

Progress

Election 2015 Supplement

Battleground briefing

The seats that
will decide who
makes it to No 10



The challenge ahead

Now is the time for policies that will capture the imagination of the electorate within battleground constituencies, argues **Kevin Craig**

The Battleground Briefing is another excellent resource from Progress which, nationally and locally, has a pivotal role to play in helping the Labour party return to power in 2015.

It is a real honour to be able to contribute to and support this publication. As a child of Irish immigrants, who came over at the same time as the Windrush generation, growing up on a council estate in Lambeth and attending a local state school, Labour has always been the natural party for me and my family, the one that seemed to care for every class and creed in this amazing country. In the 1970s and 1980s, Labour stopped listening to the electorate, who promptly returned the favour. The chance to actually win power and deliver change was secured only because of the radical transformation of the 1990s and beyond: embracing both aspiration and fairness, sound economics and progressive social justice. That willingness to take risks will be needed again in the coming months. Progress has a big role to play.

Progress was established in 1996 with the clear aim of ensuring there was no repeat of the 1992 general election, the last occasion on which a Conservative government was elected with an overall majority. David Cameron and George Osborne were involved in that campaign first hand and they are using a similar strategy to the one deployed back then: Don't trust Labour on tax or the economy. Vote Farage? You'll get Miliband – don't let Labour in by the back door. These are the fears which they want to dominate the months leading up to May 2015.

As Labour seeks to win the target seats profiled in this briefing, the debate must be framed to address these issues and to tackle the wider concerns of the electorate. In approaching the general election, Labour must not be afraid to be as radical now as it was in the 1990s, while recognising that the context is, of course, different. Exciting, brave, optimistic and distinct policies tackling perennial issues are essential in a world where the Conservatives now champion the minimum wage and holding the Liberal Democrats to account is like nailing jelly to the wall. Is Labour aggressively tapping into the business community? Is Labour going to make education so good that it might put most private schools out of business? Will Labour replicate what Stevenage council is doing by building many more houses? Will Labour make the UK the best place in the world to start a business? Will Labour address immigration positively? These are all big issues in the battleground seats.

Polling shows that the key issues in this election continue to be the economy, immigration, unemployment and the NHS. The only real change we have seen in the past year, according to Ipsos MORI, is immigration supplanting unemployment as the second most important issue for most Britons – this is driven, no doubt, by the rise of the United Kingdom Independence party in the media. Policies that are bold, and that resonate with people for whom politics is a fleeting consideration in full and often tough lives, are critical to Labour's success in 2015.

Ed Miliband and his team have made a strategic assumption that the British electorate in 2015 will be slightly more prepared to elect a government that, in simple terms, is more leftwing than New Labour was in 1997. I now think that this strategic assumption may not prove a barrier to winning. New Labour in 1997 was suitable for a Britain tired of 18 years of Conservative government, but the same offer will not win in 2015.

Now is the time for policies that will capture the imagination of the electorate within these battleground constituencies. It is time to be radical and robust in developing these policies and in communicating them. Labour has stolen a march with the cost of living crisis agenda, and needs to build on this. With the right policies in place, with some hugely impressive candidates fighting for these seats and under the strategically savvy leadership of Miliband, these battleground seats can fall to Labour and return, against all the expectations following the general election of 2010, a Labour or Labour-led government in 2015.

Labour party organisers across the country have been electrified by the effect of the cost of living agenda and energy price freeze campaign on the doorstep. The Labour party needs to deliver more such policies. Labour needs Miliband to continue to hold his nerve, avoid gaffes, build a broad church and confound many of his early doubters. Labour has never been better organised on the ground. Labour has people. The Conservatives have money. The Liberal Democrats have many embedded, agile and locally astute MPs. But the candidates in this booklet are all so impressive – Chris Matheson, Suzy Stride, Polly Billington, Jessica Asato, Neil Coyle, Sophy Gardner, to name but a few. They deserve the right policies. They deserve the continued surefootedness shown by Miliband to date that builds on the lead of the last six months and which will finish the job.

The outward-looking radical tradition of Progress can be delivered – even if it is not the Miliband brother that many thought, or expected, to be doing it. [P](#)

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Kevin Craig is a former Labour parliamentary candidate and councillor, and founder of PLMR, Political Lobbying and Media Relations Ltd. Founded in 2006, PLMR now has a 30-strong team of consultants and was named Consultancy of the Year 2013-14 at the Public Affairs News Awards. It is a former Employer of the Year in the London borough of Lambeth and donates five per cent of net profits to charitable causes.

Battleground Britain

Forty years ago this month, Harold Wilson led Labour back to power and ejected Edward Heath from Downing Street. It was hardly a resounding victory: Labour won fewer votes but a handful more seats than the Tories, and Wilson was 17 seats short of a majority, forcing him to call a second general election only eight months later. Nonetheless, it was a historic one: there is not a single other example in the last 80 years of a new government being ejected from office after a single term.

So, while the general elections of 1945, 1979 and 1997 are rightly deemed to be milestones in postwar British political history, if Ed Miliband leads Labour to victory in 2015, that achievement will instantly earn itself a place in the history books.

This guide by Lewis Baston, a contributing editor to Progress magazine and senior research fellow at Democratic Audit, profiles the 106 seats on Labour's target list and maps the party's path to power. It is part of Progress' Campaign for a Labour Majority, launched last May. That campaign is both optimistic and ambitious for Labour, while realistic about the challenges the party faces.

As Peter Kellner, the president of YouGov, argued in *Majority Rules*, the pamphlet with which we launched the campaign last year, not only is Labour attempting a comeback which no other opposition has achieved in decades, its polling performance since 2010 remains somewhat short of that required to win outright in 2015. 'No opposition party has gone on to win without at some point achieving a lead of at least 20 per cent,' Kellner wrote – and even that is no guarantee, as Neil Kinnock, who led Labour to a 23-point lead two years before the 1992 general election, discovered to his cost. None of this is to negate the achievements of Miliband's leadership since 2010. He has kept the progressive vote united behind Labour and the party has largely avoided the kind of rancour and internecine infighting into which it fell on previous occasions when it lost office.

Nonetheless, with less than 15 months until polling day, Labour has three principal challenges. First, as Baston noted in *Marginal Difference*, an analysis of marginal seats published by Progress in 2011, 'merely holding Liberal Democrat converts is enough to make it impossible for the other parties to form a non-Labour government but not enough for Labour to win a working majority'. Indeed, from the party's list of target seats, Kellner concluded that Labour probably needs to take 60 directly from the Conservatives. And, moreover, 57 of these are likely to be defended by Tory candidates standing for re-election for the first time; such incumbents, Kellner estimated, normally receive a 'bonus' of 1,000–2,000 votes. These calculations suggest that the party may need a national swing of seven per cent, and a similar-sized lead in the national vote. The metric for Labour's next phase has to be the number of those who voted Tory in 2010 who can be persuaded to vote Labour in 2015.

Second, both polling for Progress by YouGov last May and a special series of workshops in four of Labour's target seats conducted for us by BritainThinks after the party conference season last year confirms that, while the party is seen as 'on the side of people like you', its ability to take tough and unpopular decisions is still called into question. This weakness, suggested Kellner, could prove critical in a tight election campaign. To tackle these perceptions, Progress believes Labour must do four things. First, demonstrate that it has a credible plan to both grow the economy and deliver Miliband's pledge to eliminate the deficit.


Second, the tight public finances which an incoming Labour government will inherit demand the maximum return on every pound of taxpayers' money spent, hence the development of a compelling programme of public service reform and innovation.

Third, in place of the coalition's divisive politics of 'strivers versus shirkers', Labour needs to rebuild public confidence in the welfare state. The Beveridge settlement was underpinned by full employment, the contributory principle and conditionality: the notion that all those capable of work must do so. These principles are as relevant today as they were in 1942.

Fourth, Labour needs to demonstrate it has answers to two critical long-term challenges: those of social care and childcare. Each are important in their own right, but, tackled together, a move towards universal childcare and elderly care will help, respectively, to drive up employment and relieve pressure on the health service.

This policy prescription is, however, not simply about winning, it is also about governing. Since the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008, the European centre-left has had a torrid time, defeated in election after election. And in two of those rare instances in which social democratic parties have triumphed – in Denmark in 2011 and France in 2012 – the failure to prepare voters for the tough times and choices which lay ahead has provoked disillusionment and a rise in support for far-right parties.

The final challenge facing Labour is to widen the party's electoral map to focus on the seats Miliband needs to win to achieve an overall majority. As part of the Campaign for a Labour Majority, Progress has sought to throw a spotlight on the 'Frontline 40'. Using Labour's 106 target seats, we have identified the 40 seats, the first of which, beyond the first 66 gains, will produce a Labour majority of one. Target 67, Norwich North, represents ground zero in the battle for a Labour majority. Win all 'Frontline 40' seats which follow it and Miliband will lead a government with a majority of 80.

