	37.5	TBA	Charles Kennedy	LD	LD

The SNP candidate selection process was a lower priority than the 2014 referendum, and the party also has to run its procedures with a vastly expanded membership (from about 25,000 to 100,000 during 2014). A few candidates were already in place but for the most part they are planning to win on the strength of the national party brand rather than well-established local candidates. The Lib Dems, by contrast, will be seeking to localise and personalise their campaigns.



Drew HENDRY (SNP, Inverness etc) has been leader of Highland Council since 2012 and a councillor since 2007. He runs teclan, an ecommerce company.



Mike PARKER (Plaid Cymru, Ceredigion) is an author and broadcaster who has a talent for writing about travel, maps, roads and history. He is English born and moved to Wales in 2000, lives in Ceredigion and has learned Welsh.



Alex SALMOND (SNP, Gordon), First Minister of Scotland 2007-14, represents a similar constituency, Aberdeenshire East, in the Scottish Parliament. From 1987 to 2005 he represented Banff & Buchan in Westminster. An experienced, wily and popular figure he could be a crucial player if a strong SNP delegation is returned.

CHAPTER 6: THE WILD CARDS

The three party system which has been, more or less, in place since 1974 has been under increasing strain during the period since the 2010 election. As the Liberal Democrats have languished in popular esteem during the coalition, other parties have risen up in the polls to challenge the Labour and Conservative parties. It might have looked in 2012 as if two-party politics was on the way back, but by early 2015 it is clear that multi-party politics is a reality, at least in terms of the votes cast.

But how will it translate into seats? And what about Northern Ireland, which might yet end up important in deciding the UK government?

THE UKIP FACTOR

The UK Independence Party has ridden high in the polls since spring 2013, and in autumn 2014 won its first two elections for seats in the House of Commons when two defecting Tories successfully defended their seats. But when a party springs up to contention from next to nothing, it is hard to measure what effect it might have. Will its support be maintained up to the election, or will the bubble burst? And if it does poll well, where will it do so and how will its support be spread? The problem for a party with broad popularity across different classes and regions is that it polls the same everywhere, and 15 per cent or so is not enough to win any seats under the UK electoral system. If it concentrates support, as the Greens did in 2010 in Brighton, it reaps a reward in terms of electing MPs.

A lot of analysis has been done on the contours of the UKIP vote and its potential: the main text on UKIP is Goodwin and Ford's *Revolt on the Right*, which has a list (based on demographic data) of constituencies in order of UKIP potential. For its actual vote, and extent of local organisation, one can consult local and European election results. UKIP came top in about 9 constituencies in the local elections in 2013 and 2014, and considerably more in the European Parliament election in 2014 (although Euro elections are a very poor guide to General Election performance). The hot-spots tend to be seats where there is an ageing, nearly all white population, few students and low skills and wages, in a coastal town in the east or south east of England, retirement resorts, or white working class ex-industrial seats. Its chances of winning may be highest in seats that have been marginal in the recent past, because it is possible to win on a smaller share of the vote and because the electorate has already showed its willingness to change allegiance.

The following are principal seats of UKIP interest plus a few which the party would be in contention if it polls particularly well nationally.

Seat	Status 2010	
Boston & Skegness	Con	Con MP retiring; very high LG and EP vote
Camborne & Redruth	Con	Multi-party marginal
Clacton	Con	Seems safe UKIP seat
Castle Point	Con	Very high EP vote 2014
Dudley North	Lab	
Dudley South	Con	
Eastleigh	LD	Good performance in by-election 2013
Great Grimsby	Lab	Lab MP retiring
Great Yarmouth	Con	Very high local government and EP vote 2014

Penistone & Stocksbridge	Lab	
Plymouth Moor View	Lab	High local government vote 2014
Rochester & Strood	Con	Held in by-election
Rother Valley	Lab	High local government vote 2014
Sittingbourne & Sheppey	Con	
South Thanet	Con	Nigel Farage
Thurrock	Con	Very high local government and EP vote
Walsall North	Lab	
Waveney	Con	High local government vote 2013



Tim AKER (Thurrock) is an MEP for the East of England since the 2014 election and head of policy for UKIP. He has a background in political campaigning for Get Britain Out and the Taxpayers Alliance.



Victoria AYLING (Great Grimsby) was the Conservative candidate who came close to victory in the seat in 2010 but joined UKIP in 2013. She is a Lincolnshire county councillor and has a history of making somewhat hard-line comments about immigration



Nigel FARAGE (South Thanet) is an MEP for the South East since 1999 and is leader of UKIP.



Alan GREY (Great Yarmouth) is a Norfolk county councillor from the town and a local businessman.

THE SNP ENIGMA

The SNP has surged in the polls since the referendum in September 2014, and on the face of it should be able to win the vast majority of constituencies in Scotland, as they did in the 2011 Scottish Parliament election. While the Lib Dems would be hit hard, losing most of their 11 seats, Labour would bear the brunt of the assault because it has more seats to defend (41 out of Scotland's 59). The 2010 election, it should be remembered, was something of a Labour high water mark north of the border.

Political change is rarely quite as dramatic as one expects, and it is more likely that the result will have Labour and the SNP within a few points of each other across Scotland. This would translate into perhaps 10 Labour losses to the SNP. It is difficult to tell which ones they might be, because the majorities of 2010 do not tell us very much about where the SNP vote might appear in 2015 (similar to the UKIP phenomenon in England and Wales). The potential margin of error on the SNP performance is vast, and they have not selected candidates in a large number of constituencies where, nevertheless, they might gain.

It would seem, though, as if some of the more likely SNP gains from Labour are in the constituencies, where only a modest swing is needed:

- Dundee West
- Ochil and South Perthshire
- Stirling

However, some might fall on sudden, massive changes in voting behaviour.

GREENS, RESPECT, PLAID CYMRU, NHS ACTION

There are always a number of constituencies where the contest does not bear much relation to the broader currents of the national election campaign. There are more of them at this election than we are used to, although it should be recalled that Northern Ireland elections have taken place in a separate electoral environment for decades.

Most of the oddball seats listed and profiled here are basically left wing constituencies where there is political competition involving parties to the left of Labour (Greens, Plaid Cymru, Respect), although Holborn & St Pancras is safe Labour and Wyre Forest was once a Conservative inclined major party marginal before going its own way.

If the national result is close, either between Labour and the Conservatives having the most seats, or Labour having a majority or falling short, the outcome in some of these seats may prove crucial.

Seat	Status 2010	
Arfon	Plaid Cymru	Marginal with Labour
Bradford West	Lab	George Galloway won by-election 2012
Brighton Pavilion	Green	Caroline Lucas re-standing
Norwich South	LD	High Green vote, students, also Lab target
Holborn & St Pancras	Lab	Green leader Natalie Bennett standing here
Wyre Forest	Con	Ex-MP Richard Taylor re-standing for NHA
Sheffield Central	Lab	High Green vote, students

NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland politics runs along entirely different lines from those in the rest of the UK – the party system is different and the political issues are usually only tangentially related to the debate in Britain. Northern Ireland is self-governing to a large extent and most issues of domestic policy are decided by its own power-sharing Assembly.

Some elections that are sleepy in the rest of Britain are dramatic in Northern Ireland (like 2001) and vice versa. It is probably safest to assume that there will not be major electoral upheavals in Northern Ireland in 2015. The Democratic Unionist Party dominates representation, winning 8 of the 18 seats in the province in 2010 and hoping to regain its loss in Belfast East this time. As such, it may be an attractive bloc of 8-10 seats to the main British parties if forming a coalition proves tricky. The other large party in Northern Ireland, Sinn Féin, does not take up Westminster seats and its five seats, four of which it will definitely hold, are therefore removed from the calculations (making the effective threshold for a majority government 323 seats rather than 326).

The Social Democratic and Labour Party won three seats in 2010 (the majority nationalist Foyle and South Down seats, plus the liberal Belfast South seat) and its MPs vote with Labour at Westminster. However, holding Belfast South in the face of a DUP challenge will be tricky. The other two seats are occupied by Sylvia Hermon who won North Down as an Independent – she left the Ulster Unionist Party because she did not agree with its alliance with the Conservatives, and tends to vote with Labour. The UUP has no MPs, although it will be targeting Fermanagh & South Tyrone from Sinn Féin and possibly Antrim South from the DUP. The other MP in the province, Naomi Long, is from the Alliance Party, and despite its fraternal links with the Lib Dems she sits on the opposition benches at Westminster.

Seat	Status 2010	
Fermanagh & S Tyrone	Sinn Fein	Most marginal seat in UK
Belfast East	Alliance	Surprise gain in 2010 – DUP target

CHAPTER 7: CONSTITUENCY PROFILES

This chapter consists of profiles of selected constituencies that feature in the chapters discussing the prospects for each party and the candidates who are likely to win. There is not a profile for every constituency of interest, but the selection is intended to reflect a range of possible election outcomes and explore the all-important local detail of the General Election.

How the tables work

SEAT: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	32.4	10.7m	36.1	+3.7	29	
Labour	35.2	8.6m	29.0	-6.2	31	
Lib Dem	22.0	6.8m	23.0	+1.0	13	
UKIP		0.9m	3.1		17	
Majority						
Turnout	61.2		65.1			

The table should be reasonably clear. In the interests of clarity smaller parties are often omitted (full details can be found in many places). The 2005 figures are often (except in Scotland) 'notional' figures based on estimates of how the current constituencies would have voted given the different boundaries that existed in 2005. The estimates are compiled by Michael Thrasher and Colin Rallings in their Media Guide to the New Constituencies.

Labour 'target number' figures are based on that party's target list from all other parties.

The last two columns show recent indicators – local elections for 2013 (in the English counties) and 2014 (London and a lot of other urban areas), and the results of any constituency opinion polling conducted by Lord Ashcroft (to whom any analyst of the current electoral scene owes gratitude) and the publication date. Some places have not had local elections since 2011 and are omitted. In Scotland and Wales Assembly elections are used instead.

UK: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	L	C	C	C	L	L	C	L	L	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C

This indicator shows the history of the seat since 1945. Boundary changes mean that most constituencies are not fully comparable over time and the nearest predecessor is often not an exact match (it may have a different name, too). Lib Dem colours are used, ahistorically, for pre-1992 Liberals and Social Democrats. Note that the 2005 election on the old boundaries, in some cases, had a different winning party from the 'notional' result on new boundaries, e.g. Wirral West, Solihull.

United Kingdom: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	16.4	
Full time student	9.0	
Owner occupied	63.5	
Higher prof/man	10.0	
White British	80.5	

The source for the demographic information is the census 2011 data produced by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). The five measures are included because of their political relevance. Older voters are more inclined to turn out and vote, and more supportive of UKIP and the Conservatives. Constituencies with high student populations which voted Lib Dem in 2010 may be particularly inclined to swing to Labour and/ or Green this time; as well as showing the actual number of students, this figure is also revealing of the broader cultural identity of the area. High numbers of students tend to go alongside public sector professionals and highly educated voters. High levels of owner occupation mean that a constituency may be subject to economic worries (mortgage rates in particular), low levels indicating social and private renting and sensitivity to the 'bedroom tax', market failures and so on. The higher the proportion of people from the upper professional and managerial classes is a bit of shorthand for how 'posh' the constituency is generally. The proportion of white British population may be the biggest determinant of the lot; white voters are much more inclined to support UKIP than others, and BME voters give more support to Labour.

The constituency rank is from 1 to 650, with 1 being the highest proportion of that variable to be found anywhere. Broadly, it is not worth getting very excited about numbers between 100 and 550 here; for instance, the student population of Birmingham Yardley, 8.6 per cent, makes it number 196 and Torbay (5.7 per cent) is 549. But the real outliers like Cambridge and Portsmouth South are notable.

Constituency :the candidates		
Conservative	David Cameron	PM since 2010
Labour	Ed Miliband	
Lib Dem	Nick Clegg	
SNP	Nicola Sturgeon/ Alex Salmond	

Candidates with a chance of winning are listed here if the information is available.

ABERCONWY

Labour target (82) from Conservative

Aberconwy: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	W 2011 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	29.1	10,734	35.8	+6.8	34.0	-
Labour	33.0	7,336	24.5	-8.5	25.7	-
Lib Dem	19.1	5,786	19.3	+0.2	14.2	-
Plaid Cymru	14.0	5,341	17.8	+3.8	26.2	-
UKIP	1.1	632	2.1			-
						-
Majority	Lab 3.9	3,398	Con 11.3		Con 8 (8)	-
Turnout			67.2		45.1	-

Aberconwy: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	C	C	C	C	L	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C

Aberconwy: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	24.2	18
Full time student	6.7	344
Owner occupied	69.7	229
Higher prof/man	7.9	402
White British	95.2	146

Aberconwy is the constituency covering Llandudno, Conwy and a stretch of the North Wales coast to their west. The constituency also extends inland along the Vale of Conwy and includes Betws-y-Coed. It is therefore a mixture of genteel holiday and retirement coast with some quite rugged mountain territory. Labour won the seat in 1950, 1966 and the three Blair elections, but otherwise it has been Conservative – although the Lib Dems came very close in 1992. In the 2011 Welsh Assembly election the Conservatives gained the seat from Plaid Cymru, indicating that this is a multi-party constituency with fluid allegiances. The Conservative incumbent Guto Bebb (a former Plaid Cymru activist) has attracted a share of controversy.

Aberconwy: the candidates		
Conservative	Guto Bebb	MP since 2010
Labour	Mary Wimbury	

ARFON

Labour target from Plaid Cymru

Arfon: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	W 2011 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	16.4	4,416	16.9	+0.5	12.5	-
Labour	33.9	7,928	30.4	-3.5	26.2	-
Lib Dem	15.7	3,666	14.1	-1.7	4.5	-
Plaid Cymru	32.1	9,383	36.0	+3.9	56.7	-
UKIP	1.9	685	2.6			-
						--
Majority	Lab 1.8	1,455	PC 5.6		PC 30.5	-
Turnout			63.3		43.5	-

Arfon: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	15.9	385
Full time student	19.8	34
Owner occupied	62.5	442
Higher prof/man	7.3	460
White British	92.0	(334)

The Arfon constituency is in the far north west of the Welsh mainland, stretching from Bangor (a mostly Labour town) down to Caernarfon (a strongly Plaid Cymru area). The first few actual contests in this newly created constituency, both at Assembly and Westminster level, have been won by Plaid Cymru but it is estimated that Labour would have been very narrowly ahead in 2005 had the seat existed then.

The 2015 contest is a repeat of the 2010 contest between Plaid's Hywel Williams and Labour's Alun Pugh. With the Liberal Democrat vote likely to be up for grabs, and the Welsh Conservative vote seeming to hold steady, it could be a rather close contest. The neighbouring seat, Ynys Mon, was a Labour gain in 2001 (it had been Plaid in 1997), but turns in strong Plaid Cymru majorities in Assembly election.

Arfon: the candidates		
Labour	Alun Pugh	
Plaid Cymru	Hywel Williams	MP since 2001

ARGYLL AND BUTE

SNP target from Lib Dem; Labour target from Lib Dem

Argyll & Bute: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	SP 2011 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	23.5	10,861	24.0	+0.6	18.3	-
Labour	22.4	10,274	22.7	+0.3	15.3	-
Lib Dem	36.5	14,292	31.6	-4.9	12.2	-
SNP	15.5	8,563	18.9	+3.4	50.6	-
						-
Majority	LD 13.0	3,431	LD 7.6		SNP 32	-
Turnout			67.3		53.7	-

2011 result: Argyll & Bute constituency

Argyll & Bute: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	SN	SN	C	C	LD	LD	LD	LD	LD	LD

Argyll & Bute: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	21.9	58
Full time student	5.2	622
Owner occupied	66.5	346
Higher prof/man	7.9	410
White British	95.5	23

Argyll and Bute is a rugged, beautiful and rather remote constituency of long peninsulas, lochs and islands. The principal towns are Helensburgh, by the Clyde, and Oban to the north. The incumbent MP since 2001 is Liberal Democrat Alan Reid, who has a fairly low Westminster profile but is a hard worker in this difficult to represent constituency.

Argyll must count as a four-way marginal. The Liberal Democrats' vote has tanked in Scottish elections and opinion polls, and Alan Reid must need all the personal votes he can gather. The Conservatives have a reasonably strong core vote, and the Labour vote has been edging up over time, and the SNP vote can surge in good elections for the party. They achieved a massive majority in 2011 in the Scottish Parliament constituency covering most of the same territory.