As Baston suggests in his introduction to this guide, 'this is a "One Nation" target list in terms of its geographical spread and social characteristics.' In order to succeed, Labour needs a strategy, message and vision that are similarly broad. Recalling the events of 40 years ago reminds us just how high, and historic, the stakes are. 

EDITORIAL

If Ed Miliband leads Labour to victory in 2015, that achievement will instantly earn itself a place in the history books

Labour's road to victory

Introducing this special Progress supplement, **Lewis Baston** surveys the battleground on which Labour has chosen to fight the next election



Ed Miliband has a 'One Nation' target list

Labour's target list in the 2015 election includes 106 constituencies that the party aims to add to the 258 seats it won in the general election of 2010. If the party were to hit all the targets, it would have 366 seats and therefore a comfortable overall majority of 83 in the House of Commons – more than in 2005 but less than in the next most comparable election, Harold Wilson's landslide of 1966. This is an ambitious target, but not an impossible one – it is almost identical to the number of gains the Conservatives made in 2010. One has already been made, in the Corby by-election of November 2012, and two seats that were Labour in 2010 no longer are because of a member of parliament losing the whip (Falkirk) and a by-election loss (Bradford West).

There are two intermediate staging-posts on the way to that comfortable overall majority. It would take a gain of 27 seats – this list only as far as Brentford and Isleworth – in order for Labour to become the largest single party in a hung parliament and therefore most likely to lead a government. To win exactly half the seats in a 650-seat House of Commons, a party needs to win 325 seats, which means 67 net gains. If Labour gets to 325

MPs, it will in practice have a tiny overall majority because Sinn Fein MPs do not take their seats and the speaker does not vote unless there is a tie.

However, such a bare majority is insufficient to ensure that a Labour government has the authority to overcome potential obstacles and implement its policies. A solid grip on power requires breaking into the 'Frontline 40' that lie beyond the first 66 gains. Even if Labour wins the election with a good majority, there will probably be one or two of the first 66 constituencies that fail to come over because regional and local variations are becoming more important in election outcomes. By crafting an effective national message, selecting good candidates, listening to voters and running intelligent and locally appropriate campaigns, Labour can do a lot to maximise its gains among the first 66 target seats as well as the Frontline 40.

Target seats are to be found in every one of the 11 electoral regions of mainland Britain, from Plymouth in the south-west to Dundee in Scotland and from Preseli Pembrokeshire in Wales to Waveney in the east. Even among the 27 needed to just overtake the Conservatives, there are seats

	First 27	Next 39	Frontline 40	Total	From Con	From LD	From Others
SOUTH	8	8	15	31	27	3	1
Eastern	4	3	6	13	11	2	0
South-east	2	2	5	9	8	0	1
South-west	2	3	4	9	8	1	0
LONDON	3	4	5	12	9	3	0
MIDLANDS	6	9	8	23	22	1	0
East Mids	4	3	1	8	8	0	0
West Mids	2	6	7	15	14	1	0
NORTH	9	9	9	27	22	5	0
North-east	1	0	1	2	1	1	0
North-west	5	7	3	15	13	2	0
Yorks/Humber	3	2	5	10	8	2	0
SCOTLAND	0	5	0	5	1	3	1
WALES	1	4	3	8	5	1	2
Total	27	39	40	106	86	16	4

in every electoral region other than Scotland. The richest concentrations of marginal seats, however, are to be found in the north-west and west Midlands, which have traditionally been the swing regions in British elections. One should also note the importance of the east of England, Labour's worst region in the 2010 election and one where the party has a lot of recovering to do.

As one might expect, the vast bulk of the target seats are currently held by the Conservatives – 86 out of 106. There are 16 Liberal Democrat seats on the list (one or two others, particularly in Scotland, might be worth a shot as well), and four held by other parties. However, the electoral situation varies in these Conservative-held seats. In some, the Tories won in 2010 with a pretty low share of the vote because the vote was split between several parties, as in Northampton North, target number 39, which they won with 34 per cent compared to 29 per cent for Labour. In others, the Conservatives won more convincingly, for instance in Harlow, target number 81, where they polled 45 per cent support and Labour was on 34 per cent. Winning over Liberal Democrats is enough to win in places like Northampton North, but to make deep inroads in the target list requires knocking the Conservatives down a bit in seats where they did well in 2010.

The vast majority of the target seats are urban or suburban. There are some rural targets in Wales (the Carmarthen and Pembroke seats), a couple of vague prospects in Scotland, and some scattered special cases in England such as Stroud, where David Drew gathered a particularly strong personal vote during his time as member of parliament between 1997 and 2010. Back in 1945 Labour was strong in rural Norfolk but those days are long gone. There are also few seats from the big cities of the Midlands and north. These were once battlegrounds – Labour's majority in 1964 was achieved with four gains from the Conservatives in Liverpool – but the target seats there are now mostly Liberal Democrat outposts, such as Birmingham Yardley and Manchester Withington.

Although each marginal seat has its individual features, there are some broad groups that can be identified. One such group, particularly strongly represented among those seats that make the difference between being the largest single party and having a majority, are constituencies that basically consist of one free-standing town whose demographics are close to the national averages and which therefore tends to reflect the national mood. Most of what one can write about the political prospects for Chester or Worcester can also be applied to Gloucester or Lincoln. There is another group of seats, either side of the Pennines, whose members have the uncanny ability to pick the national winner time after time despite their apparently unusual local politics

and social changes brought on by immigration and home-ownership. These include Keighley, Pendle and Colne Valley.

Then there is a group of target seats where Labour's performance in 2010 was particularly bad. Losing some of these apparently reliable seats, like Thurrock and Cannock Chase, was a bitter and unexpected blow, but in others, particularly in the New Towns of the south and Midlands like Stevenage and Tamworth, the switch to the Tories was no surprise. Labour's performance in the New Towns has often been disappointing; their voters seem particularly volatile and difficult to convince.

By contrast, some of the seats where Labour was not far behind in 2010 had been considered unwinnable, or winnable only in huge landslides, before 1997. The prospect of seaside areas such as Hove or Morecambe, and northern and London suburbs like Wirral West and Hendon, being 'must-win' seats for Labour would have been absurd in 1992.

Most of the target seats were Labour in 2005, with a few rare exceptions mostly to be found in Scotland. A couple of the targets are Liberal Democrat constituencies that have never voted Labour before, including Edinburgh West and Argyll and Bute, although low swings in a couple of marginal seats that went Conservative in 2005 have meant that these retain their place high up the target list. Ilford North and Peterborough fall into this category.

People sometimes ask whether there is one seat that can represent the nation as a whole. There are some that seem to get the winner right most of the time, but one should be cautious. Gravesham still has the best record since 1918, but in 2005 it got it 'wrong'. South Derbyshire has a perfect record since 1964, but its 14-point Tory margin in 2010 is well above the national average (seven points). If Labour ends up winning narrowly in 2015, one can expect South Derbyshire and Harlow to stay Conservative; likewise, Labour might win Broxtowe, despite its slight Tory lean in the past, or Bury North even if the Tories are staying in power nationally. Pendle got the national shares of the vote as 'right' as anywhere in 2005 and 2010, but it is far from typical of the nation.

In conclusion, this is a 'One Nation' target list, in terms of its geographical spread and social characteristics. A handful will respond particularly strongly to individual policies, but most need the same sort of thing. Winning the bulk of them is challenging, but not very complicated: having a strong, credible national message that is well communicated; good candidates in place; a dialogue with local voters; and good organisation. Nearly all the candidates have now been selected. The campaign is already under way. [P](#)

Lewis Baston is senior research fellow at Democratic Audit and a contributing editor to Progress

1 North Warwickshire

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
WM	54	40.2	40.1	11.6	2.8	Mike O'Brien

North Warwickshire is part of the former Midlands mining and industrial belt but is still mostly a working-class area of villages and small towns. The largest town is Bedworth, although it also includes places such as Atherstone and Coleshill. The tangle of motorways where the M42 and M6 meet make it an attractive location for distribution centres. There is a Birmingham commuter element around Water Orton. Local election results here were disappointing in 2011 but much improved in 2013, with a 49-27 Labour lead over the Conservatives and some good results even in commuter country. Bedworth turned in some very solid Labour results. Mike O'Brien fights to regain the seat he held from 1992 until his narrow loss in 2010.

2 Thurrock

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EE	92	36.8	36.6	10.7	7.4	Polly Billington

Thurrock is the south-west corner of Essex, a low-lying area in the shadow of the Dartford bridge. Generally held by Labour since it was formed in 1950, it has seen only two Conservative victories, in 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 and hard-pressed mortgage-holders and council tenants. It has an increasingly large African community, 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 the United Kingdom Independence party has shown strength in the area.