Argyll & Bute: the candidates		
Conservative	Alastair Redman	
Labour	Mary Galbraith	
Lib Dem	Alan Reid	MP since 2001
SNP	TBA	

ASHFIELD

Labour target from Liberal Democrats

Ashfield: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	24.4	10,698	22.2	-2.2	7	-
Labour	48.7	16,239	33.7	-15.0	38	-
Lib Dem	13.8	16,047	33.3	+19.5	29	-
UKIP		933	1.9		10	-
						-
Majority	Lab 24.3	192	Lab 0.4		Lab 9	-
Turnout			62.3			-

Ashfield: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L

Ashfield: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	17.5	267
Full time student	5.4	604
Owner occupied	69.1	246
Higher prof/man	5.8	573
White British	96.2	(120)

Ashfield was a close shave for Labour in 2010. When Geoff Hoon retired, the third-placed Liberal Democrats nearly surged to a surprise victory in this working class Nottinghamshire constituency that had been loyally Labour (except in a 1977 by-election) for decades. This is the heart of D.H. Lawrence country: Sutton in Ashfield, Kirkby in Ashfield and Eastwood.

In some Labour seats where the Lib Dems fell just short in 2010 (such as Sheffield Central) their vote has collapsed since, but they have sustained a reasonable level of support in local elections in Ashfield and the swing from them to Labour between 2010 and 2013 was modest. The Labour MP elected narrowly in 2010, Gloria De Piero, has adapted to the challenge of an unexpectedly marginal seat and has been at the forefront of listening to the electorate and asking 'why do you hate politicians?' in a 2012 roadshow. She faces Jason Zadrozny, her 2010 opponent and Sutton in Ashfield North county councillor, again in the 2015 election. She *should* win with a considerably increased majority.

Ashfield: the candidates		
Labour	Gloria De Piero	MP since 2010
Lib Dem	Jason Zadrozny	

BELFAST EAST

Unionist target from Alliance

Belfast East: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	A 2011 %	Ashcroft %
DUP	49.2	11,306	32.8		44.0	-
UUP	30.1	7,305	21.2		9.7	-
Alliance	12.2	12,839	37.2		26.3	-
SDLP	2.7	817	2.4		0.8	-
Sinn Féin	3.3	365	1.1		3.2	-
						-
	DUP 19.1	1,533	AP 5.4		DUP	-
	58.0		58.5		53.6	-

Belfast East: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
UU	UU	UU	UU	UU	UU	UU	UU	UU	UU	DU	DU	DU	DU	DU	DU	DU	AP

The east of Belfast has long been the Protestant and Unionist heartland in urban Northern Ireland; the constituency contains two powerful symbols of that tradition, the Stormont government buildings and the giant cranes of the Harland and Wolff shipyard. Its political traditions have generally been dominated by Unionism, although its working class electorate sustained a Labour Party vote for many years, and there has been strong competition between the populist DUP and the (former) establishment UUP, and it is the area where Loyalism has had most electoral support. But there is also a strong liberal 'centre' vote for the Alliance Party which nearly won in 1979 and stunned political observers in 2010 by turning out DUP First Minister Peter Robinson on a huge swing, following various scandals.

The DUP are desperate to get the seat back from the Alliance, and are standing one of their rising stars, Gavin Robinson (no relation) – who was a dignified Lord Mayor of Belfast during a difficult year of flag protests, and is one of the more liberal young DUP members. But it will still be a tough and fascinating battle; the Traditional Unionist Voice party won 5.4 per cent in 2010 and now the DUP is the governing establishment its vote may leak to TUV and UUP as well as Alliance.

Belfast East: the candidates		
DUP	Gavin Robinson	
Alliance	Naomi Long	MP since 2010

BERMONDSEY AND OLD SOUTHWARK

Labour target from Liberal Democrats

Bermondsey & Old Southwark: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	13.0	7,638	17.1	+4.2	11	14
Labour	31.6	13,060	29.3	-2.4	36	35
Lib Dem	47.7	21,590	48.4	+0.7	31	36
UKIP	2.1	-	-		9	9
Green	3.0	718	1.6		11	
Majority	LD 16.0	8,530	LD		Lab 5	LD 1
Turnout			57.5			09/2014

Bermondsey & Old Southwark: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	LD	LD	LD	LD	LD	LD	LD

Bermondsey & Old Southwark: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	6.9	645
Full time student	16.6	53
Owner occupied	24.4	648
Higher prof/man	16.6	47
White British	40.7	(605)

The Bermondsey Lib Dems have some formidable advantages. They are defending a large majority, they are well-financed, with a large active membership, and, in Simon Hughes, they have one of Britain's most formidable ward-heeler local politicians at the helm. Hughes has maintained his strength as the constituency has evolved from being an old-fashioned white working class strip of dead dockland to its current mix of hipsters, wealthy professionals and African families. It is an unusual mix – one of the top 5 constituencies for social renting, but also one of the leading constituencies for people working in the financial sector and the professions.

The Liberal Democrats took their first serious knock for decades in the local elections in 2014, losing ten of their 21 seats (they won 26 out of 30 in 2006) and being pegged back to the riverside wards where the Conservatives can get votes in a good year. Labour won the popular vote, and a later Ashcroft poll found them neck and neck. It would be a brave pundit who would predict a Simon Hughes loss, but the coalition changes things and Labour has put together a good local campaign with the help of its enhanced council presence. It is certainly Labour's best shot at the constituency since 1992.

Bermondsey & Old Southwark: the candidates		
Labour	Neil Coyle	
Lib Dem	Simon Hughes	MP since 1983

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED

Conservative target from Liberal Democrats

Berwick-upon-Tweed: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	29.0	14,116	36.7	+7.7	-	33
Labour	18.4	5,061	13.2	-5.2	-	16
Lib Dem	52.6	16,806	43.7	-8.9	-	30
UKIP		1,243			-	17
					-	
Majority	LD 23.6	2,690	LD 7.0		-	Con 3
Turnout			67.0		-	09/2014

Berwick-upon-Tweed: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	LD	LD	LD	LD	LD	LD	LD	LD	LD	LD	

Berwick-upon-Tweed: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	22.1	54
Full time student	4.8	644
Owner occupied	62.7	439
Higher prof/man	8.8	347
White British	97.1	(35)

England's northernmost constituency has the second longest (after the northernmost seat of all, Orkney & Shetland) continuous history of Liberal representation in parliament. Alan Beith won the seat in a by-election in 1973 and has held it ever since, usually by sizeable majorities.

In 2015 Berwick is one of the more difficult constituencies to predict. Beith's forty years of representing the small towns and widely dispersed villages of Berwick has given him a strong personal vote that will not transfer directly to his successor. Liberalism has a history here; before 1945 the seat was normally Liberal and its MPs include the illustrious Edward Grey and William Beveridge, so the seat is more than a personal fiefdom. Adding to the difficulty of prediction, local elections in the area are a poor guide to the parties' standing. The best indicator is probably Lord Ashcroft's poll, which showed the Conservatives narrowly ahead.

The most likely winner is probably the Conservative Anne-Marie Trevelyan, who contested the seat in 2010, but the Liberal Democrats are putting up a strong fight. If she wins, their candidate Julie Pörksen would restore umlauts, unrepresented since the defeat of Lembit Öpik in 2010, to the Commons.

Berwick-upon-Tweed: the candidates		
Conservative	Anne-Marie Trevelyan	
Lib Dem	Julie Pörksen	

BIRMINGHAM NORTHFIELD

Conservative target from Labour

Birmingham Northfield: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	30.4	14,059	33.6	+3.2	37	-
Labour	50.4	16,841	40.3	-10.1	31	-
Lib Dem	12.3	6,550	15.7	+3.3	4	-
UKIP	2.2	1,363	3.3	+1.0	24	-
BNP		2,290	5.5			-
Majority	Lab 20.0	2,782	Lab 6.7		Con 6	-
Turnout			58.6			-

Birmingham Northfield: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	C	C	C	L	L	L	L	L	

Birmingham Northfield: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	15.1	441
Full time student	7.9	229
Owner occupied	56.9	520
Higher prof/man	6.9	489
White British	82.5	493

Northfield is the far south of Birmingham – the suburbs and estates around the Longbridge car production area. The local economy was hard hit by the collapse of MG Rover shortly before the 2005 general election. A small amount of car production has taken place under new Chinese ownership, but Longbridge is a shadow of its former self. The slump started early here.

In the past Northfield has been volatile and prone to high swings, but it was not much above average in 2005 or 2010. The Conservatives often perform reasonably well in local government elections here, and did so in 2014 by winning three out of the four wards in the seat (Kings Norton, Northfield and Weoley), leaving only Longbridge with Labour. They had a slight swing in their favour since 2010, but it is notable that the Tories were ahead on the same day as Labour held the seat in the general election.

Northfield is probably the most attractive Conservative target in Birmingham itself – although Edgbaston is also marginal, Gisela Stuart rebuffed a strong challenge in 2010 and Labour's results in local elections since have been better.

Birmingham Northfield: the candidates		
Conservative	Rachel Maclean	
Labour	Richard Burden	MP since 1992

BIRMINGHAM YARDLEY

Labour target from Liberal Democrats

Birmingham Yardley: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	10.6	7,836	19.2	+8.6	5	12
Labour	34.7	13,160	32.2	-2.5	29	31
Lib Dem	42.0	16,162	39.6	-2.5	45	34
UKIP	1.7	1,190	2.9		15	19
Majority	LD 7.3	3,002	LD		LD 16	LD 3
Turnout			56.5			11/2014

Birmingham Yardley: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	L	L	C	L	L	C	L	L	C	C	C	L	L	L	LD	LD	

Birmingham Yardley: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	13.9	511
Full time student	8.6	196
Owner occupied	59.3	487
Higher prof/man	5.1	607
White British	60.2	(591)

Birmingham Yardley is a wedge of east Birmingham, stretching out from inner city Acock's Green through Yardley and Stechford to the outer estates of Sheldon. It has a large Muslim population (21 per cent) concentrated in the inner city, and suffers from deprivation and high unemployment. Formerly, it was a Conservative/ Labour marginal but the Lib Dems became increasingly active in the 1990s and 2000s and they gained the seat from Labour in 2005.

The Lib Dem machine in Yardley is a formidable operation which when Labour was in power nationally could steamroller to victories with more than 60 per cent of the vote on a regular basis. Since 2010 Labour has fought back in local elections, gaining two of the four wards that make up Yardley and closing the local elections gap down to 9 points (47-38) in 2012, although the Labour share slipped in 2014. The Ashcroft poll, while showing the Lib Dems a bit ahead, found that Yardley voters were quite enthusiastic about Labour being in power nationally. The Lib Dems are still strong locally and this will be another titanic battle in an area where politics can be rough.

Birmingham Yardley: the candidates		
Labour	Jess Phillips	
Lib Dem	John Hemming	MP since 2005

BOSTON AND SKEGNESS

UKIP target from Conservative

Boston & Skegness: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	46.3	21,325	49.5	+3.1	30	-
Labour	31.5	8,899	20.6	-10.9	17	-
Lib Dem	9.5	6,371	14.8	+5.4	0	-
UKIP	9.5	4,081	9.5		40	-
						-
Majority	14.8	12,426	28.9		UKIP 10	-
Turnout			61.2			-

Boston & Skegness: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	

Boston & Skegness: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	21.6	71
Full time student	5.0	63.9
Owner occupied	63.5	416
Higher prof/man	4.7	627
White British	87.9	(200)*

Boston and Skegness is one of the most fertile constituencies for UKIP and very high up the target list – their best prospect for a gain except in seats where there is a defecting MP in situ or Nigel Farage as a candidate. The demographics are extremely propitious, with a high proportion of older voters, few ethnic minorities and a lot of unskilled, low paid workers. An additional factor here is the very high proportion of the population from the 'A10' (the 2004 EU accession states, mostly in Eastern Europe), having gone from next to nothing to 7.5 per cent in the years leading to the 2011 Census. The impact on a rather insular, isolated (28 per cent of people do not have passports, the 13th highest proportion in the UK) seat has been huge.

Politics has also been disrupted by high swings between the two main parties, and local insurgent parties in council elections, breaking up established patterns. UKIP were rampant here in the 2014 Euro elections (winning 51.5 per cent of the vote in Boston). The Conservative majority is large, setting a high threshold for a UKIP win, but it is a serious contest. Former Tory MP Neil Hamilton was interested in selection for UKIP but withdrew. A young local councillor won through at a selection meeting held in a brewery at the end of a somewhat messy process.

Boston & Skegness: the candidates		
Conservative	Matt Warman	
UKIP	Robin Hunter-Clarke	

BRADFORD EAST

Labour target from Liberal Democrats

Bradford East: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	17.4	10,860	26.8	+9.4	8	12
Labour	44.1	13,272	32.8	-11.3	47	45
Lib Dem	29.8	13,637	33.7	+3.9	36	23
UKIP					-	15
Majority	Lab 14.2	365			Lab 10	Lab 22
Turnout			62.1			(6/2014)

Bradford East (and predecessors): constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	C	L	L	L	L	L	L	LD

Bradford East: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	10.3	606
Full time student	9.7	154
Owner occupied	59.3	486
Higher prof/man	4.9	621
White British	49.4	(619)

Labour, in theory, should regain this seat easily. It was a surprise, perhaps freak, Lib Dem gain, and it is an inner urban working class seat, with a large Muslim population, and little love for the coalition. But there are a couple of shadows over Labour's prospects of regaining Bradford East; both are related to the tangled local and international politics of Bradford rather than the national issues about a choice of government. The Lib Dem MP David Ward has been making the most of incumbency and has also made a name for himself as an enemy of Israel to the point of having the (notoriously tolerant) Lib Dem whip suspended for a while – something that may not go down badly with many of his constituents. The other local problem comes from the internal battles of Bradford Labour, which has still not fully come to terms with its shattering and unexpected defeat in the Bradford West by-election in 2012. The candidate defeated then, Imran Hussain, is now standing in East having been shut out of West by an all-women shortlist.

Labour has led in the local elections here, although the Lib Dems have been resilient in the northern, more suburban wards of the constituency such as Idle & Thackley and Respect proved a challenge at their high point in 2012 in wards such as Little Horton. There is always something going on in Bradford politics.

Bradford East: the candidates		
Labour	Imran Hussain	
Lib Dem	David Ward	MP since 2010

BRADFORD WEST

Labour target from Respect

Brighton Pavilion: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	2012	2012 %	LG 2014 %
Conservative	31.4	12,638	31.2	2,746	8.4	12
Labour	39.7	18,401	45.4	8,201	25.0	61
Lib Dem	19.0	4,732	11.7	1,505	4.6	3
UKIP		812	2.0	1,085	3.3	4
Respect		1,245	3.1	18,341	55.9	12
Majority	Lab 8.3	5,763	Lab 14.2	10,140	R 30.9	Lab 39
Turnout			64.9		50.8	

Bradford West: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
			C	C	C	L	C	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L

Bradford West: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	9.4	621
Full time student	16.4	54
Owner occupied	56.1	530
Higher prof/man	4.9	619
White British	31.5	(640)

The Bradford West by-election in 2012 was one of the most sensational by-election results in British electoral history. Coming from nearly nowhere, the Respect candidate (former Glasgow and London MP George Galloway) gained the seat from Labour on a massive swing and a tide of enthusiasm. Bradford West is a most unusual political environment – it is one of the youngest, most deprived and above all most Muslim constituencies in the country – but in its rejection of the main parties in favour of a populist alternative it was actually leading the way.

During 2013 and 2014 it seemed that Labour were bound to regain the seat; Galloway was uncertain to stand again and toyed with the London mayoral election, and Bradford Respect splintered, with all the councillors falling out with Galloway. Labour won the 2014 council elections by miles. But Galloway is back in the fray, mainstream politics still unpopular, and Labour has had candidate troubles. An All Women Shortlist was imposed in a bid to overcome the ‘biraderi’ patronage networks that have been power brokers in Bradford, but so far no selection has taken place and there are no obvious female candidates waiting in the wings.

Bradford West: the candidates		
Labour		
Respect	George Galloway	MP since 2012

BRIGHTON PAVILION

Labour target from Green

Brighton Pavilion: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative					-	18
Labour					-	33
Lib Dem					-	5
UKIP					-	9
Green					-	32
					--	
Majority					-	Lab 1
Turnout					-	

Brighton Pavilion: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	G	

Brighton Pavilion: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	10.3	607
Full time student	20.8	27
Owner occupied	53.5	557
Higher prof/man	12.5	12.5
White British	80.0	(452)

Brighton Pavilion produced a historic result in 2010 – the first Parliamentary victory for the Green Party. The constituency is an exotic one. Brighton has changed rapidly over the last few decades, rather like some middle class areas of inner London, and the resort is now a centre of gay, alternative, radical and ecological culture. Just one indicator of its environment is that it is the most atheist constituency in Britain, with 48 per cent professing no religion. Before the 1980s it had been a safe Conservative seat; while there are still Tories here, particularly in the northern suburbs, they are hardly in the contest.