3 Hendon

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
LN	106	42.3	42.1	12.4	2.1	Andrew Dismore

Labour lost Hendon, a seat whose predecessor it had only held in 1945, by a tiny margin in 2010. There has been a long-term swing to the party in this outer suburb of north London as it has become a hyper-diverse area. The seat is a mix of London suburban territory, including council estates, and some affluent areas around Hendon. Its Jewish community is the second highest in the country. Andrew Dismore won a massive victory in the 2012 London assembly election, carrying Hendon by a 25-point margin even while Boris Johnson won it in the mayoral election by 18 points. Candidates clearly matter here, and Labour will be hoping the contrast between Dismore and incumbent Matthew Offord will work to its advantage.

4 Cardiff North

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	PC 2010 %	Candidate
WA	194	37.5	37.1	18.3	3.3	Mari Williams

Cardiff North consists of a belt of suburbs lying either side of the M4. Labour is strongest in the Llandaff North ward in the west, but many 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 but Labour won it in 1997 and lost it only narrowly in 2010. In 2011 former MP Julie Morgan regained the assembly seat for Labour, which the party lost in 2007. With a strong candidate in Mari Williams, and incumbent Conservative MP Jonathan Evans standing down, this is a promising Labour target.

5 Sherwood

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EM	214	39.2	38.8	14.9	3.0	Leonie Mathers

Sherwood lies to the north of Nottingham in what used to be the heart of the Nottinghamshire coalfield. It is still the 21st most mining-influenced constituency in England and Wales, but in 2011 this involved just 306 people working in the industry. To general bafflement the seat went Conservative in its first election in 1983, but normal service was resumed when Labour gained the seat in 1992. When Paddy Tipping retired in 2010, the Conservatives squeaked home on a large 8.2 per cent swing. This is a white working-class Midlands seat of the sort where the Conservatives did historically well in 2010. Labour led by about eight points in the 2013 county council elections.



Charles Clarke lost here in 2010

Jason Byr/Reax

6 Norwich South (LIBERAL DEMOCRAT)

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Green 2010 %	Candidate
EE	310	22.9	28.7	29.4	14.9	Clive Lewis

Norwich South was one of the stranger Labour losses in 2010. Former home secretary Charles Clarke was defeated by a Liberal Democrat, despite the fall in that party's own vote. Until the 2000s Norwich was a reliably Labour city in local elections, but first the Liberal Democrats and then the Greens have mounted challenges. Norwich South contains most of the student population and suburbs inhabited by liberal professionals. It also contains the city centre and some of Norwich's large social housing sector – only 30 constituencies in England and Wales have a higher proportion of council tenants. It is a very attractive target for Labour in 2015.

7 Stockton South						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
NE	332	38.9	38.3	15.1	2.9	Louise Baldock

Stockton South has a bizarre electoral history of outlandishly high swings and freak results, and was lost in 2010 on a swing of seven per cent. It is quite close to national average demographics, but the proportion of people who own their homes with a mortgage stands at 42 per cent, the fourth highest in England and Wales. Transplanted to southern England this might be a Conservative-inclined constituency, but in the north-east it is close enough to be one of the apparently easier Labour targets. However, it would be foolish to take it for granted given its volatile nature; the Tories gained it from the Social Democrats in 1987 and held on with a big increase in their vote in 1992.

8 Broxtowe						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EM	389	39.0	38.3	16.9	2.3	Nick Palmer

Broxtowe is a narrow strip of Nottinghamshire between Nottingham and the Derbyshire border centred on the town of Beeston. Nick Palmer gained the seat in 1997 and represented it until losing it 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, but this does not seem to translate into general elections. Labour had a very narrow lead in the 2013 county council elections, suggesting that this is a tough fight the party cannot be complacent about.

9 Lancaster and Fleetwood						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
NW	333	36.1	35.3	19.1	2.4	Cat Smith

Lancaster and Fleetwood was a new creation for the 2010 general election. As the name suggests, it is based mostly on two towns, and these are non-contiguous by road. It is one of the 25 most student-dominated seats of any in England and Wales. Labour and the Greens dominate Lancaster city, while Fleetwood, a seaside and fishing area, has some strong Labour areas but also sustains a Tory vote. Labour were 10 points ahead here in the 2013 county council elections.

10 Bradford East (LIBERAL DEMOCRAT)						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
YH	365	26.8	32.8	33.7	-	-

Many of the Liberal Democrats' high hopes in a number of northern urban constituencies in 2010 fell flat. An exception was Bradford East. The Liberal Democrats had been active in local elections for some time and their MP, David Ward, has since proved controversial. This is a deprived working-class constituency with low skills and high unemployment, with a very ethnically mixed population and there are only three seats with a higher proportion of Pakistani-British residents. The Liberal

Democrats have not been trounced in local elections here since 2011, retaining their hold on the more suburban wards. A complicating element in the politics of Bradford East arose in 2012 when Respect won two inner-city wards. That year Labour had a three-point lead over the Liberal Democrats with Respect a close third.

11 Amber Valley						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EM	536	38.6	37.4	14.4	2.0	Kevin Gillott

Amber Valley lies north of Derby and is a rather working-class constituency, 98 per cent white, with a high proportion of people employed in manufacturing. It has been prone to very high swings, amounting to 19 per cent between 1987 and 1997 and was lost in 2010 with an unusually large drop in the Labour vote – nine percentage points – for a seat defended by an incumbent. This is a key Labour-Tory battleground full of swing voters. In 2013's local elections Labour led by a healthy 16-point margin over the Tories.

12 Waveney						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EE	769	40.2	38.7	13.3	5.2	Bob Blizzard

Waveney is based on the port town of Lowestoft in Suffolk, although it extends into the hinterland to include the towns of Beccles and Bungay. Historically a fishing town, Lowestoft faces economic problems, an ageing population and a lack of infrastructure. Bob Blizzard, member of parliament for the seat from 1997 until 2010, was reelected early in this parliament and has been campaigning hard. In the 2013 local elections Ukip did extremely well, winning some formerly Labour areas; the idea that the rise of Ukip only hurts the Tories is clearly not the case in seats such as Waveney.



Getty Images

13 Wolverhampton South-west						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
WM	691	40.7	39.0	16.0	3.7	Rob Marris

Wolverhampton South-west is based on the city's centre and western suburbs; as in many cities the west side is the more affluent and middle class. From 1950 to 1974 it sent Enoch Powell to parliament, and from 1974 to 1997 it elected Nick Budgen, an MP rather in the same mould as Powell. At times it has looked safely Tory, but demographic change has made it a Labour-inclined marginal. It is now a very ethnically mixed seat. Labour's core strength is in the inner-city wards but in 2012 the party gained astonishing victories in two previously safe Tory suburbs and it looks as if Labour is building strength in this target seat.

14 Morecambe and Lunesdale

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
NW	866	41.5	39.5	13.3	4.2	Amina Lone

Morecambe and Lunesdale was one of several coastal constituencies that voted Labour for the first time ever in 1997, and the Conservatives only regained it by a narrow margin in 2010. It is the northernmost constituency in Lancashire, based around the seaside towns of Morecambe and Heysham and a more sparsely populated inland area. As with many coastal towns, the constituency has a relatively old, white population and a heavy dependence on leisure and caring-sector employment. Labour strength is concentrated in Skerton, which is the area of Lancaster lying to the north of the River Lune, and in Heysham.

15 Carlisle

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
NW	853	39.3	37.3	15.6	2.3	Lee Sherriff

Carlisle was one of Labour's most disappointing losses in 2010 – the border city had stayed with the party ever since 1964, although often with relatively small majorities. Eric Martlew stood down in 2010 and the loss of his incumbency vote may have been decisive. The constituency consists of Carlisle itself and a small rural area. It is basically a white working-class town, with some very safe Labour wards, and some more Conservative suburbs, but elections have been essentially about getting a heavy enough Labour majority in the town to outweigh rural Tory strength. Carlisle was one of Labour's best results in the county council elections of May 2013: the party racked up an 18-point lead over the Conservatives.

16 Stroud

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
SW	1,299	40.8	38.6	15.4	2.2	David Drew

Labour's David Drew has one of the most remarkable electoral records of any recent MP. Before 1997, this Gloucestershire seat had been Labour

only in 1945, and then with a tiny majority. Drew represented this seat for Labour in three parliaments and nearly held on in 2010. This is not a stereotypical slice of the rural West Country. There has always been a working-class presence and Stroud itself is something of a New Age sort of town, and one of the first places in Britain where the Green party made an impact in local politics. However, the Conservative MP will hope to gain from incumbency. Stroud should be a hard-fought battle where personal factors and local organisation will count.