In a choice of government, Pavilion would vote Labour by miles, but its choice of local MP is more complex – Caroline Lucas has been an effective MP and many on the left like the fact that a Green voice is heard at Westminster. However, the Greens won minority control of Brighton & Hove council in 2011 and most observers think they have made a hash of running it. Their unpopularity at a local level may rub off on Lucas, or alternatively voters might engage in huge ticket-splitting in May 2015, for Lucas as MP and Labour councillors.

Brighton Pavilion: the candidates		
Labour	Purna Sen	
Green	Caroline Lucas	MP since 2010

BROXTOWE

Labour target (8) from Conservative

Broxtowe: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	37.3	20,585	39.0	+1.8	27	30
Labour	41.7	20,196	38.3	-3.4	28	39
Lib Dem	16.1	8,907	16.9	+0.8	20	7
UKIP	1.4	1,194	2.3		17	18
Majority	Lab 4.4	389	Con 0.7		Lab 1	Lab 9
Turnout			73.2			07/2014

Broxtowe: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	C	C	C	C	C	L	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C

Broxtowe: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	18.2	224
Full time student	8.8	180
Owner occupied	73.5	106
Higher prof/man	13.2	127
White British	88.4	(398)

Broxtowe is a narrow strip of Nottinghamshire between Nottingham city and the Derbyshire border. It is centred on the town of Beeston (which gave the seat its name from 1974 to 1983). It also includes other suburbs such as Stapleton and Kimberley, and Trowell by the M1. Nick Palmer gained the seat in 1997 and represented it until Labour lost the seat in 2010. He is trying to win it back in 2015. Demographically, Broxtowe is fairly near the national averages, and it is politically very marginal. In local elections the Liberal Democrats are surprisingly strong, particularly in the north of the seat, but this does not seem to translate into general elections.

Except in 1997 Broxtowe seems to be a low-swing seat. Anna Soubry has gained profile since 2010, and Labour had a very narrow lead in the 2013 county elections, suggesting that it is a tough fight the party cannot be complacent about even if the odds are in their favour.

Broxtowe: the candidates		
Conservative	Anna Soubry	MP since 2010
Labour	Nick Palmer	MP 1997-2010

CAMBORNE AND REDRUTH

Labour target from Conservative; Lib Dem target from Conservative; UKIP target

Camborne & Redruth: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	25.6	15,969	37.6	+12.0	17	-
Labour	28.8	6,945	16.3	-12.4	21	-
Lib Dem	35.8	15,903	37.4	+1.6	2	-
UKIP	4.8	2,152	5.1		24	-
						-
Majority	LD 7.0	66	Con 0.2		UKIP 3	-
Turnout			66.4			-

Camborne & Redruth: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
C	L	L	L	L	L	L	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	LD	C

Camborne & Redruth: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	20.4	121
Full time student	7.8	232
Owner occupied	70.2	213
Higher prof/man	6.3	542
White British	95.6	78

Camborne and Redruth (including Hayle) is a strange constituency. It is unusual for Cornwall in having a history of Labour strength, and the two main towns are also of industrial and mining heritage rather than tourism or fishing. It also produces odd election results, with frequent reshuffling of the three main parties. Labour came from first to third in 1997, and then the Conservatives repeated the trick in 2010. The Lib Dem loss in 2010 was one of their more unexpected setbacks, although defeated MP Julia Goldsworthy bounced back as a Treasury special adviser and is contesting the constituency again in 2015.

Conservative MP George Eustice is one of the more Eurosceptic Conservatives – his election literature reminds the rather anti-EU voters of this traditional Cornish seat that he stood as a UKIP MEP candidate in 1999. But he still faces something of a threat from UKIP, particularly in a seat where the vote is so split between several parties. The last time any candidate polled more than 40 per cent was in 1987. The future will see more close and confusing contests in England's second to last constituency.

Camborne & Redruth: the candidates		
Conservative	George Eustice	MP since 2010
Labour	Michael Foster	
Lib Dem	Julia Goldsworthy	MP 2005-10
UKIP	Robert Smith	

CAMBRIDGE

Labour target from Liberal Democrats

Cambridge: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	17.3	12,829	25.6	+8.3	14	19
Labour	32.5	12,174	24.3	-8.2	39	33
Lib Dem	44.8	19,621	39.1	-5.6	28	32
UKIP	1.4	1,195	2.4		1	7
Green	2.9	3,804	7.6		15	
Majority	LD 12.3	6,792	LD 13.5		Lab 12	Lab 1
Turnout			65.0			(9/2014)

Cambridge: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	C	C	C	C	C	L	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	LD	LD

Cambridge: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	11.5	580
Full time student	27.5	9
Owner occupied	46.5	599
Higher prof/man	18.0	21
White British	82.6	(516)

In some ways Cambridge lives up to its stereotypes – a liberal, intellectual city with a very high proportion of students and young people living among a large number of scientific, educational and professional workers in beautiful surroundings. Its recent voting behaviour does suggest this – a Labour loss to the Lib Dems after Iraq and tuition fees in 2005, and heavy Lib Dem losses to Labour since the coalition and the trebling of tuition fees. But there is a traditional working class side to Cambridge, particularly in the eastern council-built estates.

Labour is now on top in both components – the outer estates were reclaimed in 2011, and the party has continued to advance into collegiate territory in 2014 (gaining Market ward for only the second time since 1973). The Greens poll reasonably well but do not seem to be growing and have not established a council base. Cambridge Lib Dems are well-organised and well-resourced and have a first term incumbent MP in Julian Huppert. It will, as the Ashcroft poll indicates, be a tough fight.

UKIP are not much of a player in Cambridge; despite this, one of their most articulate and persuasive candidates, Patrick O'Flynn (*Express* journalist turned MEP) is standing here.

Cambridge: the candidates		
Labour	Daniel Zeichner	
Lib Dem	Julian Huppert	MP since 2010

CANNOCK CHASE

Labour target (50) from Conservative

Cannock Chase: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	30.0	18,271	40.1	+10.1	24	27
Labour	51.0	15,076	33.1	-17.9	35	32
Lib Dem	14.0	7,732	17.0	+3.0	6	8
UKIP	5.0	1,580	3.5		33	30
Majority	Lab 21.0	3,195	Con 7.0		Lab 2 (11)	Lab 2 (5)
Turnout			61.2			11/2014

Cannock Chase: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	C	L	L	L	C	C	L	L	L	L	C

Cannock Chase: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	16.1	374
Full time student	6.0	474
Owner occupied	69.1	245
Higher prof/man	6.5	528
White British	96.5	157

Labour's loss of Cannock Chase, on the retirement of Tony Wright in 2010, was one of the party's worst results in the country. What had seemed a reasonably safe seat ended up with a Conservative majority of over 3,000 votes after a 14 per cent swing. It was not the first time that Cannock had produced an unpleasant surprise for Labour – the seat ejected Arts Minister Jennie Lee in 1970 and went Tory again in 1983 and 1987, despite its working class industrial and ex-mining nature. But the 2010 result was a bitter blow.

For a while, Cannock Chase looked an easy Labour target because of the mishaps of its Tory MP Aidan Burley, but Burley is not standing again, and the UKIP vote has grown strongly in this working class Staffordshire constituency in 2013 and 2014. Judging by polls and local elections, Cannock may produce another bizarre result, with the Conservatives looking as if they are relegated to third place while Labour and UKIP fight a close battle.

Cannock Chase: the candidates		
Conservative	Amanda Milling	
Labour	Janos Toth	
UKIP	Grahame Wiggin	

CARDIFF NORTH

Labour target (4) from Conservative

Cardiff North: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	W 2011 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	36.5	17,860	37.5	+1.0	42.4	30
Labour	39.0	17,666	37.1	-1.9	47.6	41
Lib Dem	18.7	8,724	18.3	-0.4	4.6	6
Plaid Cymru	4.3	1,588	3.3		5.4	7
UKIP	1.2	1,130	2.4		-	12
					-	
Majority	Lab 2.5		Con 0.4		Lab 5.2	Lab 11
Turnout					51.9	

Cardiff North: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C

Cardiff North: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	16.5	341
Full time student	12.8	86
Owner occupied	74.9	71
Higher prof/man	15.1	74
White British	87.8	(416)

Cardiff North consists of a belt of suburbs in the north of the Welsh capital, lying either side of the M4 motorway. Most of the population is to the north west of the city centre, around Whitchurch and Llanishen, but it stretches round to Pontprennau in the east. Labour are strongest in the Llandaff North ward in the west of the constituency, but many of the wards are marginal and returned split delegations in the 2012 Cardiff council elections at which Labour surged to a majority.

Historically, the seat has tended to be Conservative in most years but Labour won the seat in 1997 and lost it only narrowly on a tiny swing in 2010. Former MP Julie Morgan regained the Assembly seat, which the party lost in 2007, for Labour in 2011. With a strong candidate in Mari Williams, and the incumbent Conservative MP Jonathan Evans standing down, Cardiff North is a promising Labour target despite (or perhaps because of) its high-end demographics.

Cardiff North: the candidates		
Conservative	Craig Williams	
Labour	Mari Williams	

CASTLE POINT

UKIP target from Conservative

Castle Point: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	48.3	19,806	44.0	-4.2	33	-
Labour	30.4	6,609	14.7	-15.6	13	-
Lib Dem	10.3	4,232	9.4	-0.9	2	-
UKIP/ Spink	7.5	12,174	27.0		34	-
						-
Majority	Con 17.9	7,632	Con 17.0		UKIP 1	-
Turnout			66.9			-

Castle Point: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	C	C	C

Castle Point: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	21.6	72
Full time student	5.2	621
Owner occupied	82.6	6
Higher prof/man	7.8	41.6
White British	96.9	(233)

Castle Point is a thoroughly strange and volatile political environment. It is in south Essex, based on Canvey Island and its mainland neighbour Benfleet. Labour gained the seat in 1997, but it was one of the party's rare losses in 2001. The MP for the seat from 1992 to 2010 (except the 1997-2001 Labour interlude) was Bob Spink, but he eventually left the Conservative Party, flirted with UKIP and then contested the 2010 as an independent 'Green Belt' candidate, not part of UKIP but with mutual endorsement; however, the new Conservative candidate Rebecca Harris prevailed.

Castle Point remains on the UKIP target list and the party won 47.8 per cent of the vote in the Euro elections here in 2014 (fourth highest in the country); the local election figures probably do not do them justice as there is an active local party on Canvey Island called the Canvey Island Independence Party. We shall see which Independence happens first.

Castle Point: the candidates		
Conservative	Rebecca Harris	MP since 2010
UKIP	Jamie Huntman	

CITY OF CHESTER

Labour target (44) from Conservative

City of Chester: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	36.8	18,995	40.6	+3.8	-	36
Labour	39.0	16,412	35.1	-3.9	-	37
Lib Dem	21.8	8,930	19.1	-2.7	-	7
UKIP	1.7	1,225	2.6		-	15
					-	
Majority	Lab 2.2	2,583	Con 5.5		-	Lab 1
Turnout			67.9		-	11/2014

City of Chester: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C

City of Chester: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	17.9	241
Full time student	11.2	117
Owner occupied	63.6	414
Higher prof/man	13.2	128
White British	91.5	291

While Labour had not won Chester prior to 1997, the constituency is a bit of a demographic microcosm of England (slightly more educated and professional than the median, but otherwise pretty close). It is in the north west, but Cheshire is the part of the north which is closest, geographically and attitudinally, to southern England. It is also a border town – one end of Chester City's football ground is in Wales.

Chester's internal political configuration is also that of a stereotypical urban marginal – a large council-built estate at Blacon is the best Labour area, and the party also wins the inner areas, but there are marginal suburbs like Upton and safer Conservative wards like Handbridge Park in the south of the town, and a few villages. Labour were still lagging at the time of the 2011 council elections, but Chester's status as a key target can be in no doubt. Their candidate Chris Matheson is highly regarded as a good campaigner and a possible candidate for promotion in government.

City of Chester: the candidates		
Conservative	Stephen Mosley	MP since 2010
Labour	Chris Matheson	

CLACTON

UKIP defence

Clacton: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change	2014 by %	Change
Conservative	44.4	22,867	53.0	+8.6	24.6	-28.4
Labour	35.9	10,799	25.0	-10.9	11.2	-13.8
Lib Dem	13.5	5,577	12.9	-0.6	1.4	-11.5
UKIP	4.6	-	-		59.7	-
Majority	Con 8.5	12,068	Con 28.0		UKIP 35.1	
Turnout			64.2		51.0	

Clacton: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	C	C

Clacton: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	30.2	2
Full time student	5.2	619
Owner occupied	73.5	107
Higher prof/man	4.9	616
White British	95.2	(186)

In a by-election on 9 October 2014, Douglas Carswell became the first MP elected under UKIP colours having resigned as a Conservative and tested the views of his electorate. The response was overwhelmingly positive; not only is Carswell personally popular but Clacton is also the most fertile seat in the country for his new party according to UKIP scholars Goodwin and Ford. The scale of the Carswell majority in the by-election is sufficiently intimidating for the Conservatives not to put much effort into unseating him in the general election, although the majority should fall to more modest levels then. Giles Watling, the brave Conservative candidate in the by-election, is having another go. It is strange to recall that this seat was Labour at that party's high tide in 1997 and 2001.

Clacton: the candidates		
Conservative	Giles Watling	
UKIP	Douglas Carswell	MP since 2005

COLNE VALLEY

Labour target from Conservative; Lib Dem target from Conservative

Colne Valley: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	32.9	20,440	37.0	+4.1	24	-
Labour	35.4	14,589	26.4	-9.0	25	-
Lib Dem	24.5	15,603	28.2	+3.7	23	-
UKIP		1,163	2.1		10	-
						-
Majority	Lab 2.5	4,837	Con 8.8		Lab 1	-
Turnout			69.1			-

Colne Valley: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	L	L	L	L	LD	L	LD	LD	LD	LD	C	C	L	L	L	C	

Colne Valley: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	16.1	373
Full time student	6.9	304
Owner occupied	73.2	114
Higher prof/man	11.4	194
White British	85.3	472

Colne Valley is a peculiar constituency on the edge of West Yorkshire. It combines the western suburbs of Huddersfield and some picture postcard rural territory along the Colne and Holme valleys (such as Holmfirth of *Last of the Summer Wine* fame) and was the only seat Labour lost in the 1966 election, to Liberal Richard Wainwright. The Conservatives were squeezed but recovered – with the help of boundary changes – to gain the seat in 1987.

In an even year, Colne Valley is probably now a Conservative-inclined marginal, but Labour cannot be ruled out despite their third place finish in 2010, and were ahead by a whisker in the 2014 local elections. The Huddersfield area has swung gently towards Labour, and the rural hinterland slightly against, and overall it makes up a marginal seat, as it has always been. While the Lib Dems will probably fall well short in 2015, the seat has history and potential for them.

Colne Valley: the candidates		
Conservative	Jason McCartney	MP since 2010
Labour	Bin Joshi Barr	
Lib Dem	TBA	

DERBY NORTH

Conservative target from Labour; Lib Dem target from Labour

Derby North: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	25.9	14,283	31.7	+5.8	23	-
Labour	42.1	14,896	33.0	-9.0	32	-
Lib Dem	27.5	12,638	28.0	+0.5	21	-
UKIP	2.1	829	1.8		21	-
						-
Majority	Lab 14.6	613	Lab 1.3		Lab 9	-
Turnout			63.1			-

Derby North: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	C	C	C	L	L	L	L

Derby North: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	15.1	445
Full time student	13.4	78
Owner occupied	60.4	470
Higher prof/man	9.6	292
White British	81.9	485

Derby is an ancestrally Labour city thanks to its long-established railway, engineering and manufacturing industries and their strong trade unions. North has generally been a bit weaker for Labour than South and boundary changes and new suburban developments flipped Derby North to the Tories from 1983 until 1997. Labour held on in 2010 thanks to further boundary changes in which the outer suburbs to the north left the seat and were replaced by the city centre area around Abbey ward.

Derby North is still a complicated political environment. The western middle class suburbs of Littleover and Mickleover are the best Conservative areas, although the Lib Dems and to some extent Labour have strength there. Labour has recovered ground from the Lib Dems in the inner city since 2010, but has lost support in some hitherto safe areas (such as Derwent ward) to UKIP. Labour should increase their margin in Derby North in 2015; it is an indication of how difficult it is for the Conservatives to win an overall majority that they need to gain seats like this one, which seems highly unlikely.

Derby North: the candidates		
Conservative	Amanda Solloway	
Labour	Chris Williamson	MP since 2010
Lib Dem	Lucy Care	

DUDLEY NORTH

Conservative target from Labour; UKIP target from Labour

Dudley North: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	31.4	14,274	37.0	+5.6	23	24
Labour	42.6	14,923	38.7	-3.9	35	37
Lib Dem	10.5	4,066	10.5	0.0	0	3
UKIP	4.6	3,267	8.5		38	34
BNP		1,899	4.9			
Majority	Lab 11.1	649	Lab 1.7		UKIP 3	Lab 3
Turnout			63.5			12/2014

Dudley North: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L

Dudley North: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	18.4	213
Full time student	7.1	283
Owner occupied	63.0	430
Higher prof/man	6.5	524
White British	83.9	447

Dudley North is based on a similar formula to its twin, Dudley South – a slice of the town centre plus some outlying industrial and post-industrial Black Country towns. However, this seat has rather more inner urban territory than South, balanced by the smaller towns of Gornal and Sedgley, and therefore a stronger anchor for the Labour vote that kept it on the red side of the aisle (just) in 2010. Despite its threatened status now, Dudley North (and Dudley East before it) have been continuously Labour since 1945 except in a 1968 by-election.

The Black Country was Enoch Powell country in the 1960s and 1970s, and it is possible to discern his influence in Dudley's relative enthusiasm for UKIP. UKIP seem, on the basis of polls and local elections, to be the main challenger to Labour but it would be foolish to rule out the Conservatives given how close they came in 2010. It will be a fierce campaign.

Dudley North: the candidates		
Conservative	Afzal Amin	
Labour	Ian Austin	MP since 2005
UKIP	Bill Etheridge	MEP since 2014

DUDLEY SOUTH

Labour target (74) from Conservative

Dudley South: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	35.1	16,450	43.1	+8.1	28	-
Labour	44.0	12,594	33.0	-11.0	32	-
Lib Dem	12.7	5,989	15.7	+3.0	0	-
UKIP	3.2	3,132	8.2		32	-
						-
Majority	Lab 8.9	3,856	Con 10.1		Lab 1	-
Turnout			63.0			-

Dudley South (and predecessors): constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	L	L	C	C	C	C	L	L	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C	

Dudley South: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	18.7	192
Full time student	6.1	466
Owner occupied	68.3	274
Higher prof/man	6.6	514
White British	91.1	392

The borough of Dudley, in the West Midlands, has long been a volatile political environment, prone to high swings between the two major political parties. In 1968 it inflicted Harold Wilson's worst by-election defeat, and in 1994 it did the same to John Major. Although the boundaries change regularly, this constituency and its predecessor Dudley West have gone with the national trend since 1970. In 2010 Labour MP Ian Pearson stood down, and the seat was won by Chris Kelly (tipped by many as a rising star of the Conservatives). But Kelly is standing down after a single term.

Dudley South is a mixture of the south side of the town centre plus some smaller Black Country towns like Kingswinford and Brierley Hill. Many of the wards are marginal in local elections. Labour made particularly strong gains in 2012 but then UKIP surged in 2014. The result could be a very close three-way fight.

Dudley South: the candidates		
Conservative	Mike Wood	
Labour	Natasha Millward	
UKIP	Phil Rowe	

EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE

Labour target from Liberal Democrats

East Dunbartonshire: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	SP 2011 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	16.5	7,431	15.5	-1.0	13.1	-
Labour	33.1	16,367	34.1	+1.0	36.9	-
Lib Dem	41.8	18,551	38.7	-3.1	7.7	-
SNP	5.8	5,054	10.5		42.2	-
						-
Majority	LD 8.7				SNP 5	-
Turnout					56.4	-

2011 results: Strathkelvin & Bearsden constituency

East Dunbartonshire: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	C	SN	L	C	L	L	L	L	LD	LD

East Dunbartonshire: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	20.5	116
Full time student	9.2	170
Owner occupied	85.8	1
Higher prof/man	15.7	63
White British	92.4	319

East Dunbartonshire is a suburban area north of Glasgow including Bearsden, Milngavie and part of Kirkintilloch; it has the distinction of being the most owner-occupied constituency in the UK, and is the preferred suburb of many of Glasgow's professional classes. The seat has one of Britain's oddest electoral histories, having been held by all four of Scotland's main parties since 1974 (it has changed hands at every Scottish Parliament election as well). The boundary changes of 2005 helped the Lib Dems, as did a general swing in Scotland and in liberal middle class areas, and Jo Swinson gained it and held it in 2010.

Swinson's survival in 2015 must be very doubtful given the Lib Dems' particularly poor prospects in Scotland. Until 2014 this constituency seemed a nearly nailed-down Labour gain, but with the SNP far ahead in Westminster voting intention following the referendum they cannot be ruled out in this seat which they have won at their previous high tides (October 1974 and 2011).

East Dunbartonshire: the candidates		
Labour	Amanjit Jhund	
Lib Dem	Jo Swinson	MP since 2005
SNP	TBA	

EASTLEIGH

UKIP target from Lib Dem

Eastleigh: election results and recent indicators							
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	By-el 2013 %	Change %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	37.2	21,102	39.3	+2.1	25.4	-13.9	25
Labour	21.1	5,153	9.6	-11.5	9.8	+0.2	12
Lib Dem	38.3	24,966	46.5	+8.2	32.1	-14.4	40
UKIP	3.4	1,933	3.6		27.8		21
Majority	LD 1.1	3,864	LD 7.2		LD 4.3		LD 15
Turnout			69.3				09/2014

Eastleigh (Winchester before 1955): constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	LD	LD	LD	LD

Eastleigh: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	15.6	408
Full time student	5.8	513
Owner occupied	71.2	183
Higher prof/man	11.3	199
White British	92.3	317

Eastleigh is a sprawling suburban seat wrapped around the north and east of Southampton. It has been represented by the Liberal Democrats since they won a by-election in 1994, but by three MPs: David Chidgey from 1994 to 2005, Chris Huhne from 2005 to 2013, and Mike Thornton since then. The 2013 by-election was a fascinating contest – the only one this parliament defended by the Lib Dems, the first serious UKIP chance to win a seat, and an election caused by the public downfall of Chris Huhne. The Lib Dems survived, but their vote plunged, and UKIP did well again here in the 2013 county elections and ran the Lib Dems close.

Normal service was resumed in 2014 as the astonishingly well-organised campaign machine of the Eastleigh Lib Dems steamrollered to another win, and – particularly in the light of the Ashcroft poll – it seems likely that they will do so again in the 2015 general election despite challenges from UKIP and the Conservatives.

Eastleigh: the candidates		
Conservative	Mims Davies	
Lib Dem	Mike Thornton	MP since 2013
UKIP	Patricia Culligan	

FERMANAGH AND SOUTH TYRONE

Unionist target from Sinn Féin

Fermanagh & South Tyrone: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	A 2011 %	Ashcroft %
DUP	28.8	-	-		24.4	-
UUP	18.2	-	-		19.3	-
Ind Unionist	-	21,300	45.5	(-1.5)	1.5	-
SDLP	14.8	3,574	7.6	-7.2	9.6	-
Sinn Féin	38.2	21,304	45.5	+7.3	40.3	-
						-
		4	SF 0.0		SF	-
	72.6		68.9		69.0	-

Fermanagh & South Tyrone: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
R	R	R	SF	UU	UU	UU	R	UU	R	R	UU	UU	UU	UU	SF	SF	SF

Fermanagh & South Tyrone is a predominantly rural constituency in the south west corner of Northern Ireland, and as of 2010 the MP's majority of 4 votes makes it the most marginal seat in the United Kingdom (a political entity to which its attachment is a complex matter). This closeness is only fitting, as the seat has one of the wildest electoral histories of any constituency. The reason for its closeness and its peculiar history is that the demographic statistic that is most important in Northern Ireland, religious-community identity, is finely balanced. It would be inappropriate to call it an electoral battleground seat, because for many years it was blighted by violence. The idea of holding a G8 summit in the seat, as happened at Lough Erne in 2013, would have been absurd before the peace process.

Election results here depend on who stands for election, and how effective the parties are at generating turnout. If either the nationalist or unionist vote is united while the other one is split, that can mean a comfortable victory (as in 2005). Sinn Féin have the edge here, although if the UUP candidate Tom Elliott has cleared the field he has a chance. If the UK election is close, the Conservatives will be crossing their fingers that Elliott wins, as he could be a vote in their division lobby at Westminster; Sinn Féin MPs do not take up their seats.

Fermanagh & South Tyrone: the candidates		
UUP	Tom Elliott	MLA since 2003
Sinn Féin	Michelle Gildernew	MP since 2001

GLOUCESTER

Labour target (38) from Conservative

Gloucester: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	34.7	20,267	39.9	+5.3	36	34
Labour	47.6	17,847	35.2	-12.4	27	33
Lib Dem	13.7	9,767	19.2	+5.6	19	12
UKIP	2.4	1,808	3.6		15	18
Majority	Lab 13.0	2,420	Con 4.7		Con 9	Con 1
Turnout			64.0			10/2014

Gloucester: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C

Gloucester: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	14.4	493
Full time student	7.2	270
Owner occupied	65.5	367
Higher prof/man	7.9	409
White British	83.9	462

Gloucester is another piece of marginal 'Middle England' – a free-standing city on the Severn not far from where the South West shades into the West Midlands, with a mix of neighbourhoods, industries and people that is fairly typical. Politically, it is a rather unconventional marginal – Labour from 1945 to 1970, Conservative from 1970 to 1997 and then Labour from 1997 to 2010. Richard Graham, an ex-diplomat with an interest in China, won it for the Tories in 2010.

Labour have performed poorly in recent local elections, even in 2012, and the Conservatives were ahead in 2013 and 2014. On the other hand, there seems to be a particularly large discrepancy between local and general election results in Gloucester and Labour tends to do better at national level. Labour has selected an interesting candidate to contest the seat – Sophy Gardner, an RAF Wing Commander who saw service in Iraq and Afghanistan and adds valuable defence and foreign affairs experience to Labour's team.

Gloucester: the candidates		
Conservative	Richard Graham	MP since 2010
Labour	Sophy Gardner	

GREAT GRIMSBY

UKIP target from Labour

Great Grimsby: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	23.8	10,063	30.5	+6.7	19	20
Labour	47.1	10,777	32.7	-14.3	25	35
Lib Dem	19.3	7,388	22.4	+3.1	14	8
UKIP	3.8	2,043	6.2		35	34
Majority	Lab 23.2	714	Lab 2.2		UKIP 10	Lab 1
Turnout			53.8			12/2014

Great Grimsby: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L

Great Grimsby: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	15.5	422
Full time student	7.2	272
Owner occupied	60.4	168
Higher prof/man	4.1	641
White British	94.7	219

Great Grimsby is a long-standing Labour seat, but it has had brushes with marginality – the majority has fallen into three figures more than once, and did so again in 2010. Veteran MP (since 1977) Austin Mitchell squeaked home and is retiring in 2015.

Grimsby is a rather isolated, thoroughly working class constituency (most of the area's middle class population is in the neighbouring Cleethorpes seat) – like Mitchell himself, Old Labour in a quirky, unpredictable and populist fashion. UKIP did very well in 2014 and given the division in the vote for other parties (the Lib Dems even held a couple of wards in the local elections then) stand a good chance. Labour has probably selected wisely in the circumstances, with Melanie Onn – a working class, leftist local woman – taking up the baton. Victoria Ayling, who ran Mitchell close as the Conservative candidate in 2010, is now standing for UKIP.

Great Grimsby: the candidates		
Conservative	Marc Jones	
Labour	Melanie Onn	
UKIP	Victoria Ayling	

GREAT YARMOUTH

Labour target (73) from Conservative; UKIP target from Conservative

Great Yarmouth: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	38.2	18,571	43.1	+5.0	27	33
Labour	45.6	14,295	33.2	-12.3	29	28
Lib Dem	11.1	6,188	14.4	+3.4	0	3
UKIP	4.3	2,066	4.8		41	31
Majority	Lab 7.4	4,276	Con 9.9		UKIP 12	Con 2 (5)
Turnout			61.2			07/2014

Great Yarmouth: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	C	C	C	C	L	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C	

Great Yarmouth: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	20.9	97
Full time student	5.9	507
Owner occupied	64.3	402
Higher prof/man	5.1	611
White British	92.8	236

Great Yarmouth is a town with some serious problems – poor infrastructure and access, low skills, poverty and unemployment. Like other east coast towns (Clacton, Waveney) it has a sense of being left behind which is reflected in its political gyrations – Conservative for years, then big swings to Labour in the 1990s before swinging back again in 2005 and 2010. Since 2010 it has also been a huge growth area for UKIP. The story can be told in the three sets of borough elections – in 2011, close between Labour and the Conservatives. In 2012, Labour gained control of the council as UKIP ate into the Conservative vote. In 2014, Labour lost control because UKIP swept 10 of the 13 wards up for election and surged into the lead.

Great Yarmouth is a genuine three way marginal, in which UKIP will fancy their chances of coming through the middle, but where neither other party is going to give up.

Great Yarmouth: the candidates		
Conservative	Brandon Lewis	MP since 2010
Labour	Lara Norris	
UKIP	Alan Grey	

HALIFAX

Conservative target from Labour

Halifax: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	33.1	14,806	34.0	+0.9	29	-
Labour	41.9	16,278	37.4	-4.5	39	-
Lib Dem	17.9	8,335	19.1	+1.2	10	-
UKIP		654	1.5		19	-
BNP		2,760	6.3			-
Majority	Lab 8.8	1,472	Lab 3.4		Lab 10	-
Turnout			61.9			-

Halifax: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	L	L	C	C	L	L	L	L	L	L	C	L	L	L	L	L	L

Halifax: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	15.1	443
Full time student	7.3	267
Owner occupied	63.1	426
Higher prof/man	7.7	425
White British	79.0	515

Although the Conservatives have only won Halifax once in the last fifty years (at their 1983 high point), the seat has never shaken off its marginal status. Halifax has a distinctive, hilly townscape but has a political and demographic shape rather like other marginal towns either side of the Pennines. It has a fairly high Muslim population (14 per cent), concentrated in the inner areas, marginal suburbs and a fairly Conservative outlying area (Northowram). In the 2014 local elections UKIP polled reasonably, but not spectacularly, and seemed to do more damage to the Conservative vote (in areas where UKIP did better it seemed to eat into the Labour share).

Labour MP Linda Riordan upholds Halifax's history of left wing Labour candidates. Philip Allott, who fought the seat for the Conservatives in 2010, tries again. If he wins, the Tories probably have an overall majority.

Halifax: the candidates		
Conservative	Philip Allott	
Labour	Linda Riordan	MP since 2005

HAMPSTEAD AND KILBURN

Conservative target from Labour; Lib Dem target from Labour

Hampstead & Kilburn: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	22.9	17,290	32.7	+9.8	30	30
Labour	36.3	17,332	32.8	-3.5	34	47
Lib Dem	35.2	16,491	31.2	-4.0	21	13
UKIP	0.7	408	0.8		1	2
Green					13	
Majority	Lab 1.1	42	Lab 0.1		Lab 4	Lab 17
Turnout						08/2014

Hampstead & Kilburn: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
C	C	C	C	C	C	L	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	L	L

Hampstead & Kilburn: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	11.0	590
Full time student	9.5	161
Owner occupied	38.2	623
Higher prof/man	21.2	6
White British	40.7	(605)

Hampstead's constituency declarations often come in the bleary early hours of daylight on the Friday – in 1992 Glenda Jackson's gain (over Oliver Letwin) provided some comfort for Labour that devastating night, and in 2010 Labour were again consoled when the widely anticipated Lib Dem gain failed to materialise and Jackson won one last victory – with a 42-vote margin over the Conservatives.

Hampstead & Kilburn is one of the less typical constituencies in Britain. Like many stereotypes, the image of Hampstead has some elements of truth – it is disproportionately inhabited by well-off members of the liberal professions of working age. But it also has large numbers of people living more precariously in the huge local private rented sector (6th highest proportion in the UK). Labour did reasonably well in the local elections in 2014, particularly against the Lib Dems in their erstwhile strongholds in West Hampstead, although the Conservative vote was also resilient (central Hampstead is quite a Tory area, in fact). Hampstead is contrarian – the last time it swung in favour of an incumbent government was in 1974. The odds, and the polls, favour Labour's Tulip Siddiq to win by more than 42 votes in 2015.