17 Weaver Vale

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
NW	991	38.5	36.3	18.6	2.3	Julia Tickridge

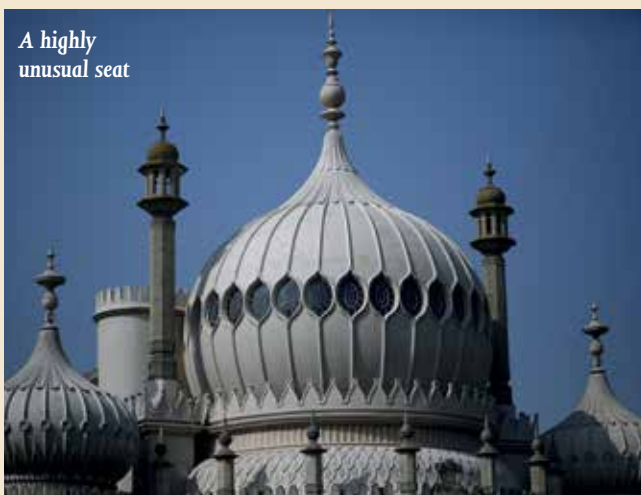
Weaver Vale in mid-Cheshire was a new seat created in 1997. It is based on Northwich, with the other main population centre being the south-eastern section of Runcorn. It would probably have voted Labour in 1992, but was lost on a high swing of eight per cent in 2010. South-east Runcorn is as hardcore Labour as the neighbouring Halton constituency – Norton South ward was 92 per cent Labour in the 2012 local elections, although the area does also include the one Tory ward in Runcorn, Daresbury. Northwich is politically mixed, with strong areas for each party, while the Conservatives dominate in the rural part of the constituency and the smaller town of Frodsham.

18 Lincoln

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EM	1,058	37.5	35.2	20.2	2.2	Lucy Rigby

Lincoln 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, on a small share of the vote, looks shaky. Demographically, the seat is quite near the national averages, although it has a significant student population and a fair amount of social housing. In a good year like 2012 Labour can win nearly all the wards in the city itself in local elections; in 2013 there was a notable result in one ward where Ukip won in a tight three-way contest with 636 votes to 635 for the Conservatives and 630 for Labour. Every last vote counts in Lincoln.

A highly unusual seat



19 Brighton Pavilion (GREEN)

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Green 2010 %	Candidate
SE	1,252	23.7	28.9	13.8	31.3	Purna Sen

Brighton Pavilion is an unusual constituency, as might be expected given that it was the seat that gave the Green party its breakthrough into the House of Commons. The party's heartlands are in the centre of Brighton and the inner areas around Brighton station, but the Green-led council has come in for considerable criticism since it took office in 2011, and Labour gained a hitherto-safe Green ward on a high swing in a July 2013 by-election. However, Labour will need to campaign hard to translate disillusion with the council into a defeat for Green member of parliament Caroline Lucas.



23 Brent Central (LIBERAL DEMOCRAT)

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
LN	1,345	11.2	41.2	44.2	-	Dawn Butler

Labour enjoyed some comparatively good results in London in 2010 but Brent Central was not among them. In this newly formed seat, Brent East incumbent Sarah Teather defeated former Brent South member of parliament Dawn Butler on a large swing. In many ways Brent Central is natural Labour territory. It is a particularly diverse slice of north-west London, around Harlesden, Willesden and Cricklewood. There are only three seats in England and Wales with a lower proportion of white British people; it is also one of the least owner-occupied constituencies in the country. With Teather opting not to defend the seat, Labour should be in a strong position to win here in 2015.

20 Plymouth Sutton and Devonport

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
SW	1,149	34.3	31.7	24.7	6.5	Luke Pollard

This constituency is the successor to the Plymouth Sutton seat that Labour held between 1997 and 2010. It comprises the city centre, some deprived inner-city areas, some affluent suburbs, the university, and lots of Plymouth's hilly urban terraced streets. Since 2010 it has contained the inner core of Devonport as well. There is a substantial student population and a large amount of privately rented housing. The Liberal Democrat vote in 2010 was freakishly high, given that party's persistent lack of success in local elections here, and it left most seats in the city uncontested in 2012. Labour racked up a massive lead over the Tories that year as the Liberal Democrats collapsed and Ukip edged upwards. This looks a likely Labour gain.

21 Dewsbury

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
YH	1,526	35.0	32.2	16.9	-	Paula Sherriff

It is unusual for Dewsbury to have a Conservative MP; in postwar elections the Tories have only won here in 1983 and 2010. However, while it has been consistently Labour the majorities have often not been very large and it is a deeply divided constituency. The election in 2010 was complicated by several factors, including a high British National party vote, a rebel Conservative councillor standing as an independent, and controversy over the Labour incumbent's expenses. Since 2010 Labour has dominated the town of Dewsbury itself. Outlying areas are less strong, particularly the solidly Conservative town of Mirfield, but a united and effective Labour campaign should see the seat return to the fold.

22 Warrington South

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
NW	1,553	35.8	33.0	27.5	3.0	Nick Bent

Warrington South is the more middle-class half of industrial Warrington. Labour gained the seat in 1992 and held it easily in 1997 despite adverse boundary changes, but lost it on the retirement of member of parliament Helen Southworth in 2010. She is still the only member of parliament to have won successive general elections since Warrington South was created in 1983. There is a large Liberal Democrat vote to squeeze here, much of which seems left-inclined judging by the very high swings in many wards in recent local elections. In 2012 Labour was well ahead of the pack across Warrington South, with the Tories in third place.

24 Bedford

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EE	1,353	38.9	35.9	19.9	2.5	Patrick Hall

Bedford used to be a seat Labour could only win by narrow majorities in landslide years like 1945 and 1966, but new boundaries and a big swing in 1997 set the scene for three comfortable general election wins for Labour. Patrick Hall's loss in 2010 was on a routine national swing rather than the big movements that knocked Labour out in some other eastern and Midlands seats. Bedford has long been a multi-ethnic town, with well-established black, Asian, Italian and Polish communities, joined in significant numbers by people from the European Union accession states. Labour's best areas are in the inner and western parts of Bedford, while the local Liberal Democrats tend to the left and captured the mayoralty in 2011.

25 Brighton Kemptown

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Green 2010 %	Candidate
SE	1,328	38.0	34.9	18.0	5.5	Nancy Platts

Kemptown is the eastern part of Brighton and traditionally its more Labour section. The constituency contains some trendy inner-urban areas around Kemp Town itself, and some council estates like Moulsecomb, but extends out to some more affluent areas. To win Kemptown, Labour now needs to fight on three fronts – against the Conservatives along the coast, against the Greens in inner Brighton and against apathy and alienation in the outlying estates. Labour should be able to count on some support from people who voted Liberal Democrat and Green here in 2010 to overcome the small Conservative lead.



There are some Labour voters here

Design: Peter Rice

30 Hastings and Rye

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
SE	1,993	41.1	37.1	15.7	2.8	Sarah Owen

Hastings has been one of Labour's organisational and political success stories in southern England, despite the narrow loss of the seat in 2010. It had never been Labour before 1997, but it is now a target the party can approach with some confidence. The council is strongly Labour, winning 13 of the 16 town wards in 2012 and seven of the eight county divisions in 2013. Picturesque Rye and the villages are weaker ground for Labour, although the party sustains a respectable vote there: 24.5 per cent in 2013. Overall, Labour led in the constituency in 2013 with 39 per cent of the vote to the Conservatives' 29 per cent and Ukip's 23 per cent.

26 Pudsey

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
YH	1,659	38.5	35.1	20.8	2.5	Jamie Hanley

Pudsey is a seat of two halves. One is Pudsey itself, a suburban area lying between Leeds and Bradford, whose two wards comprise a safe Labour area, but also the most Tory area of the seat. The other half of the seat contains the Leeds suburbs of Guiseley and Horsforth. Labour can come close in Guiseley in a good year but Horsforth is contested between the Tories and Liberal Democrats. The constituency is classic 'hard-working families' territory – high proportions of people in employment, medium qualifications and few retirees or students. Labour won here 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.

27 Brentford and Isleworth

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
LN	1,958	37.2	33.6	23.7	1.6	Ruth Cadbury

Brentford and Isleworth is the western half of the London borough of Hounslow. Social change has flipped the seat inside-out politically as once-Labour Chiswick gentrifies and suburban Hounslow, Brentford and Isleworth become more ethnically diverse. The trends seem to be continuing: comparing the 2012 London assembly election to 2008, Labour's vote share was up about four percentage points in Chiswick but 10-20 points in the rest of the constituency. The seat was Conservative from its creation in 1974 until 1997 when Ann Keen won it for Labour. The Conservative gain in 2010 was by a narrow majority, with a fairly large Liberal Democrat vote for a Labour-Tory marginal.

28 Hove

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Green 2010 %	Candidate
SE	1,868	36.7	33.0	22.6	5.2	Peter Kyle

29 Enfield North

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
LN	1,692	42.3	38.5	12.2	2.1	Joan Ryan

Enfield North was one of Labour's best performances in 2010. The swing to the Tories was less than one per cent, but adverse boundary changes had turned it into a seat that would have voted Conservative in 2005 so this was not quite good enough for Labour to make what would have been a notional 'gain'. It remains highly marginal, and Labour's cause is strengthened by the readoption of former member of parliament Joan Ryan who polled strongly in both 2005 and 2010. Western Enfield is still more Conservative but the east of the seat seems to be trending Labour rapidly, probably linked with changing demographics as London's ethnic minority population expands into the suburbs. There were strong swings to Labour here in 2012.