Hampstead & Kilburn: the candidates		
Conservative	Simon Marcus	
Labour	Tulip Siddiq	
Lib Dem	Maajid Nawaz	

HOLBORN AND ST PANCRAS

Green Party leader contesting the seat

Holborn & St Pancras: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	20.9	11,134	20.4	-0.5	15	-
Labour	45.1	25,198	46.1	+1.0	51	-
Lib Dem	26.2	15,256	27.9	+1.8	10	-
UKIP		587	1.1		4	-
Green	7.5	1,480	2.7		19	-
						--
Majority	Lab 19.0	9,942	Lab 19.8		Lab 32	-
Turnout			62.9			-

Holborn & St Pancras: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	L	L	C	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	

Holborn & St Pancras: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	10.3	608
Aged 16-24	20.6	28
Owner occupied	27.5	641
Higher prof/man	15.5	68
White British	44.2	595

Holborn and St Pancras is a central London constituency, a slice of the capital at its most vibrant, busy, diverse and unequal stretching from Highgate to the north to Holborn and the Inns of Court in the south. A predecessor seat went Tory in 1959 (and Holborn was Tory even in 1945), but it has generally been a safe Labour seat. The Liberal Democrats seemed to be gaining strength in the 2000s, but Labour won decisively in 2010, regaining control of Camden council and increasing the parliamentary majority. The long-serving MP Frank Dobson (first elected in 1979) is standing down, and it was a very attractive seat for Labour aspirants. The selection was won by Keir Starmer, the former Director of Public Prosecutions, who is now likely to assume a senior role on Labour's front bench, perhaps in a legal capacity.

The Greens are most unlikely to win the seat, but they are trying to build strength and as a central London seat it is convenient for their leader Natalie Bennett to stand here while speaking for the party for the national media. She will probably fight it out for second place with the young Conservative candidate Will Blair.

Holborn & St Pancras: the candidates		
Labour	Keir Starmer	DPP 2008-13
Green	Natalie Bennett	Party leader since 2012

HORNSEY AND WOOD GREEN

Labour target from Liberal Democrats

Hornsey & Wood Green: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	12.7	9,174	16.7	+4.0	10	14
Labour	38.3	18,720	34.0	-4.2	40	43
Lib Dem	43.3	25,595	46.5	+3.2	28	30
UKIP	0.7				3	3
Green	5.0	1,261	2.3		16	
Majority	LD 5.1	6,875	LD 12.5		Lab 12	Lab 13
Turnout			68.9			9/2014

Hornsey & Wood Green: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	LD	LD

Hornsey & Wood Green: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	9.4	619
Full time student	9.4	162
Owner occupied	45.5	602
Higher prof/man	17.1	43
White British	47.3	(571)

This constituency is the western, more middle class half of the borough of Haringey, including Crouch End, Muswell Hill and part of Highgate as well as – and one cannot always take this for granted in constituency names – Hornsey and Wood Green. Labour gained it for the first time in 1992, from the Conservatives, but in 2001 and 2005 there was a strong swing to Lib Dem candidate Lynne Featherstone. It is an ethnically and socially diverse inner London residential area, tending to youth and liberal social attitudes, and the sort of place where joining the coalition with the Conservatives is likely to prove fatal to Lib Dem election chances. They lost heavily in the 2014 local elections when Labour even took seats in their heartland wards such as Muswell Hill and Fortis Green.

The only shadow on the horizon for an upbeat local Labour campaign is the possible threat of the Green Party dividing the anti-coalition vote.

Hornsey & Wood Green: the candidates		
Labour	Catherine West	
Lib Dem	Lynne Featherstone	MP since 2005

HOVE

Labour target from Conservative

Hove: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	36.4	18,294	36.7	+0.3	-	34
Labour	37.4	16,426	33.0	-4.5	-	37
Lib Dem	18.0	11,240	22.6	+4.6	-	6
UKIP	1.3	1,206	2.4		-	11
Green	5.8	2,568	5.2		-	(12)
					-	
Majority	Lab 1.0	1,868	Con 3.7		-	Lab 3
Turnout					-	10/2014

Hove: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C

Hove: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	14.6	484
Full time student	7.6	252
Owner occupied	56.9	519
Higher prof/man	13.5	120
White British	80.4	(460)*

While Labour lost all three of the Brighton & Hove city seats in 2010, the margins of defeat were all small and the party can have reasonable hopes that at least two of them will be temporary. The majority is largest in Hove, although it is still just about feasible for Labour to gain Hove while the Conservatives remain the largest single party in a hung parliament.

Hove was once a hard-core 'blue rinse' Tory stronghold but it was a stunning Labour gain in 1997 and was lost on a notably low swing in 2010 (2.4 per cent) which leaves it very high on Labour's target list for 2015. The easternmost wards are very similar to Hove's exotic neighbour Brighton Pavilion; former Tory bastions like Goldsmid and central Hove going so far as to vote Green in 2011. Hove contains some more ordinary areas such as the Labour-voting dock town of Portslade in the west of the seat, and the suburbs around Hangleton on the edge of the Downs. This constituency may be slipping away from the Conservatives but Labour still needs to give it a campaigning shove to win over Greens and ex-Lib Dems. The retirement after one term of sitting Tory MP Mike Weatherley gives Labour additional grounds for confidence.

Hove: the candidates		
Conservative	Geoffrey Cox	
Labour	Peter Kyle	

ILFORD NORTH

Labour target (83) from Conservative

Ilford North: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	43.8	21,506	45.7	+2.0	37	-
Labour	39.6	16,102	34.3	-5.4	35	-
Lib Dem	13.8	5,966	12.7	-1.1	8	-
UKIP	2.1	871	1.9		13	--
						-
Majority	Con 4.1	5,404	Con 12.4		Con 2	-
Turnout			65.3			-

Ilford North: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	C	C	C	C	L	L	C	C	

Ilford North: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	13.5	526
Full time student	10.3	139
Owner occupied	68.4	270
Higher prof/man	11.4	192
White British	44.3	620

Ilford North was an unexpected Labour gain in 1997 (boundary changes had made it even more Conservative than it had been before), and the Conservatives regained it in 2005. However, the swing in 2010 was low and it remains marginal.

Ilford North is in the outer east London borough of Redbridge, a majority Labour council for the first time ever in 2014. Many of the borough's marginal wards are in this constituency – once safe Conservative suburbs like Clayhall and once safe Labour outer estates like Hainault alike. The ethnic composition of the constituency has been transformed at a rapid rate: the non-white proportion of the population has risen from 13 per cent in 1991 to 48 per cent in 2011.

The Conservatives were still narrowly ahead in Ilford North in the borough elections, suggesting that they are in with a chance of holding it in the General Election, but it is one of the more promising Labour targets to be found this far down the list of target seats.

Ilford North: the candidates		
Conservative	Lee Scott	MP since 2005
Labour	Wes Streeting	

INVERNESS, NAIRN, BADENOCH AND STRATHSPEY

SNP target from Lib Dem; Labour target from Lib Dem

Inverness etc.: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	SP 2011 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative		6,278	13.3	+3.0	11.6	-
Labour		10,407	22.1	-8.8	21.8	-
Lib Dem		19,172	40.7	+0.5	11.5	-
SNP		8,803	18.7	+5.2	51.5	-
						-
Majority					SNP 30	-
Turnout					52.4	-

2011 result: Inverness & Nairn constituency

Inverness etc.: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
C	C	C	C	C	LD	LD	LD	LD	LD	LD	LD	LD	LD	L	L	LD	LD

Inverness etc.: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	16.9	310
Full time student	5.2	623
Owner occupied	67.0	326
Higher prof/man	8.3	375
White British	93.0	105

Inverness (the full constituency name is the first quadruple-barrelled in British election history) has been a Liberal or Lib Dem seat since their Highland revival of 1964, with the exception of the two Blair landslides when it went Labour. The constituency is centred on the capital of the Highlands but extends over a large hinterland – Badenoch to the south, Nairn to the east – that perhaps excuses its rambling name.

The Lib Dem MP is Danny Alexander, Chief Secretary to the Treasury under George Osborne and one of the Lib Dems most personally identified with Clegg and politically identified with the coalition. As such, Alexander's chances of re-election in this liberal to radical Highland constituency are poor. While Labour has entertained hopes of recovering the seat, the main threat comes from the SNP which racked up a big majority locally in 2011 and approaches the contest with even more confidence now. Their candidate is leader of Highland council.

Inverness etc.: the candidates		
Conservative	Edward Mountain	
Labour	Mike Robb	
Lib Dem	Danny Alexander	MP since 2005
SNP	Drew Hendry	

IPSWICH

Labour target (33) from Conservative

Ipswich: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	31.1	18,371	39.1	+8.0	27	31
Labour	42.9	16,292	34.7	-8.2	38	38
Lib Dem	21.1	8,556	18.2	-2.9	9	6
UKIP	2.7	1,365	2.9		19	19
Majority	Lab 11.8	2,079	Con 4.4		Lab 11	Lab 7
Turnout			59.9			10/2014

Ipswich: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	C	C	L	L	L	C	L	L	L	L	C

Ipswich: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	14.3	499
Full time student	6.9	316
Owner occupied	54.7	546
Higher prof/man	8.3	374
White British	81.7	466

The Ipswich constituency covers most (but not all) of Suffolk's largest town. Ipswich has a slightly peculiar electoral history, but counts as a key marginal. Labour was out-campaigned in the constituency in 2010 and had suffered local election defeats, and the Tory majority in the seat was the largest since 1935. However, past Tory intervals have been relatively short, and Ipswich Labour has been working hard to make sure that this pattern is repeated in the current parliament.

Ipswich was Labour's most notable southern success in the 2011 local elections and the party has continued to dominate in local elections since then, although UKIP's vote rose from nowhere to quite impressive levels in 2013 and 2014 and apparently eroded Labour's advantage. It would be surprising if Labour failed to gain Ipswich in 2015 – but then, Ipswich sometimes does spring surprises.

Ipswich: the candidates		
Conservative	Ben Gummer	MP since 2010
Labour	David Ellesmere	Council leader

KEIGHLEY

Labour target (48) from Conservative

Keighley: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	34.3	20,003	41.9	+7.7	29	31
Labour	44.7	17,063	35.8	-8.9	35	37
Lib Dem	11.8	7,059	14.8	+3.0	4	5
UKIP	-	1,470	3.1		17	23
Majority	Lab 10.5	2,940	Con 6.1		Lab 6	Lab 6
Turnout			72.4			11/2014

Keighley: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	L	L	L	C	L	L	C	L	L	L	C	C	C	L	L	L	C

Keighley: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	17.3	278
Full time student	6.8	323
Owner occupied	72.5	144
Higher prof/man	10.3	253
White British	80.9	510

Keighley is one of the most reliable 'bellwether' seats, going to the national winner every time since 1959, with the exception of 1979 when Labour squeaked home. The constituency comprises the town of Keighley and the surrounding rural areas, including two famous Yorkshire landmarks – Ilkley with its moor, and the Brontë village of Haworth. Like neighbouring Bradford, Keighley has a large Muslim community (13 per cent) mostly of Pakistani origin.

Despite its bellwether status, Keighley tends to have low swings because it has strong elements of each main party's core vote. The three wards of Keighley town are Labour in all but very unusual circumstances, although often not by overwhelming margins. The three outer wards, Worth Valley, Ilkley and Craven are mirror images, being reliably Conservative in normal circumstances but with a significant minority Labour vote. Labour edged the local elections in 2012 but did better in 2014, suggesting that UKIP may damage the Tories more here. It will be an all-out major-party contest in 2015.

Keighley: the candidates		
Conservative	Kris Hopkins	MP since 2010
Labour	John Grogan	MP for Selby 1997-2010

LINCOLN

Labour target (18) from Conservative

Lincoln: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	34.2	17,163	37.5	+3.3	31	35
Labour	43.7	16,105	35.2	-8.4	39	39
Lib Dem	18.4	9,256	20.2	+1.9	2	6
UKIP	3.7	1,004	2.2		21	17
Majority	Lab 9.5	1,058	Con 2.3		Lab 8	Lab 4
Turnout			62.2			08/2014

Loughborough: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	DL	L	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C

Lincoln: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	14.9	466
Full time student	14.4	66
Owner occupied	57.1	518
Higher prof/man	6.8	493
White British	90.2	293

Lincoln is a key marginal seat which has gone with the national winner since Margaret Beckett gained it from independent social democrat Dick Taverne in October 1974. The Conservative victory here in 2010, by a narrow margin on a small share of the vote, looks shaky, which is good news for Labour's national chances. The city is slightly too small to be a whole constituency, so the seat includes some outlying suburban areas at Bracebridge Heath and Skellingthorpe.

Demographically, Lincoln is quite near the national averages, although it has a significant student population and a fair amount of social housing. In local elections, Labour recaptured the council in 2011 but UKIP has also shown strength in local elections; in 2013 there was a notable result in the Hartsholme ward in the middle class south west of the city, where UKIP won in a tight three-way contest with 636 votes to 635 for the Conservatives and 630 for Labour. Every vote counts in Lincoln!

Lincoln: the candidates		
Conservative	Karl McCartney	MP since 2010
Labour	Lucy Rigby	
UKIP	Nick Smith	

LOUGHBOROUGH

Labour target (51) from Conservative

Loughborough: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	37.3	21,971	41.6	+4.3	38	40
Labour	41.2	18,227	34.5	-6.7	44	37
Lib Dem	17.9	9,675	18.3	+0.4	7	5
UKIP	2.4	925	1.8		6	12
Majority	Lab 3.9	3,744	Con 7.1		Lab 6	Con 3
Turnout			68.2			11/2014

Loughborough: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C	

Loughborough: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	14.8	470
Full time student	20.8	26
Owner occupied	66.9	330
Higher prof/man	10.4	245
White British	83.1	(481)

Loughborough is a mixture of a Midlands manufacturing town and a university seat (its student population is 21 per cent). The north and east of Loughborough are solidly Labour areas, reliable even in bad years for the party like 2009. They are a mixture of town centre terraces, the Thorpe Acre estate and a heavily university-dominated area. The south and south west of the town are more middle class and are marginal to Tory. The rest of the seat is the marginal town of Shepshed and a small Tory rural component. It adds up to a key marginal seat with a tendency to low swings. Nicky Morgan, first elected in 2010, has already reached the Cabinet and has the advantage of incumbency (particularly as former Labour MP Andy Reed is not standing again) and Loughborough's tendency to low swings between elections.

Loughborough: the candidates		
Conservative	Nicky Morgan	MP since 2010
Labour	Matthew O'Callaghan	

MILTON KEYNES SOUTH

Labour target (69) from Conservative

Milton Keynes South: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	37.8	23,034	41.6	+3.9	28	-
Labour	40.8	17,833	32.2	-8.6	30	-
Lib Dem	15.2	9,787	17.7	+2.5	12	-
UKIP	3.6	2,074	3.8		22	-
						-
Majority	Lab 3.0	5,201	Con 9.4		Lab 2	--
Turnout			61.2			-

Milton Keynes South (Buckingham 1945-83): constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	C	C	C	L	L	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C	

Milton Keynes South: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	10.9	592
Full time student	6.7	346
Owner occupied	57.2	516
Higher prof/man	12.1	162
White British	74.2	525

The New City of Milton Keynes is split into two seats that would have been very marginally Labour in 2005 but which voted Conservative in 2010. South is the more Labour-inclined of the two, lying south and west of the A5 highway for the most part and containing the older towns of Bletchley and Stony Stratford as well as New Town areas like (marginal) Loughton and (Conservative) Walton Park. In a comparatively short time, Milton Keynes South has acquired pretty urban demographics – a young and fairly professional population, a large rented sector and ethnic diversity.

Labour did reasonably well in the 2014 local elections in Milton Keynes, although the picture is complicated by the rather concentrated UKIP vote in Bletchley town and the reasonably resilient vote for Lib Dem council candidates. In the long term, this seat will probably be in the Labour column but this does not mean that the Conservatives will necessarily lose in 2015.

Milton Keynes South: the candidates		
Conservative	Iain Stewart	MP since 2010
Labour	Andrew Pakes	

NEWTON ABBOT

Liberal Democrat target from Conservative

Newton Abbot: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	35.1	20,774	43.0	+8.0	32	-
Labour	11.4	3,387	41.9	-4.4	8	-
Lib Dem	45.6	20,251	41.9	-3.6	31	-
UKIP	6.5	3,088	6.4		24	-
						-
Majority	LD 10.5	523			Con 1	-
Turnout			69.6			-

Newton Abbot: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	LD	LD	C

Newton Abbot: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	23.5	26
Full time student	5.5	581
Owner occupied	72.9	128
Higher prof/man	8.7	348
White British	96.2	82

Although a long time Conservative seat, the Liberal Democrats gained Teignbridge in 2001 and held it in 2005. The boundary changes and change of name in 2010 did not lead to their defeat; it was part of a fairly good Conservative showing in much of Devon and was aggravated by criticism of Richard Younger-Ross during the expenses saga. Younger-Ross returns to the fray in 2015 against first-term Conservative Anne-Marie Morris.

The seat includes Newton Abbot town, plus Teignmouth and Dawlish (where storms closed the seaside main railway line in spring 2014). The election campaign here may well be heavily local, with UKIP providing a complicating factor. On the face of it, the party should help Lib Dem chances of recovering the seat, but they will also absorb a section of the protest and anti-London vote that the Lib Dems previously received. The odds should be that the Conservatives will retain the seat, but there is enough doubt to make it interesting.

Newton Abbot: the candidates		
Conservative	Anne-Marie Morris	MP since 2010
Lib Dem	Richard Younger-Ross	MP 2001-10

NORTHAMPTON NORTH

Labour target (39) from Conservative

Northampton North: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	29.7	13,735	34.1	+4.4	26	31
Labour	38.7	11,799	29.3	-9.4	27	35
Lib Dem	26.9	11,250	27.9	+1.0	19	9
UKIP	2.5	1,238	3.1		23	22
Majority	Lab 9.0	1,936	Con 4.8		Lab 1	Lab 4
Turnout			62.7			(11/2014)

Northampton North (Northampton 1945-70): constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C

Northampton North: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	15.2	439
Full time student	10.9	126
Owner occupied	66.0	358
Higher prof/man	7.0	481
White British	77.8	500

Northampton, on the borderlands between the Midlands, the East and the South East, is a traditional manufacturing town that has been transformed by waves of development. Northampton North has gone with the national winner since the town was divided into two seats in 1974. It is an urban seat comprising Kingsthorpe to the north west, some of the older inner areas, and a section of Northampton's 1970s New Town development to the east. Politically, it is a complex jigsaw in which Labour, Conservative, Lib Dem and UKIP all elected councillors in 2013 and most wards were marginal – often three-way marginal.

The Conservatives won on a notably low share of the vote in 2010; given the size of the Lib Dem vote that year it looks like it should be a fairly easy Labour pick-up. The only complicating factors are the possible benefit from Michael Ellis's first term incumbency, and a strong UKIP vote that could even make this seat one of their better bets for a win if Farage's party wins a high national share of the vote.

Northampton North: the candidates		
Conservative	Michael Ellis	MP since 2010
Labour	Sally Keeble	MP 1997-2010
UKIP	Paul Oakden	

NORWICH NORTH

Labour target (67) from Conservative

Norwich North: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	30.5	17,280	40.6	+10.1	29	-
Labour	47.1	13,379	31.4	-15.7	32	-
Lib Dem	16.1	7,783	18.3	+2.2	7	-
UKIP	2.3	1,878	4.4		23	-
						-
Majority	16.6	3,901	Con 9.2		Lab 3	-
Turnout			65.2			-

Norwich North: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	C	C	C	L	L	L	C	

Norwich North: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	19.1	171
Full time student	5.7	542
Owner occupied	64.8	387
Higher prof/man	7.5	438
White British	91.5	312

If one looks at uniform swing, Norwich North – Labour’s 67th target seat – is the one that Labour needs to win to obtain a bare overall majority with 325 seats (to 324 for the other parties and one for the Speaker). But uniform swing, while it is a reasonable guide to the overall result, can be a poor predictor of individual seats, and Norwich North has its share of uncertainties. For a start, only a minority is within the city of Norwich – the working class northern wards of the city are the Labour stronghold, but they may be vulnerable to UKIP. The bulk of the constituency is in the suburban Broadland district, around Sprowston and Thorpe St Andrew, and Labour has struggled here.

Recent history makes Norwich North a bit special, in that the Conservatives gained it in a peculiar by-election in 2009 caused by the Labour Party’s treatment of the MP, Ian Gibson, during the expenses scandal. By-election changes usually affect the next election and the Conservative majority in 2010 was probably a bit inflated; therefore one could expect an above-average Labour swing in 2015. However, not being a minister any more may help Chloe Smith, by giving her time and latitude to focus on the constituency. Jessica Asato, the possible Labour MP, is formidably ambitious and well-connected.

Norwich North: the candidates		
Conservative	Chloe Smith	MP since 2009
Labour	Jessica Asato	

NORWICH SOUTH

Labour target from Lib Dem; Green target from Lib Dem

Norwich South: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	21.8	10,902	22.9	+1.1	17	18
Labour	37.4	13,960	28.7	-8.7	33	33
Lib Dem	30.0	13,960	29.4	-0.6	13	12
UKIP	1.5	1,145	2.4		2	15
Green	7.4	7,095	14.9		34	20
Majority	Lab 7.4	310	LD 0.7		Green 1	Lab 13
Turnout			64.6			(6/2014)

Norwich South: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	C	C	C	C	L	L	C	L	L	L	C	L	L	L	L	L	L	LD

Norwich South: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	15.5	418
Aged 16-24	17.8	45
Owner occupied	45.0	609
Higher prof/man	10.5	237
White British	84.1	437

Norwich South was one of the weirder Liberal Democrat gains at the 2010 election – the winner, Simon Wright, polled a lower share of the vote than his predecessor did in 2005 and won the wooden spoon for the least popular winner. Norwich South has been chalked up as an almost certain loss from the moment that the Lib Dems and Conservatives formed a coalition, because it is the sort of liberal-radical urban constituency that was attracted to the Lib Dems because they appeared to the left of New Labour. But will Labour pick up the seat that Charles Clarke lost in 2010?

Except for the Brighton area, Norwich South has the strongest Green presence in the country. They regularly win four or five of the ten wards in the constituency, and were narrowly ahead (as far as one can tell – one ward, New Costessey, had no elections) in 2014. Polling suggests that Wright is at risk of coming fifth at the general election – perhaps unlikely, but not a good omen. The Greens would be doing very well indeed to win outright, and it looks a near-certain gain for Clive Lewis (one of several former broadcast journalists to stand, and a tip for ministerial office in a Labour government). But he might have a Green challenge to fend off in 2020.

Norwich South: the candidates		
Labour	Clive Lewis	
Lib Dem	Simon Wright	MP since 2010
Green	Lesley Graham	

OXFORD WEST AND ABINGDON

Liberal Democrat target from Conservative

Oxford West & Abingdon: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	32.7	23,906	42.3	+9.6	30	38
Labour	15.9	5,999	10.6	-5.3	16	18
Lib Dem	46.1	23,730	42.0	-4.1	33	30
UKIP	1.5	1,518	2.7		10	9
Green	3.8	1,184	2.1		11	
Majority	LD 13.4	176	Con 0.3		LD 3	Con 8
Turnout			65.3			09/2014

Oxford West & Abingdon: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
No pre-1983 constituency counterpart											C	C	C	LD	LD	LD	C

Oxford West & Abingdon: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	16.7	332
Full time student	13.6	74
Owner occupied	67.1	317
Higher prof/man	18.6	22
White British	80.0	(438)

Although this constituency does contain some of the colleges and residential areas of Oxford, the name is a bit misleading in that the largest component of the seat is the more ordinary town of Abingdon; it also extends north to Kidlington, a dormitory suburb of Oxford. The proportion of student electors is above average, but not hugely so – Portsmouth South, for instance, has a higher proportion. It is basically an urban and suburban middle class – fairly upper middle class - constituency in southern England that is competitive because of Lib Dem activism over the years in all parts of the seat.

‘Oxwab’ was a long term hope of the SDP-Liberal Alliance that came good in 1997 when Evan Harris won the seat, and an unexpected and wounding loss in 2010 (it is said that they took it for granted during ‘Cleggmania’ and sent activists instead in a doomed attempt to seize Oxford East from Labour). Nicola Blackwood swiped the seat for the Conservatives, and is one of very few MPs who has to look over her shoulder at a Lib Dem challenge in 2015. The party ‘won’ in the 2013 county elections and can hope to appeal to Labour and Green tactical votes. Given the national trends, Blackwood should be able to pull ahead, but the seat is still one to watch.

Oxford West & Abingdon: the candidates		
Conservative	Nicola Blackwood	MP since 2010
Lib Dem	Layla Moran	

PENDLE

Labour target (57) from Conservative

Pendle: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	31.8	17,512	38.9	+7.2	30	36
Labour	37.1	13,927	30.9	-6.1	39	33
Lib Dem	23.2	9,095	20.2	-2.9	20	11
UKIP	1.8	1,476	3.3		7	17
Majority	Lab 5.3	3,585	Con 8.0		Lab 9	Con 3
Turnout			67.8			12/2014

Pendle: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	C	C	L	C	C	C	L	L	L	L	C	

Pendle: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	16.0	377
Full time student	6.8	332
Owner occupied	68.5	267
Higher prof/man	7.0	483
White British	77.2	528

Pendle is probably the constituency that came closest in 2005 and 2010 to reflecting the national percentage shares of the vote for each main party, and it has a reasonable track record for going with the winner of the national popular vote, having got only one election 'wrong' since 1964 (it went Labour in 1992). From this, one might deduce that Pendle is typical of Britain. But one would be wrong – it is a very unusual place.

Pendle is the name for the seat comprising the east Lancashire mill towns of Nelson and Colne, and some smaller settlements in the area like Barnoldswick, set in hilly countryside. Its history is a peculiar one (the most famous event being the Witch Trials of 1612). Pendle, although no longer a traditional mill area, is the second most manufacturing-oriented constituency in England & Wales, with 20 per cent of the population employed in manufacturing. It also has a large Asian population (19 per cent), nearly all of Pakistani origin and Muslim faith.

Local politics here can also go against national trends, for instance when Labour lost ground in 1994-95 and gained seats in 2009, and the council seems to alternate between periods of Lib Dem and no overall control. Despite its typical voting behaviour recently, Pendle is a one-off.

Pendle: the candidates		
Conservative	Andrew Stephenson	MP since 2010
Labour	Azhar Ali	

PENISTONE AND STOCKSBRIDGE

UKIP target from Labour

Penistone & Stocksbridge: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	23.7	14,516	37.8	-7.4	15	-
Labour	45.2	17,565	31.2	+7.5	29	-
Lib Dem	24.7	9,800	21.1	-3.7	9	-
UKIP	1.7	1,936	4.2		35	-
						-
Majority	Lab 20.4	3,049	Lab 6.6		UKIP 6	-
Turnout			67.9			-

Penistone & Stocksbridge: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L

Penistone & Stocksbridge: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	20.0	135
Full time student	5.6	560
Owner occupied	75.8	56
Higher prof/man	10.1	266
White British	96.5	161

This South Yorkshire seat is something of a wild card – if UKIP are doing better than most predictions imply, particularly in Labour territory, this is the sort of place they might pick up. It is more or less the successor to the Sheffield Hillsborough constituency, from which comes Stocksbridge and Ecclesfield, plus the Penistone area from the west of Barnsley. It is a Labour area, but not overwhelmingly – the Lib Dems have been strong here in the past but UKIP won all three wards in the 2014 local elections. Penistone is the only bit of Barnsley where there are sufficient Conservatives to win local elections even in good years.

It would be interesting to see a constituency opinion poll here – but the likelihood is that Labour will prevail against an opposition divided between the Conservatives, UKIP and maybe even the Lib Dems, particularly as no other party seems to have a candidate in place yet.

Penistone & Stocksbridge: the candidates		
Conservative		
Labour	Angela Smith	MP since 2005
UKIP		

PLYMOUTH MOOR VIEW

UKIP target from Labour

Plymouth Moor View: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	25.0	13,845	33.3	+8.3	27	26
Labour	44.4	15,433	37.2	-7.2	34	35
Lib Dem	19.0	7,016	16.9	-2.1	2	5
UKIP	7.7	3,188	7.7		35	30
Majority	Lab 19.4	1,588	Lab 3.9		UKIP 1	Lab 5
Turnout			61.7			

Plymouth Moor View: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	L	L	C	C	L	L	L	L	L	SD	SD	L	L	L	L	L	

Plymouth Moor View: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	17.8	246
Full time student	7.0	290
Owner occupied	60.3	471
Higher prof/man	5.4	596
White British	95.8	181

Moor View is more or less the successor to the old Devonport constituency, once held by Michael Foot and somewhat later by David Owen. It is the more working class of the Plymouth seats, containing much of Plymouth's outer ring of post-war council estates such as Southway and the dockland area of St Budeaux, and some more mixed and classically marginal suburbs like the distinctively named Eggbuckland (the seat also contains Ham, appropriately enough).

UKIP seems to have eaten into Labour's capacity to restore a large majority here after the Conservatives came close on an above-average swing in 2010. The Labour share fell 16 percentage points between 2012 and 2014, with UKIP gaining enough votes to put them ahead across the seat. Lord Ashcroft's polling showed Labour ahead on the constituency-specific voting question, but uncomfortably close for Plymouth Labour who were hoping to spend the bulk of their efforts on gaining the neighbouring marginal Sutton & Devonport division.

Plymouth Moor View: the candidates		
Conservative	Johnny Mercer	
Labour	Alison Seabeck	MP since 2005
UKIP	Penny Mills	

PORTSMOUTH SOUTH

Conservative target from Liberal Democrats

Portsmouth South: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	33.6	13,721	33.3	-0.4	25	30
Labour	22.4	5,640	13.7	-8.7	17	20
Lib Dem	41.6	18,921	45.9	+4.2	29*	25
UKIP	2.4	876	2.1		21	17
Majority	LD 8.0	5,200	LD 12.6		LD 4*	Con 5
Turnout			58.8			11/2014

* Includes Independent Hancock vote in Fratton as Lib Dem.

Portsmouth South: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	LD	LD	LD	LD

Portsmouth South: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	12.0	568
Full time student	24.2	17
Owner occupied	43.9	611
Higher prof/man	8.9	342
White British	78.1	(506)

Portsmouth South is a densely populated urban constituency packed into the southern acres of Portsea Island. The seat includes Portsmouth's post-war city centre and the more elegant terraces of Southsea to the east. It is a very youthful seat (thanks to the university and the naval presence) with urban demographics of the sort that often favour Labour, but it has been a Lib Dem/ Conservative battleground. The dominant political personality in the area, for over 30 years, has been Mike Hancock: he won a by-election for the SDP in 1984, lost the seat narrowly in 1987 and 1992, and then regained it in 1997. Hancock is standing down under a cloud, having had the whip withdrawn following allegations of misconduct towards a constituent. He lost his Fratton seat on Portsmouth City Council (which he had held throughout his term as MP) in 2014.

Hoping to hold the seat is Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Lib Dem leader of Portsmouth council until they lost their majority in 2014, and a renowned organiser and vote winner for his party. Despite everything, the Lib Dems did well in local elections here in 2011 and 2012, and even in their defeat in 2014 they were still just about ahead in share of the vote. On the basis of the Ashcroft and local election figures, the seat is a four-way marginal with Labour and UKIP also in the game, but the odds must favour a Conservative gain.

Portsmouth South: the candidates		
Conservative	Flick Drummond	
Lib Dem	Gerald Vernon-Jackson	

PUDSEY

Labour target (26) from Conservative

Pudsey: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	33.7	18,874	38.5	+4.8	32	36
Labour	45.4	17,215	35.1	-10.3	30	36
Lib Dem	18.2	10,224	20.8	+2.7	10	9
UKIP	2.8	1,221	2.5		20	15
Majority	Lab 11.7	1,659	Con 3.4		Con 2	Tie
Turnout			70.9			10/2014

Pudsey: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C

Pudsey: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	17.0	302
Full time student	6.3	430
Owner occupied	72.9	126
Higher prof/man	13.9	102
White British	91.1	313

Pudsey is a constituency of two halves. One is Pudsey itself, a suburban area lying directly between Leeds and Bradford, whose two wards are Pudsey, a safe Labour area, and Calverley & Farsley which is the most Tory area of the seat. The other half of the seat is the north west Leeds suburbs of Guiseley and Horsforth. Labour can come close in Guiseley in a good year like 2012 but Horsforth is contested between the Tories and Lib Dems. The constituency is classic 'hard working families' territory- high proportions of people in employment, medium qualifications and few retirees or students.