31 Manchester Withington (LIBERAL DEMOCRAT)

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
NW	1,894	11.1	40.5	44.7	1.6	Jeff Smith

Withington consists of a band of southern Manchester suburbs traditionally inhabited by the liberal, educated professional classes and increasingly diverse in terms of ethnicity, religion and lifestyle. Manchester's burgeoning student population makes up 20 per cent of the seat. It was won by Labour from the Conservatives for the first time in 1987 but then lost to the Liberal Democrats on a huge swing in 2005. Labour had a 32-point lead over the Liberal Democrats in Withington in 2012 and the odds must be that forming a coalition with the Tories has been fatal for Liberal Democrat hopes of holding this constituency at the general election.

32 Burnley (LIBERAL DEMOCRAT)

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
NW	1,818	16.6	31.3	35.7	2.2	Julie Cooper

Burnley local politics has been a turbulent environment in recent years, with the rise, and usually fall, in fairly short succession, of independent, BNP and Liberal Democrat challenges to its Labour traditions. The Liberal Democrats gained an overall majority on the council in 2008 and seized the parliamentary seat from Labour in 2010. The ethnic divide in Burnley politics seems to have eased now that most wards are fought between Labour and Liberal Democrats on normal political issues, and Labour regained an overall majority on the council in 2012. It led by 18 points in 2013, suggesting that Burnley may be receptive to returning to its Labour roots.

33 Ipswich

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EE	2,079	39.1	34.7	18.2	2.9	David Ellesmere

Ipswich has a slightly peculiar electoral history, being mostly Labour, but with Tory wins in 1970 and February 1974, 1987, and then again in 2010 despite Labour hanging on in the Tory landslide years of 1959 and 1983. It was Labour's most notable southern success in the 2011 local elections and the party tightened its grip in 2012 – its lead over the Conservatives extended to an impressive 22 points. However, Labour's dominance slipped in the Ukip surge of 2013 – although this was only a 16-point margin over the Tories. It would be surprising if Labour failed to gain Ipswich in 2015 – but, then, Ipswich sometimes does spring surprises.

34 Dundee East (SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY)

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	SNP 2010 %	Candidate
SC	1,821	15.2	33.3	10.6	37.8	Lesley Brennan

Dundee East stretches north and east from the edge of the city centre. Boundary changes in 2005 took it out further into Angus, making it a less purely Dundee constituency than the Labour seat of Dundee West. Angus is one of the Scottish National party's stronger areas and the party has built up strength in Dundee City. The two Holyrood constituencies were SNP by massive margins in 2011. However, Scottish voters often make different decisions for different elections, and Labour came fairly close in the 2010 general election. They may be open to persuasion that a Labour government at Westminster would be best for Dundee East.

35 East Dunbartonshire (LIBERAL DEMOCRAT)

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	SNP 2010 %	Candidate
SC	2,184	15.5	34.1	38.7	10.5	Amanjit Jhund

East Dunbartonshire is essentially a suburban seat north of Glasgow popular with NHS workers, academics and professionals, and with a

record of political volatility – since 1983 it has voted for all four main Scottish parties in Westminster or Holyrood elections, as well as an independent in 2007. The Liberal Democrats gained the seat in 2005 but election results since 2010 suggest that their hopes of holding the seat should be pretty slim. The party came a bedraggled fourth in the roughly corresponding Holyrood constituency in 2011. There is still some Liberal Democrat strength in Bearsden and Milngavie and the party polled respectably in a by-election in Campsie, so, although chances of a Labour gain are good, it is not in the bag.

36 Halesowen and Rowley Regis

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
WM	2,023	41.2	36.6	14.8	6.4	Stephanie Peacock

This constituency was created in 1997 and it was clear that it would be a hard-fought Black Country contest between Labour and the Conservatives. Labour won convincingly in 1997 but the majority ebbed away and it fell on a seven per cent swing in 2010. As the name suggests, it is a constituency of two halves. The four wards in Halesowen are Conservative-inclined, although Labour won two of them in the 2012 local elections, while the three Sandwell wards are Labour except in the best Tory years like 2008. Labour was slightly behind in 2011 but led by a respectable 12-point margin in 2012.

Marginal 'middle England' territory



Nick Servino/Robert Harding/Rex

38 Gloucester

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
SW	2,420	39.9	35.2	19.2	3.6	Sophy Gardner

Gloucester is another piece of marginal 'middle England' – a free-standing city on the Severn with a mix of neighbourhoods, industries and people that is fairly typical. It was Labour from 1945 to 1970, Conservative from 1970 to 1997 and then Labour from 1997 to 2010. Labour has performed poorly in recent local elections, even in 2012, and the Conservatives were ahead in 2013. 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 the national level. The party has selected an interesting candidate to contest the seat – Sophy Gardner, an RAF wing commander who saw service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

37 Nuneaton

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
WM	2,069	41.5	36.9	15.3	–	Victoria Fowler

Nuneaton is a working-class town with significant manufacturing, transport and retail sectors, and a high proportion of mortgaged homeowners. It has only voted Conservative in four parliamentary elections since 1929 – in 1931, 1983, 1987 and 2010 – this is an indication of quite how bad Labour's performance was in the last election in several mainly white, working-class seats in the south and Midlands. Nor has the party's performance in recent local elections been as good as in neighbouring North Warwickshire, with Ukip's intervention in 2013 seemingly slashing Labour's strong lead over the Tories acquired in 2012.

39 Northampton North

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EM	1,936	34.1	29.3	27.9	3.1	Sally Keeble

Northampton North has gone with the national winner since the town was divided into two seats in 1974. Politically, it is a complex jigsaw in which Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Ukip all elected councillors in 2013 and where most wards were marginal. Labour came out narrowly on top across the constituency as a whole, albeit with only 27 per cent of the vote in a four-way pile-up of a result. In national elections, however, the battle is usually between Labour and the Conservatives although it came close to being a three-way marginal in 2010 with the Tories winning on a very low share of the vote.

40 Bury North

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
NW	2,243	40.2	35.2	17.0	2.9	James Frith

While a big Labour majority has piled up in formerly marginal Bury South, Bury North remains a key battleground between Labour and the Conservatives. Other than a Labour hold in 1979, it has been won since 1955 by the party which has polled the most votes nationally and can therefore claim to be one of Britain's most reliable 'bellwether' seats. In the local elections of 2012, Labour had a healthy 11-point lead, winning a previously Tory ward and defeating the Tory leader, with Ukip achieving one of its better results in a metropolitan area. Bury North Labour party seems to be keen to have the Tories for breakfast in the capital of black pudding production.

41 Kingswood

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
SW	2,445	40.4	35.3	16.8	3.2	Jo McCarron

Kingswood is a suburban and industrial seat lying just to the east of Bristol, contained within the South Gloucestershire council area. It is frequently altered in boundary changes, making long-term comparisons difficult, but it has tended to go with the national winner, except in 1992. It also produces high swings, as it did in 2010 when the Conservatives gained it on the sort of swing that would have given them a big national majority if it had been repeated across the country. Much of the centre and north of the seat was fairly marginal in 2011, the only local authority elections here between the 2010 and 2015 elections.

42 Erewash

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EM	2,501	39.5	34.2	17.5	1.8	Catherine Atkinson

As with some other Midlands seats, Erewash has a manufacturing heritage but has become increasingly suburban and middle class over time thanks to its proximity to Derby and Nottingham. It is a volatile seat – Labour won on a 12 per cent swing in 1997 but lost on a 10 per

Blackpool
shone brightly
for Labour
in 1997



43 Blackpool North and Cleveleys

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
NW	2,150	41.8	36.5	13.3	4.1	Sam Rushworth

The two Blackpool seats were both first-time gains for Labour in 1997, part of the wave of seaside seats swept into Tony Blair's winning coalition. Blackpool North switched back to the Tories in 2010, in part because of boundary changes. It starts at Blackpool's North Pier and extends up across the borough boundary to the suburb of Cleveleys. Demographically, it has a lot of retired voters, people in poor health and low-paid workers. In the last full set of local elections in 2011, when Labour regained Blackpool council, the votes in north Blackpool were a dead heat between Labour and the Conservatives. The Cleveleys wards in the Wyre district tipped the balance to the Conservatives in the seat as a whole with about a three-point margin over Labour.

cent swing in 2010. The party's strong point in the constituency is the town of Ilkeston, in the north of the seat, while the Conservatives have the upper hand in Sandiacre. Labour led by nine points in the 2013 local elections here, but the seat is never one to be taken for granted.

44 City of Chester						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
NW	2,583	40.6	35.1	19.1	2.6	Chris Matheson

Cheshire is in the unaccustomed position of being host to four Labour target seats: Crewe and Nantwich, Chester, Weaver Vale and Warrington South. While Labour had not won Chester prior to 1997, the constituency is a demographic microcosm of England – only slightly more educated and professional than the median. Chester's internal political configuration is also that of a stereotypical urban marginal – a large council-built estate is the best Labour area, and the party also wins the inner areas, but there are marginal suburbs, safer Conservative wards like Handbridge Park, and a few villages. Labour was still lagging at the time of the 2011 council elections, but the city's status as a key target can be in no doubt.

45 Arfon (PLAID CYMRU)						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	PC 2010 %	Candidate
WA	1,455	16.9	30.4	14.1	36.0	Alun Pugh

Arfon was a new creation for the 2007 assembly and 2010 Westminster elections. Its two principal towns are Caernarfon, a Plaid Cymru stronghold, and Bangor, a Labour-inclined town, and it is therefore not surprising that it is a marginal seat. So far, Plaid has had the upper hand with victories in all three elections – landslides in the assembly polls of 2007 and 2011 and a narrower win for Hywel Williams in the 2010 general election. However, it has not enjoyed the same increase in support as the SNP and Plaid remains vulnerable to electoral challenge, as in 2001 when Labour seized neighbouring Ynys Môn. Labour has selected an experienced candidate, Alun Pugh, who sat in the assembly from 1999 to 2007 and contested Arfon in 2010.

46 Croydon Central						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
LN	2,969	39.5	33.5	13.2	2.0	Sarah Jones

Labour gained Croydon Central in 1997 but lost the seat narrowly in 2005. The Conservative winner on that occasion, Andrew Pelling, left the party and contested the 2010 general election as an independent; he is now a Labour candidate for a marginal ward in the 2014 council elections. Labour's best areas in the constituency are Addiscombe and Woodside; there are also marginal wards like Ashburton, while Heathfield and Shirley bulk out the Conservative vote. This mixture produces a hard-fought marginal seat.

47 Worcester						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
WM	2,982	39.5	33.4	19.4	2.8	Joy Squires

Worcester is a classic example of a free-standing town that has a range of safe and marginal wards for each main party and comes close to the national averages in most demographic criteria. Its history, however, is a bit more Tory than the nation's – it was a first-time Labour gain in 1997. Labour has not made huge progress in Worcester's local elections since 2010, with the two main parties essentially tied in vote share in 2013, with Ukip and the Greens each picking up votes. An interesting feature in some Midlands towns is that the Greens have started winning some previously Conservative urban seats. 'Worcester woman' was the target of a lot of campaigning in 1997. She is still relevant in 2015.

48 Keighley						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
YH	2,940	41.9	35.8	14.8	3.1	John Grogan

Keighley is one of the most reliable 'bellwether' seats, going to the national winner every time since 1959, with the exception of 1979. The constituency comprises the town of Keighley and the surrounding rural areas, including two famous Yorkshire landmarks – Ilkley with its moor, and the Bronte village of Haworth. Like neighbouring Bradford, Keighley has a large Muslim community. Despite its bellwether status, Keighley tends to have low swings because it has strong elements of each main party's core vote. Labour tends to underperform in local elections, but was narrowly in the lead in 2012. Keighley will be a tough contest.



50 Cannock Chase

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
WM	3,195	40.1	33.1	17.0	3.5	Janos Toth

Labour lost Cannock Chase on a shockingly large swing against it in 2010 – 14 per cent, the worst result in the country. What had seemed a reasonably safe seat ended up with a Conservative majority of over 3,000. It was not the first time that Cannock had produced an unpleasant surprise for Labour – the seat ejected Aneurin Bevan's widow, arts minister Jennie Lee, in 1970 and went Tory again in 1983 and 1987. Tory MP Aidan Burley has made himself an attractive target for Labour because of his involvement in a Nazi-themed stag night, his disparaging comments about the Olympics opening ceremony and his hostility to trade unionism. Local election results have been encouraging for Labour, with a 15-point lead over the Tories in May 2013.

49 Wirral West

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
NW	2,436	42.5	36.3	16.8	2.3	Margaret Greenwood

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 such as West Kirby and Hoylake and had previously been regarded as a safe Tory seat. However, the Conservatives are still a force and have been consistently ahead in local elections; their local election vote in Wirral frequently outruns their general election performance, suggesting reasonably good organisation. The campaign amid the golf courses of the posh bit of Merseyside will be an important one for Labour's hopes of a majority.

51 Loughborough

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EM	3,744	41.6	34.5	18.3	1.8	Matthew O'Callaghan

Loughborough is a mixture of Midlands manufacturing town and a university seat with students comprising 21 per cent of the population. The north and east of Loughborough are solidly Labour, 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. It adds up to a key marginal seat with a tendency to low swings. Labour led by about six points here in the 2013 local elections.

52 Harrow East

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
LN	3,403	44.7	37.6	14.3	1.9	Uma Kumaran

Before 1997 Harrow East had only voted Labour in 1945 and 1966 but it is now a key marginal. London suburbs have become increasingly ethnically diverse and Harrow is at the forefront of the trend. It is home to a large and mostly affluent community of Indian origin; it is the third most Hindu constituency in England and Wales; and it also has a significant Jewish presence. Labour's strongest wards are at either end of the seat in Wealdstone and around Queensbury, while the Conservatives do best in Stanmore Park. The 2014 borough election will be a key test of Labour strength in Harrow – Labour gained control in 2010 but lost it because of a split in 2013.

53 Warwick and Leamington

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
WM	3,513	42.6	35.4	18.3	1.9	Lynnette Kelly

Warwick and Leamington are effectively one urban unit, close enough to Birmingham and Coventry to be good for commuting but with economic and cultural significance in their own right. Labour's

support here grew strongly in the 1990s and the constituency was a first-time gain in 1997. The party's majority was trimmed back in 2005 thanks to losses to the Liberal Democrats and Greens, and, despite favourable boundary changes in 2010, it fell on a large swing to the Conservatives. The 2013 county council election results showed a particularly splintered pattern of voting, with Labour a nose ahead of the Tories but with only 29 per cent of the vote, and it would surely have been less if Ukip had contested more seats.

54 Birmingham Yardley (LIBERAL DEMOCRAT)

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
WM	3,002	19.2	32.2	39.6	2.9	Jess Phillips

Birmingham Yardley is a wedge of east Birmingham with a large Muslim population which suffers from deprivation and high unemployment. Formerly, it was a Conservative-Labour marginal but the Liberal Democrats became increasingly active and gained the seat from Labour in 2005. The Liberal Democrat machine in Yardley is a formidable operation which, when Labour was in power nationally,



Cosmopolitan, even for London

56 Ealing Central and Acton

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
LN	3,716	38.0	30.1	27.6	1.6	Rupa Huq

This constituency is fairly similar to the Ealing Acton seat that existed between 1974 and 1997 and sent George Young to parliament as its Conservative MP, and it was, therefore, not surprising that the Conservatives won it when it was reconstituted in 2010. Acton itself is a somewhat Labour-leaning area of inner west London while Ealing Common and Ealing Broadway are much more affluent and classically suburban. The constituency is extremely cosmopolitan, even by London standards. Its population is also youthful, highly educated and mobile; it is a constituency of broadly liberal social attitudes although perhaps receptive to low-tax conservatism as well. A large number of BBC and other television industry workers live in the seat.

could steamroller to victories with more than 60 per cent of the vote on a regular basis. Since 2010 Labour has fought back, gaining two of the four wards that make up Yardley and closing the gap in local elections to nine points in 2012, which probably underestimates Labour's strength in a general election. However, the Liberal Democrats are still strong here and cannot be written off.

55 Swindon South						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
SW	3,544	41.8	34.3	17.6	4.3	Anne Snelgrove

Swindon South is the older part of the rapidly developing town of Swindon, stretching between the main railway line and the borough boundary south of the town in the Wiltshire downs. Its neighbourhoods include the more upmarket areas of the town, some of the older council-built estates, and the town centre. When Swindon was divided into two seats before the 1997 election, it was expected that Swindon South would be more Conservative than Swindon North, but things have not turned out that way. Labour had a clear but not overwhelming lead in the constituency in the 2012 local elections.

57 Pendle						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
NW	3,585	38.9	30.9	20.2	3.3	Azhar Ali

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 only got one election 'wrong' since 1964, voting Labour in 1992. Pendle is not typical of Britain, however. The seat comprises the mill towns of Nelson and Colne and some smaller settlements set in hilly countryside. It remains the second most manufacturing-oriented constituency in England and Wales; there is a large, skilled working-class population; and it also has a large Asian population, mostly of Pakistani origin. The Liberal Democrats have made an impact on local politics for decades, but have never broken through in a general election. Local politics here can also go against national trends, for instance when Labour lost ground in 1994-95 and gained seats in 2009.