Labour gained the seat for the first time in 1997 and some of that strength remains, as in many northern suburbs - what had previously been fairly safely Tory is now a front-rank marginal. The balance of opinion has remained close in local elections since 2010, Labour slightly ahead in 2011 and 2012 but the Conservatives in 2014. One can imagine the Conservatives holding the seat even if they are falling behind in the election nationally.

Pudsey: the candidates		
Conservative	Stuart Andrew	MP since 2010
Labour	Jamie Hanley	

REDCAR

Labour target from Liberal Democrats

Redcar: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	17.9	5,790	13.8	-4.0	-	12
Labour	51.4	13,741	32.8	-18.6	-	44
Lib Dem	20.2	18,955	45.2	+25.0	-	18
UKIP	1.5	1,875	4.5		-	23
					-	
Majority	Lab 31.2	5,214	LD		-	Lab 21
Turnout			62.5		-	09/2014

Redcar (Cleveland before 1974): constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	L	L	C	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	LD

Redcar: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	19.1	170
Full time student	6.8	326
Owner occupied	65.3	374
Higher prof/man	5.3	602
White British	97.4	(66)

Redcar was one of the most extreme results of the 2010 election, with Vera Baird losing to Lib Dem candidate Ian Swales on a 22-point swing. The steel industry is a vital component of this constituency and the closure of the Corus works in 2009 came as a blow to local identity as well as the economy. As a traditional Labour seat represented by a coalition Lib Dem, and one of few marginals in the strong Labour region of the North East, Redcar is a very attractive target seat that Labour should gain. The announcement in 2014 that Ian Swales is stepping down after a single term makes it one of the most likely Labour gains from Liberal Democrat despite the fairly large majority in 2010.

Redcar: the candidates		
Labour	Anna Turley	
Lib Dem	Josh Mason	

REDDITCH

Labour target (100) from Conservative

Redditch: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	38.5	19,138	43.5	+5.0	28	
Labour	43.7	13,317	30.3	-13.4	31	
Lib Dem	14.4	7,750	17.6	+3.2	4	
UKIP	3.4	1,497	3.4		30	
Majority	Lab 5.2	5,821	Con 13.2		Lab 1(3)	
Turnout			64.2			

Redditch (and predecessors): constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C	

Redditch: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	14.7	379
Full time student	6.5	371
Owner occupied	66.7	336
Higher prof/man	9.1	326
White British	87.9	399

Jacqui Smith was one of the more high-profile Labour MPs to be defeated in 2010, but in truth she had done well to hold on with a low swing in 2005 in this quiet Worcestershire New Town that had never elected a Labour MP in any general election prior to 1997 (though it did in Labour's best by-election result under the Heath government in 1971).

Redditch is thoroughly 'Middle England', with demographic statistics all being close to the national average, a geographical location in the heart of England and a history of centre-ground Conservative-Labour battles in national and local elections. However, this pattern has been disrupted by the rise of UKIP, who made the town a three-way marginal in the 2013 and 2014 elections. A Conservative hold seems most likely, although this is the sort of seat where the result may be surprising and strange.

Redditch: the candidates		
Conservative	Karen Lumley	MP since 2010
Labour	Rebecca Blake	
UKIP	Peter Jewell	

ROCHESTER AND STROOD

UKIP defence

Rochester & Strood: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change	2014 by %	Change
Conservative	42.6	23,604	49.2	+6.6	34.8	-14.4
Labour	41.5	13,651	28.5	-13.1	16.8	-11.7
Lib Dem	12.4	7,800	16.3	+3.9	0.9	-15.5
UKIP	3.5	-	-	-	42.1	
Majority	Con 1.1	9,953	Con 20.7		UKIP 7.3	
Turnout			64.9		50.6	

Rochester & Strood: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	L	L	C	L	L	C	C	L	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C	

Rochester & Strood: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	14.6	485
Full time student	7.7	244
Owner occupied	68.1	282
Higher prof/man	8.0	396
White British	86.6	427

After Douglas Carswell's defection to UKIP, his friend Mark Reckless – another strongly anti-EU backbencher who was not opposed by UKIP in 2010 – followed suit. The by-election was a more stringent test for UKIP, because Reckless did not have Carswell's personal profile and Rochester and Strood has more middle of the road demographics. Its electoral outcomes have also tracked the parties' national fortunes, with it voting (on varying boundaries) for the party with the most votes (not necessarily seats) every time since 1931 with the sole exception of 1955. Like the other UKIP prospects, though, it has a recent history of high swings between Conservative and Labour.

Having won the by-election, Reckless has some work to do to consolidate the seat because the Conservative vote was reasonably resilient and some of his voters suggested that they would return to the Tories (or Labour) in the General Election. On the other hand, this observer's impression was that the higher the turnout, the better for UKIP. It will be an interesting, unconventional, battle. The main candidates are the same as in 2014.

Rochester & Strood: the candidates		
Conservative	Kelly Tolhurst	
Labour	Naushabah Khan	
UKIP	Mark Reckless	MP since 2010

ROTHER VALLEY

UKIP target from Labour

Rother Valley: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	23.1	13,281	28.4	+5.3	13	18
Labour	51.6	19,147	41.0	-10.6	38	40
Lib Dem	16.1	8,111	17.4	+1.2	0	4
UKIP	4.3	2,613	5.6		43	34
Majority	Lab 28.5	5,866	Lab 12.6		UKIP 5	Lab 6
Turnout			64.2			12/2014

Rother Valley: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L

Rother Valley: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	18.8	186
Full time student	5.8	521
Owner occupied	74.1	92
Higher prof/man	8.4	371
White British	95.9	229

Rother Valley is the small town and semi-rural part of the metropolitan borough of Rotherham, stretching south of Rotherham along the border with the rather similar Bassetlaw constituency in Nottinghamshire. The constituency is abundant with coal mining heritage and was for long a very safe Labour seat. It is still pretty safe, although Rotherham has seen the strongest UKIP challenge in any Labour heartland and Farage's party was ahead here in the 2014 local elections. There has long been a minority Conservative vote here and if it swings behind UKIP, Labour might have its closest run here in over a century. Kevin Barron, an ex-miner, is a well-regarded parliamentary stalwart.

Rother Valley: the candidates		
Labour	Kevin Barron	MP since 1983
UKIP	Allen Cowles	

SHEFFIELD CENTRAL

Sheffield Central: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	9.2	4,206	10.1	+1.0	7	-
Labour	46.5	17,138	41.3	-5.2	43	-
Lib Dem	31.4	16,973	40.9	+9.5	14	-
UKIP	1.7	652	1.6		7	-
Green	5.7	1,556	3.8		27	-
						--
Majority	Lab 15.1	165	Lab 0.4		Lab 16	-
Turnout			59.7			-

Sheffield Central: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L

Sheffield Central: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	8.8	627
Aged 16-24	38.1	1
Owner occupied	36.3	626
Higher prof/man	9.4	300
White British	67.1	567

Sheffield Central may sound like a gritty, working class seat that should be safe for Labour, but this is far from the case. The Liberal Democrats came close in 2010 and the Greens have a respectable vote here. Inner Sheffield has been physically and demographically transformed, and (with the help of some boundary changes) this seat has become Student Central. It stretches from the city centre out to the university area around Broomhill and Nether Edge, and also to the solidly Labour estates of Manor Castle.

The Lib Dems 'won' the seat most times in local elections before the coalition, but have slumped since then and have not held a single council seat. The Greens have won Central ward and added the student-heavy Broomfield in 2014, but it has mostly gone Labour's way. With Green support highest among young voters, this constituency should record one of the party's highest votes – if young people bother to turn out. But Labour should restore the seat to safe status.

Sheffield Central: the candidates		
Labour	Paul Blomfield	MP since 2010
Green	Jillian Creasy	

SITTINGBOURNE AND SHEPPEY

UKIP target from Conservative

Sittingbourne & Sheppey: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	41.7	24,313	50.1	+8.3	28	-
Labour	41.7	11,930	24.6	-17.1	28	-
Lib Dem	12.7	7,943	16.4	+3.6	3	-
UKIP	2.3	2,610	5.4		39	-
						-
Majority	Con 0.05	12,383	25.5		UKIP 11	-
Turnout			64.5			-

Sittingbourne & Sheppey: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C

Sittingbourne & Sheppey: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	16.1	370
Full time student	5.8	511
Owner occupied	68.2	276
Higher prof/man	6.8	495
White British	92.6	282

Sittingbourne and Sheppey – like several other seats in north Kent including Rochester & Strood and South Thanet – went from Conservative to Labour on a very large swing in 1997 but reverted decisively to the Tories in 2010, only to follow that swing by developing UKIP tendencies. UKIP polled fairly well across the seat in the 2013 county elections, although Labour featured also, particularly in Sheerness, the port on the isle of Sheppey. Henderson may be one of the Conservative MPs whose chances of re-election would be increased by defecting to UKIP, and in some ways he would be a good fit as a traditionalist right-winger and serial Commons rebel. But in September 2014, after considerable speculation, Henderson made a statement announcing and explaining his decision to remain with the Conservatives.

Sittingbourne & Sheppey: the candidates		
Conservative	Gordon Henderson	MP since 2010
Labour	Guy Nicholson	
UKIP	Richard Palmer	

SOLIHULL

Conservative target from Liberal Democrats

Solihull: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	39.7	23,460	42.6	+2.9	38	37
Labour	15.6	4,891	8.9	-6.8	11	12
Lib Dem	39.4	23,635	42.9	+3.5	23	28
UKIP	1.9	1,200	1,200	2.2	10	16
Green			-	-	14	
Majority	Con 0.2	175	LD 0.3		Con 16	Con 9
Turnout			70.8			09/2014

Solihull: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	LD	LD

Solihull: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	20.8	107
Full time student	7.4	258
Owner occupied	79.6	17
Higher prof/man	14.6	87
White British	82.2	491

Solihull was a surprise gain for the Liberal Democrats in 2005 – this affluent suburban area south east of Birmingham had never given the Conservatives much cause for concern before. Despite minor adverse boundary changes, the Liberal Democrat MP Lorely Burt successfully defended her parliamentary seat in 2010 against a determined Conservative challenge.

The Liberal Democrats would be surprised and relieved if Burt won a third term; it is very likely that the Conservatives will win the seat, albeit on a lower share of the vote than they polled in 2010. The local Lib Dems have suffered from defections and election losses, mostly to the Green Party who have built up a presence on Solihull council, and have to face the headwinds from national electoral trends. This is probably the most nailed-down Conservative gain of 2015.

Solihull: the candidates		
Conservative	Julian Knight	
Lib Dem	Lorely Burt	MP since 2005

SOUTHAMPTON ITCHEN

Conservative target from Labour

Southampton Itchen: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	27.3	16,326	36.8	-11.5	34	34
Labour	48.3	16,134	36.3	+9.1	34	34
Lib Dem	20.7	9,256	20.8	+0.1	6	10
UKIP	3.7	1,928	4.3		20	19
Majority	Lab 21.0	192	Lab 0.5		Con 0.5	Tie
Turnout			59.6			08/2014

Southampton Itchen: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	L	L	L	L	Sp	Sp	L	L	L	C	C	L	L	L	L	L	

Southampton Itchen: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	14.2	501
Full time student	13.6	75
Owner occupied	52.9	564
Higher prof/man	7.4	457
White British	84.7	(418)

Southampton Itchen is the eastern side of the city, containing the city centre and the suburbs (like Bitterne and Woolston) to the east of the river that gives the constituency its name. It has usually been a Labour seat, going Tory only in the two Thatcher landslides, but trembled on the threshold of doing so in 2010 thanks to a large swing. Now Labour MP John Denham is standing down, and the seat will be one of the key battles of the 2015 election. The Conservatives need this seat for an overall majority, and Labour knows that the fight is on. Labour's hold depends on the support of traditional white working class voters in the estates and suburbs (as well as ethnic minority voters and students, who are also to be found in Itchen), and the rise of UKIP has done some damage to the party's prospects here. Recent council election results and polls suggest that it is still very close.

The Conservative candidate who nearly won in 2010, former council leader Royston Smith, stands again in 2015. The Labour candidate, Rowenna Davis, is well-known nationally and campaigning hard to establish herself locally.

Southampton Itchen: the candidates		
Conservative	Royston Smith	
Labour	Rowenna Davis	

SOUTH THANET

UKIP target from Conservative

South Thanet: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	41.2	22,043	48.0	+6.8	26	34 (29)
Labour	39.5	14,426	31.4	-8.1	27	26 (29)
Lib Dem	12.2	6,935	15.1	+2.9	4	7 (4)
UKIP	4.8	2,529	5.5		35	29 (33)
Majority	Con 1.8	7,617	Con 16.6		UKIP 9	Con 5 (UKIP 4)
Turnout			64.2			11/2014 (09/2014)

South Thanet: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C

South Thanet: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	21.0	92
Full time student	7.3	266
Owner occupied	63.3	419
Higher prof/man	7.6	431
White British	90.0	(306)

South Thanet is based on Ramsgate, although the constituency also includes Sandwich and Cliftonville. Like several other seats of UKIP interest, it is a mainly urban seat on the east coast of England that swung strongly to Labour in 1997 but then back again to the Conservatives in 2005 and 2010. Nigel Farage has Kent origins, and contested this very seat in 2005. It is probably the best UKIP prospect in Kent (though Sittingbourne and Folkestone are also plausible), so it was logical that he would choose to stand for Parliament here. The Conservatives lose one of their rare pro-European MPs with Laura Sandys standing down after one term. Her replacement is Craig Mackinlay, from the opposite end of the party – he is a former member of UKIP and the Anti-Federalist League. The local campaign is likely to be not so much about ends as means – would the Conservatives or UKIP be most likely to actually accomplish withdrawal from the EU? Labour has enough core strength, and the pro-EU field to itself, and cannot be ruled out. Farage’s chances are reasonable but far from certain; while Carswell has a lock on re-election, his leader may not make it. Farage’s personal vote is a presumed, but untested, phenomenon.

South Thanet: the candidates		
Conservative	Craig Mackinlay	
Labour	Will Scobie	
UKIP	Nigel Farage	MEP since 1999

SUTTON AND CHEAM

Conservative target from Liberal Democrats

Sutton & Cheam: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	40.6	20,548	42.4	+1.7	28	27
Labour	11.8	3,376	7.0	-4.8	11	11
Lib Dem	46.9	22,156	45.7	-1.2	38	45
UKIP		950			17	15
Majority	LD 6.2	1,608	LD 3.4		LD 10	LD 18
Turnout			72.8			09/2014

Sutton & Cheam: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	LD	LD	LD	LD

Sutton & Cheam: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	15.5	416
Full time student	7.0	291
Owner occupied	71.0	187
Higher prof/man	13.5	115
White British	69.7	(533)

The Lib Dems won a swathe of south west London seats in 1997, and all except Richmond Park has stuck with them ever since. Sutton and Cheam is part of this pattern, despite a fierce Conservative campaign to recover it in 2010. The constituency has a cherished place in the Liberal Democrat roll of honour – a stunning by-election win during their 1972 revival, and their longest continuous control of any council, dating back to 1986. The borough, of which this seat comprises half, even turned in a decent Lib Dem performance in the 2014 local elections. The Conservatives were strongest in Cheam and in the south of Sutton, but the Lib Dems dominated the bulk of the seat.

Sutton & Cheam is classic outer London middle class suburbia and Lib Dem success is down to decades of work rather than demographic factors. Incumbent MP Paul Burstow was a minister but has recently concentrated on constituency work. Few would bet against him holding on despite the adverse national climate.

Sutton & Cheam: the candidates		
Conservative	Paul Scully	
Lib Dem	Paul Burstow	MP since 1997

SWINDON SOUTH

Labour target (55) from Conservative

Swindon South: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	36.9	19,687	41.8	+4.9	29	34
Labour	40.4	16,143	34.3	-6.2	32	34
Lib Dem	17.0	8,305	17.6	+0.6	13	7
UKIP	2.2	2,029	4.3		20	20
Majority	Lab 3.5	3,544	Con 7.5		Lab 3	Tie
Turnout			64.9			12/2014

Swindon South: constituency history (Swindon 1945-92)																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	C	C	C	L	L	L	C	

Swindon South: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	13.4	531
Full time student	6.4	409
Owner occupied	61.8	452
Higher prof/man	10.9	214
White British	80.1	(489)

Swindon South is the older part of the rapidly developing town of Swindon, stretching basically between the main railway line and the borough boundary south of the town in the Wiltshire downs. Its neighbourhoods include the more up-market areas of the town such as Lawn and Old Town, and some of the older council-built estates, and the town centre. Its neighbourhoods are more differentiated than those in Swindon North. When Swindon was divided into two seats before the 1997 election, it was expected that South would be the more Conservative of the two but things have not turned out that way.