58 Stevenage						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EE	3,578	41.4	33.4	16.6	4.5	Sharon Taylor

Stevenage is the archetypal New Town seat. It is packed with skilled working- and lower middle-class families – the aspirational but 'squeezed' middle. It is a volatile constituency; voters in Stevenage seem to wear their party loyalties lightly. Since the seat was created in 1983, Labour's share has ranged from 24 per cent in 1983 to 55 per cent in 1997. It was lost on a high swing of eight per cent in 2010. But at a local level Stevenage has been solidly Labour since 1973, and Labour candidate Sharon Taylor is leader of what seems a fairly popular council. Labour was six points ahead in the constituency, which includes a few villages outside Stevenage, in the 2013 local elections.

59 Elmet and Rothwell						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
YH	4,521	42.6	34.5	16.3	2.9	Veronica King

Elmet and Rothwell is a mainly suburban mixture of several different sorts of political environment. It has existed in some form since 1983 and has always gone with the national winner. There are two strongly Conservative wards in the north of the seat, the small town of Wetherby and the rural area of Harewood, and two Labour wards in the south (Garforth and Swillington, and Kippax and Methley). Added to the seat in 2010 was the small town of Rothwell, which was Liberal Democrat when Labour was in power nationally but has voted Labour under the coalition. Labour won narrowly in the wards making up the seat in 2011 and more comfortably, by eight points, in 2012.



60 Edinburgh West (LIBERAL DEMOCRAT)						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	SNP 2010 %	Candidate
SC	3,803	23.2	27.7	35.9	13.2	Cammy Day

Edinburgh West has never been a Labour seat, but it has come within range for 2015 because of Labour's strong result in Scotland in 2010 and the subsequent collapse in support for the Scottish Liberal Democrats. The core of the constituency consists of a number of gracious suburbs of Scotland's capital. It may be won in 2015 with a relatively small share of the vote, because as well as Liberal Democrat and Labour there is a firm Conservative core vote, and the SNP won a surprise victory for the Holyrood seat here in 2011. While Scottish Labour has less room for expansion than its counterpart in England and Wales, a gain is certainly a possibility.

61 Watford						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EE	4,541 (over Lab)	34.9	26.7	32.4	2.2	Matthew Turmaine

Watford is historically a seat that swings with the national tide, although it stuck with Labour in 1951 and 1970. A Labour gain in 1997, it reverted to the Tories in 2010, but the Liberal Democrats and their elected mayor have risen to dominance in local elections and have challenged strongly in the last two general elections. They held all their wards in the 2013 county council elections and remained ahead in the

constituency, with 36 per cent of the vote to 23 per cent for Labour and 20 per cent for the Conservatives. However, the local Liberal Democrat 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.



62 Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	PC 2010 %	Candidate
WA	3,423	41.1	32.7	12.1	10.4	Delyth Evans

This cumbersome named constituency covers a stretch of coast and country from Pembroke Dock through Tenby to take in most of the town of Carmarthen. Pembrokeshire lacks most of rural Wales' aversion to the Conservative party and the upswing in the Welsh Tories' fortunes in the last 10 years has seen the Conservatives winning this seat at assembly level since 2007 and then defeating Labour MP Nick Ainger in the 2010 Westminster election. For the assembly it is a tight three-way marginal between Labour, the Conservatives and Plaid Cymru, but in Westminster elections it has a more two-party orientation.

63 Vale of Glamorgan

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	PC 2010 %	Candidate
WA	4,307	41.8	32.9	15.2	5.5	Chris Elmore

Labour won a big victory in Vale of Glamorgan in a 1989 by-election, but it was overturned in 1992 by a 17-vote Tory majority. Labour returned in 1997, but then lost by a surprisingly wide margin in 2010. In the Welsh assembly, though, it has remained consistently Labour but never by all that big a majority. The largest town in the seat is Barry, a seaside resort down the coast from Cardiff. The constituency also includes a rural hinterland shaped by agriculture and commuting rather than mining, stretching from the edge of Cardiff nearly until Bridgend. As might be expected, Barry is the principal source of Labour strength in the constituency.

64 Argyll and Bute (LIBERAL DEMOCRAT)

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	SNP 2010 %	Candidate
SC	4,018 (over Lab)	24.0	22.7	31.6	18.9	Mary Galbraith

File this one under 'only in Scotland' – a seat that is marginal only because Labour did so well in Scotland in 2010; Labour has never been in contention here before. The Liberal Democrats have held the Westminster seat since 1987 but lost the Scottish parliament seat to the SNP in 2007 and came fourth in 2011. The SNP will contest the seat strongly in 2015, hoping to capitalise on Liberal Democrat weakness. Despite the numbers it remains a long shot for Labour.

65 Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	SNP 2010 %	Candidate
SC	4,194	38.0	28.9	19.8	10.8	Archie Dryburgh

This is another seat that would probably not appear in these charts if it were located in England. It is a large rural constituency covering most of the distance from the border crossing north of Carlisle to Edinburgh or Glasgow including small towns like Lockerbie, Biggar and Peebles. It was created in 2005 and returns Scotland's lone Conservative MP, David Mundell. Given that 2010 was a good year for Scottish Labour, gaining it in 2015 is tougher than the numbers might suggest.

66 Carmarthen East and Dinefwr (PLAID CYMRU)

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	PC 2010 %	Candidate
WA	3,481	22.4	26.5	12.1	35.6	Calum Higgins

Despite losing most of Carmarthen town in 1997, this seat is the nearest successor to the old Carmarthen seat that provided Plaid Cymru's first parliamentary gain in 1966 and remained closely contested between Plaid and Labour thereafter. Labour held the seat, often narrowly, from 1979 until 2001 when it became one of the very few Labour losses in that election. Plaid has held the Welsh assembly seat since the body was created in 1999. First-term incumbency works in Plaid's favour here, but the party is sometimes electorally vulnerable when facing a strong campaign, and with Labour doing well in Wales the seat is a viable target.

If Labour gains all of the 66 seats above it will be on the threshold of a parliamentary majority. Beyond the first 66 gains it will have a majority of one. Thus Progress calls the next 40 seats the 'Frontline 40' which will determine the size of Ed Miliband's majority.

FRONTLINE
X40

67 Norwich North

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EE	3,901	40.6	31.4	18.3	4.4	Jessica Asato

The Norwich North by-election in 2009 took place at a particularly low point in the Labour government's fortunes – an unnecessary vacancy in a vulnerable marginal seat (gained in 1997 having been Conservative since 1983) that the Tories duly won easily and held in 2010. The seat is mostly composed of suburbs in the Broadland district outside the core city of Norwich – Sprowston, Thorpe St Andrew and Hellesdon – with five wards of Norwich city with a large working-class council tenant

population. While Labour is strong in the city, the party has struggled to put down roots in the Broadland section. A high swing can probably be expected in 2015, as by-election seats often revert towards their previous allegiance. Labour was three points ahead in the 2013 local elections.

68 High Peak						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EM	4,677	40.9	31.6	21.8	3.4	Caitlin Bisknell

High Peak is the north-western tip of Derbyshire; the main towns are Glossop and Buxton and it is a seat that generally looks to Manchester rather than Derby. Its landscape is wild and rugged. High Peak was Labour from 1997 until 2010, when sitting MP and rural issues campaigner Tom Levitt retired, although the only previous Labour victory in the seat was in 1966. Some of High Peak is working class, with quarrying and manufacturing industry, but the black and ethnic minority population is very small. Labour did well in the 2011 and 2013 elections here, leading by five points in 2013.

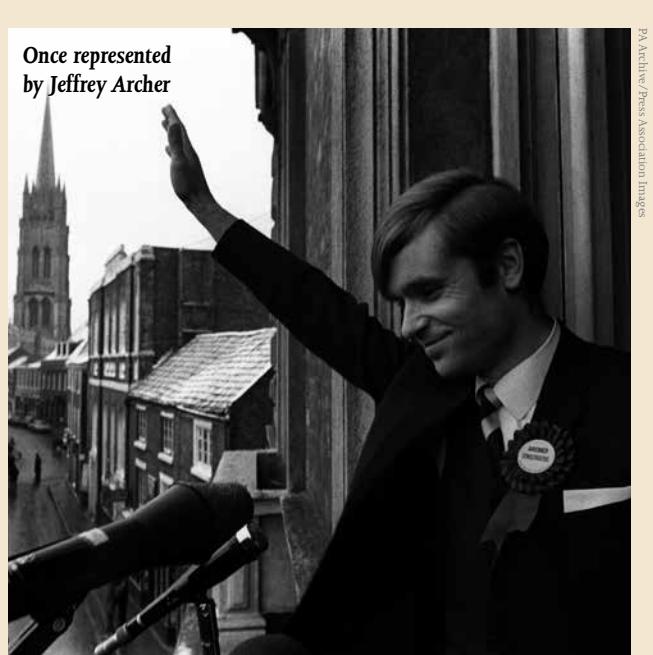
69 Milton Keynes South						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
SE	5,201	41.6	32.2	17.7	3.7	Andrew Pakes

The southern half of Milton Keynes is the slightly more Labour-inclined section of the city, and contains the older towns of Bletchley and Stony Stratford as well as post-1967 New Town neighbourhoods like Loughton Park and Walton Park. The dividing line with Milton Keynes North is, for much of its length, the A5 highway. The seat (as Milton Keynes South-west) was created in 1992 and since then has followed the national winner, therefore seeing two Conservative and three Labour wins. Milton Keynes South is more ethnically diverse and has a younger population than most other New Towns, perhaps reflecting the growth of a London commuting population.