While the Conservatives seem to have established a firm grip on North since gaining the seat in 2010, the situation in South remains competitive and Labour has led – slightly – in local elections. The 2015 election is a rematch between former MP Anne Snelgrove and the pro-European Conservative MP Robert Buckland, and is likely to be a close major-party battle.

Swindon South: the candidates		
Conservative	Robert Buckland	MP since 2010
Labour	Anne Snelgrove	MP 2005-10

TAUNTON DEANE

Conservative target from Liberal Democrats

Taunton Deane: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	41.1	24,538	42.2	+1.1	29	34
Labour	12.1	2,967	5.1	-7.0	14	14
Lib Dem	44.4	28,531	49.1	+4.7	27	30
UKIP	2.4	2,114	3.6		18	15
Majority	LD 3.3	3,993	LD 6.6		Con 2	Con 4
Turnout			70.5			09/2014

Taunton Deane: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	LD	C	LD	LD

Taunton Deane: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	20.0	136
Full time student	6.8	335
Owner occupied	66.9	329
Higher prof/man	9.8	284
White British	93.5	(204)

The mid Somerset seat of Taunton (unnecessarily renamed 'Taunton Deane' in 2010) has an unusual distinction in having turfed out its incumbent MP in three successive elections (1997, 2001, 2005) but the curse was broken by Lib Dem Jeremy Browne when he won re-election in 2010. Browne's career seemed to be prospering until his unexpected dismissal from the government and it seems that he leant too far to the right on economic issues even for Nick Clegg's tastes.

The Lib Dem hold on Taunton was already looking a bit shaky, but Browne's late 2014 decision not to contest the seat again has probably dealt a fatal blow to their chances of fending off the Conservatives in Taunton. When Conservative candidate Rebecca Pow wins the seat in May, some of Browne's former colleagues will probably regard it as a swing to the left.

Taunton Deane: the candidates		
Conservative	Rebecca Pow	
Lib Dem	TBA	

THURROCK

Labour target (2) from Conservative; UKIP target from Conservative

Thurrock: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	33.2	16,869	36.8	+3.6	24	28
Labour	46.2	16,777	36.6	-9.6	33	30
Lib Dem	11.1	4,901	10.7	-0.4	3	2
UKIP	3.4	3,390	7.4		40	36
Majority	Lab 13.0	92	Con 0.2		UKIP 7	UKIP 6
Turnout			59.1			07/2014

Thurrock: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	C	L	L	L	L	C

Thurrock: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	11.3	583
Full time student	6.2	446
Owner occupied	61.6	456
Higher prof/man	6.8	505
White British	76.5	(518)

Thurrock is the south west corner of Essex, a low-lying area in the shadow of the Dartford bridge. The main towns are Grays, Purfleet and the London dock town of Tilbury, although it is also known for the Lakeside shopping mall. Thurrock has generally been a Labour constituency since it was formed in 1950, with only two Conservative victories – 1987 and 2010. It was therefore a particularly disappointing loss for Labour in 2010. Thurrock is a working class seat, with a high rate of economic activity (particularly in retailing and transport) and hard-pressed mortgage holders and council tenants. It has an increasingly large African community (27th largest in England and Wales), a new feature in what was practically an all-white seat when the Tories won it in 1987. Labour gained the council in 2012, but UKIP gains deprived the party of control in 2014.

It is one of UKIP's front rank targets, as well as Labour's. The BNP and UKIP combined were already on 15 per cent in 2010 and the close Labour/ Conservative fight means that it could be won with well under 40 per cent. Their candidate, MEP and policy chief Tim Akers, is one of their best advocates. But Polly Billington is a no-nonsense, clever and tough candidate and the contest in this corner of Essex will be one of the most interesting and unpredictable of 2015.

Thurrock: the candidates		
Conservative	Jackie Doyle-Price	MP since 2010
Labour	Polly Billington	
UKIP	Tim Akers	MEP since 2014

TORBAY

Conservative target from Liberal Democrats

Torbay: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	35.8	19,048	38.7	+3.0	-	30
Labour	14.5	3,231	6.6	-7.9	-	15
Lib Dem	41.8	23,126	47.0	+5.2	-	30
UKIP	8.0	2,628	5.3		-	21
					-	
Majority	LD 6.0	4,078	LD 8.3		-	Tie
Turnout					-	09/2014

Torbay: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	LD	LD	LD	LD

Torbay: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	22.5	41
Full time student	5.7	549
Owner occupied	64.9	385
Higher prof/man	6.4	530
White British	94.1	(214)

The 'Devon Riviera' went Liberal Democrat by a majority of 12 votes in 1997, but rather more comfortably since then and incumbent MP Adrian Sanders has built up a strong personal position against successive determined Conservative challenges. The politics of the town can be unpredictable, with some big swings in local elections and occasional transfers of allegiance: the Conservative mayor elected in 2005 had previously been a Liberal parliamentary candidate, and stood for re-election in 2011 as an Independent. He was defeated by a Conservative who had stood as an Independent in 2005... Throughout all this, Sanders of the Riviera has stayed the course as a rather left of centre Lib Dem for the town best known for a fictional resident, Basil Fawlty, whose views are probably closer to UKIP.

Torbay: the candidates		
Conservative	Kevin Foster	
Lib Dem	Adrian Sanders	MP since 1997

WALSALL NORTH

Conservative target from Labour; UKIP target from Labour

Walsall North: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	27.4	12,395	34.3	+6.8	21	-
Labour	48.2	13,385	37.0	-11.2	35	-
Lib Dem	12.4	4,754	13.1	+0.8	9	-
UKIP	3.7	1,737	4.8	+1.1	31	-
BNP		2,930	8.1			
Majority	Lab 20.8	990	Lab 2.7		Lab 4 (14)	-
Turnout			55.5			

Walsall North: constituency history																		
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10	
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L

Walsall North: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	15.5	419
Full time student	6.6	366
Owner occupied	55.2	539
Higher prof/man	4.3	637
White British	84.7	490

Walsall North, like Dudley North, is an oddity – a West Midland seat that has been loyal to Labour except in a by-election (this one was in 1976), but where the Conservatives have come close in the past and where there was a strong swing to the Tories in 2010. Labour's majority has, ever since the by-election loss in 1976, been a bit deficient for a seat with such solidly working class demographics. There are only 13 more seats with a lower proportion of senior professional and managerial workers. Bloxwich and Willenhall, the core of the seat, are gritty urban industrial towns.

David Winnick is a veteran MP now (born in 1933) and will, with the retirement of Peter Tapsell, be the only MP in the House who had served before the 1970 election (Winnick had previously been the MP for the marginal seat of Croydon South from 1966 to 1970). That is, if he holds the seat. Like several other seats that had high pro-Tory swings in 2010 (Cannock Chase is not far away) it is now one of UKIP's stronger areas, and the election is in a state of uncertainty – will UKIP throw the seat to the Conservatives, or will the Tories fade away? Can UKIP actually win it on a split vote?

Walsall North: the candidates		
Conservative	Douglas Hansen-Luke	
Labour	David Winnick	MP since 1979
UKIP	Liz Hazell	

WARRINGTON SOUTH

Labour target from Conservative

Warrington South: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	32.1	19,641	35.8	+3.7	23	29
Labour	41.2	18,088	33.0	-8.3	36	37
Lib Dem	24.0	15,094	27.5	+3.5	29	15
UKIP	1.8	1,624	3.0		11	15
Majority	Lab 9.2	1,553	Con 2.8		Lab 7 (13)	Lab 8
Turnout			68.2			08/2014

Warrington South: constituency history (Runcorn pre-1983)																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	L	C

Warrington South: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	16.1	375
Full time student	6.3	417
Owner occupied	75.1	68
Higher prof/man	14.1	97
White British	92.5	313

Warrington South is the more middle class half of industrial Warrington. It is a peculiarly shaped constituency including the western suburbs around Great Sankey, the town centre and suburbs lying south of the Mersey at Latchford and Appleton, extending to the well-heeled commuter village of Lymm.

There is a large Liberal Democrat vote to squeeze in Warrington South, much of which seems left-inclined judging by the very high pro-Labour swings in many wards in local elections reflected in big Labour leads across the seat. However, there are also a lot of classic middle-ground swing voters in the privately developed estates who may be swayed by arguments about the economy. Labour's candidate Nick Bent looks likely to win the seat, after having lost narrowly in 2010, but nothing is certain.

Warrington South: the candidates		
Conservative	David Mowat	MP since 2010
Labour	Nick Bent	

WATFORD

Labour target from Conservative; Lib Dem target from Conservative

Watford: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	29.6	19,291	34.9	+5.3	19	30 (27)
Labour	33.5	14,750	26.7	-6.8	24	24 (29)
Lib Dem	31.2	17,866	32.4	+1.1	36	28 (25)
UKIP	2.6	1,199	2.2		15	14 (14)
Majority		1,425	Con 2.5		LD 12	Con 2 (Lab 2)
Turnout			68.3			11/2014 (09/2014)

Watford: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	L	L	C	C	L	L	L	L	L	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C

Watford: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	13.3	535
Full time student	7.6	249
Owner occupied	64.7	392
Higher prof/man	12.3	158
White British	66.0	552

Watford is, historically, a seat that swings with the national tide (although it stuck with Labour in 1951 and 1970). It has maintained this tendency, being a Labour gain in 1997 that reverted to the Tories in 2010, but it is no longer a typical marginal seat. The Liberal Democrats, and their elected mayor Dorothy Thornhill, have risen to dominance in local elections and they have challenged strongly in the last two general elections. The Conservatives were third in 2005 and Labour were in 2010, and it is effectively a three-way contest.

The Liberal Democrats have stayed ahead in all the local elections since 2010, and are running their strongest candidate – the popular Mayor Thornhill. However, as previous elections have shown, the local Lib Dem vote does not fully translate into general election voting and there could still be a squeeze between the incumbent Tory MP and Labour over which party should lead the next government.

Watford: the candidates		
Conservative	Richard Harrington	MP since 2010
Labour	Matthew Turmaine	
Lib Dem	Dorothy Thornhill	Mayor since 2002

WAVENEY

Labour target (12) from Conservative; UKIP target from Conservative

Waveney: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	33.4	20,571	40.2	+6.9	30	28
Labour	45.4	19,802	38.7	-6.6	28	37
Lib Dem	15.1	6,811	13.3	-1.8	4	3
UKIP	3.8	2,684	5.3		25	22
Majority	Lab 12.0	769	Con 1.5		Con 2	Lab 9
Turnout			68.3			07/2014

Waveney: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	L	L	L	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C

Waveney: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	22.9	38
Full time student	5.5	580
Owner occupied	69.1	247
Higher prof/man	6.1	552
White British	95.7	(167)

The Waveney constituency is based on the port town of Lowestoft in Suffolk, although it extends into the hinterland a bit to include the towns of Beccles and Bungay. Lowestoft is historically a fishing town but faces economic problems, an ageing population and a lack of infrastructure, a classic 'left behind' area that has swung between Conservative and Labour and now seems inclined to UKIP. In the 2013 local elections UKIP did extremely well, winning some formerly Labour areas such as Oulton and Lowestoft South; the idea that the rise of UKIP only hurts the Tories is clearly not the case in seats such as Waveney.

Bob Blizzard, MP for the seat from 1997 until 2010, was reselected early in this parliament and has been campaigning hard, and has a lot of local credibility. But both main parties are weakened not only by UKIP but also the Greens, who polled 12 per cent in the 2013 elections. Local Greens have cast tactical votes for Blizzard in the past, and Labour's chances may depend on how many votes the various insurgent parties take.

Waveney: the candidates		
Conservative	Peter Aldous	MP since 2010
Labour	Bob Blizzard	MP 1997-2010
UKIP	Simon Tobin	

WELLS

Conservative target from Liberal Democrats

Wells: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2013 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	43.6	23,760	42.5	-1.0	38	35
Labour	15.6	4,198	7.5	-8.1	12	13
Lib Dem	37.8	24,560	44.0	+6.2	25	28
UKIP	3.0	1,711	3.1		16	16
Majority	Con 5.7	800	LD 1.5		Con 13	Con 7
Turnout			70.3			08/2014

Wells: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	LD

Wells: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	21.6	70
Full time student	6.8	328
Owner occupied	71.8	169
Higher prof/man	9.5	296
White British	94.7	(121)

The Wells constituency in Somerset has been a long-term Liberal Democrat hope – they have run the Conservatives close several times in recent years, and it was one of their rare breakthroughs in 2010. The constituency is based on several small towns and a rural area in the north of the current county of Somerset, with the small cathedral city of Wells and the new-age town of Glastonbury at its core giving a slight air of mystery to the area.

While the Conservatives should be in a position to win such a marginal seat, they have not opened up a dominant position against the Liberal Democrats and it often happens that Lib Dem MPs facing their first election as incumbents can do a lot better than the national trend. The neighbouring seat of Somerton & Frome has seen David Heath win narrowly four times with very little swing between each election, and Tessa Munt can be hopeful of pulling off a similar feat if she keeps in close touch with her constituency.

Wells: the candidates		
Conservative	James Heapey	
Lib Dem	Tessa Munt	MP since 2010

WIRRAL WEST

Labour target (49) from Conservative

Wirral West: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	41.8	16,726	42.5	+0.7	37	38
Labour	40.3	14,290	36.3	-4.0	30	39
Lib Dem	16.4	6,630	16.8	+0.5	9	6
UKIP	1.2	899	2.3		17	12
Majority	Con 1.5	2,436	Con 6.2		Con 7	Lab 1
Turnout			71.5			11/2014

Wirral West: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	L	L	C

Wirral West: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	22.9	37
Full time student	7.0	296
Owner occupied	78.6	28
Higher prof/man	13.0	137
White British	95.4	193

Wirral West was one of the most surprising Labour victories in 1997, and was a powerful symbol of the Conservatives' long term decline in Merseyside. The constituency is composed mostly of affluent suburbs and retirement towns along the Dee, such as West Kirby and Hoylake, and had previously been regarded as a safe Tory seat. Tory candidate (now minister) Esther McVey regained it in 2010 with the help of boundary changes, but by a margin that seems shaky and vulnerable to any Labour recovery.

However, the Conservatives are still a force and have been consistently ahead in local elections (although their local election vote in Wirral frequently outruns their general election performance), despite recent Labour inroads even in some of the upmarket areas like Pensby. The long-term regional change on Merseyside probably means that this will never recover its safe Conservative status and may be Labour even in close elections in future.

Wirral West: the candidates		
Conservative	Esther McVey	MP since 2010
Labour	Margaret Greenwood	

WYRE FOREST

Independent target from Conservative

Wyre Forest: election results and recent indicators						
	2005 %	2010	2010 %	Change %	LG 2014 %	Ashcroft %
Conservative	29.1	18,793	36.9	+7.8	25	32
Labour	22.6	7,298	14.3	-8.2	21	16
Lib Dem		6,040	11.9			7
UKIP	2.3	1,498	2.9		24	27
Ind./ KHHC	38.6	16,150	31.7		20	(18)
Majority	K 9.5	2,643	Con 5.2		Con 1	Con 5
Turnout			66.4			11/2014

Wyre Forest: constituency history																	
45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74	74	79	83	87	92	97	01	05	10
L	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	L	I	I	C

Wyre Forest: the demographics		
	Percentage	Constituency rank
Aged over 65	20.9	102
Aged 16-24	5.4	594
Owner occupied	70.6	202
Higher prof/man	8.6	355
White British	94.7	201

Wyre Forest in Worcestershire (no relation to the Wyre in Lancashire) is based around Kidderminster, although it includes Bewdley (with its associations with Stanley Baldwin). Most of the time the constituency has been Conservative, but it has gone Labour on high swings in the national landslides of 1945 and 1997. But, in an early localist revolt against politics as usual, the closure of the A&E department at Kidderminster hospital led to another political shake-up and the victory of Dr Richard Taylor, a hospital campaigner, in 2001. Taylor held the seat with a smaller majority in 2005 but lost it in 2010 as the Conservative vote recovered.

Wyre Forest remains an unpredictable and volatile political micro-climate; the tactical position is far from clear – both the Conservatives and Dr Taylor, based on the 2010 voters, seem like strong contenders but there is a Labour vote and UKIP seems to poll reasonably well here.

Wyre Forest: the candidates		
Conservative	Mark Garnier	MP since 2010
Labour	Matt Lamb	
UKIP	Michael Wrench	
Independent	Richard Taylor	MP 2001-10