70 Rossendale and Darwen						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
NW	4,493	41.8	32.2	18.1	3.4	Will Straw

Rossendale and Darwen was a disappointing loss for Labour in 2010 – Janet Anderson had represented the constituency since she gained it from the Tories on a high swing in 1992 but she was defeated quite easily by Tory Jake Berry. The constituency is made up of former textile towns in the valleys of Rossendale, and – separated from the rest of the seat by a range of hills – the affluent town of Darwen which lies between Blackburn and Bolton. The area has become increasingly attractive for affluent Manchester-area commuters. Turnout tends to be high and local politics is a Labour-Conservative contest. Labour gained Rossendale council in 2012.

72 North-east Somerset						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
SW	4,914	41.3	31.7	22.3	3.4	Todd Foreman



PA Archive/Press Association Images

71 Cleethorpes						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
YH	4,298	42.1	32.6	18.2	7.1	–

The Cleethorpes seat has rather odd boundaries, stretching round the neighbouring town of Grimsby in the thin band of territory that is in south Humberside rather than the county of Lincolnshire. Before 1997 it had been a Conservative seat under various boundaries since 1924, including a period (1969-74) represented by Jeffrey Archer. It was one of a number of unprecedented Labour wins in seaside seats, and was held until 2010. Ukip won two seats in previously Tory wards in the constituency in the 2012 elections and a 2013 by-election.

North-east Somerset may sound rural on first hearing, but for the most part it consists of suburban communities between Bristol and Bath, the largest of which is Keynsham, plus a rural area around Midsomer Norton and Radstock which has a coal-mining heritage and supports a significant Labour vote. The suburbs are the swing element in the constituency. This seat, as Wansdyke, was represented by Dan Norris for Labour from 1997 until 2010; Norris had a personal vote that enabled him to hold on in 2005. The seat is now represented by rightwing traditionalist Tory Jacob Rees-Mogg.

73 Great Yarmouth						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EE	4,276	43.1	33.2	14.4	4.8	Lara Norris

Great Yarmouth, like many of the Frontline 40 seats, was a Labour gain in 1997 but a loss in 2010. It is one of many coastal towns which were part of the New Labour electoral coalition, although unlike some others it had been Labour before (if only in the 1945 and 1966 landslides). It is a mixture of seaside resort and working port, and parts of Great Yarmouth are among the most deprived places in Britain; the politics of jobs, skills and investment are relevant. Although Labour gained the council in 2012, Ukip polled the most votes here in 2013.

74 Dudley South

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
WM	3,856	43.1	33.0	15.7	8.2	Natasha Millward

Dudley South contains the southern part of Dudley town plus a number of Black Country towns such as Kingswinford, Brierley Hill and Wordsley. It, and its predecessors, have been somewhat peculiar marginal seats for decades (for instance, Brierley Hill was Labour in 1955 but Tory in 1966, and its successor Dudley West swung strongly to Labour in 1974). The thumping Labour by-election win in Dudley West in 1994 heralded the 1997 triumph. But the tide ebbed, Labour lost a lot of ground in local elections and then finally Dudley South itself in 2010 (narrowly holding Dudley North). In the 2012 local elections this volatile seat produced a big swing to Labour, giving the party a 13-point lead, but the general election will be a tough test.

**75 Dover**

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
SE	5,274	44.0	33.5	15.8	3.5	Clair Hawkins

The Dover constituency is based on the main cross-Channel ferry port but also includes the town of Deal and a rural hinterland – some of which is, most unusually for southern England, a Labour-voting former coalfield. Labour represented the seat in 1945-50, 1964-70 and 1997-2010 – basically all the elections at which the party has won an adequate majority in the House of Commons. It is a mainly white, working-class and lower middle-class seat. A local issue of some interest is the future of the port of Dover. The constituency was neck and neck between Labour and the Conservatives in the 2013 county council elections.

76 Colne Valley

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
YH	5,851 (over Lab)	37.0	26.4	28.2	2.1	Bin Joshi Barr

Colne Valley in West Yorkshire was a disappointing result for Labour in 2010. While its loss to the Conservatives was expected, less anticipated was that Labour fell into third place. The seat is a mixture of the western

suburbs of Huddersfield and some attractive Pennine towns along the Colne and Holme valleys and it has been politically interesting for decades: Liberal from 1966-70, then Labour, then Liberal from 1974-87, then Conservative until 1997, then Labour again. Labour has had trouble building strength in depth in the seat in local elections, but was ahead in the 2012 council elections as the Liberal Democrats faded.

77 South Ribble

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
NW	5,554	45.5	34.7	14.1	3.7	Veronica Bennett

South Ribble is in central Lancashire, containing some communities such as Penwortham that are basically southern suburbs of Preston, Leyland and the urban area around it, and a few more rural wards in west Lancashire. Since the seat was created in 1983 it has gone with the national winner. The Conservative sweep in the 2007 local elections was an indicator of the likely result in 2010. Labour recovered somewhat in the 2011 local elections but the Conservatives still control the council. Results in the 2013 Lancashire county council elections were disappointing, with the Tories still well ahead, but it remains a key marginal.

78 Peterborough

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EE	4,861	40.4	29.5	19.6	6.7	Lisa Forbes

Peterborough is one of the second-generation New Towns of the 1960s, which was built around core towns that already existed – Peterborough's long history is apparent from its fine cathedral. The town has a tradition of producing extremely narrow margins of victory, such as those of three votes in 1966 and 22 votes in February 1974. However, it has usually stayed slightly on the blue side of the aisle, being won by Labour only in 1929, 1945, October 1974, 1997 and 2001. Labour has had difficulty winning council elections in the city, and the Tories currently have a large majority against splintered opposition. The swing to the Conservatives in 2010 was very low, partly a result of the growing Muslim vote in the city and partly compensating for the larger-than-average swing in 2001 and 2005. In a constituency where every vote counts, Labour needs to work at re-establishing its organisation and winning wards consistently in local elections.

79 Stafford

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
WM	5,460	43.9	33.0	16.3	3.4	Kate Godfrey

David Cameron was defeated in his bid to become Stafford's MP in 1997 – the first time since 1945 that the Conservatives had lost the seat. The victor on that occasion, David Kidney, served as Labour's MP for the constituency until he lost in 2010. Stafford is a classic free-standing town constituency, with a small rural area around Penkridge included but dominated by the politically marginal town of Stafford. It is pretty close to being the median constituency in terms of its demographic and economic characteristics – a stereotypical slice of 'middle England'. It would have been narrowly Tory in the 2013 county council elections.



Local MP Robert Halfon is an effective campaigner

Credit: Pugh/Box Features

81 Harlow

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EE	4,925	44.9	33.7	13.7	3.6	Suzy Stride

The Conservatives have been much more successful in recovering votes since their 1997 defeat in the New Towns than they have nationally, and Harlow is an example of this. The Conservative MP Robert Halfon is an effective campaigner with a good sense of the local and national issues, such as fuel taxation, that strike a chord here, and it will take a tough campaign capable of inspiring ‘aspirational’ and ‘traditional’ Labour voters (the two are not, of course, opposites) to beat Halfon. Labour was narrowly ahead in the 2012 local elections when the party won back control of Harlow council, and in 2013. So far the constituency with Harlow in it (from 1955 to 1974 the seat was called Epping) has gone with the national winner in every election since 1955 with the sole exception of 1979.

80 Stourbridge						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
WM	5,164	42.7	31.7	16.4	4.5	Pete Lowe

Stourbridge is the south-western section of the borough of Dudley. It is a classic marginal seat on the edge of the west Midlands metropolitan area, being won by Labour after 1997 but gained by Tory candidate Margot James in 2010. It is a mixture of some very Conservative suburbs such as Norton and Pedmore, the Labour town of Cradley, and marginal wards in Amblecote and Stourbridge town itself where Labour gained the upper hand in 2012. It is basically a two-party contest, although Ukip can poll respectably. It is likely to continue to swing with the national tide.

82 Aberconwy						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	PC 2010 %	Candidate
WA	3,398	35.8	24.5	19.3	17.8	Mary Wimbury

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 Conwy Valley 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 Liberal Democrats came very close to taking it 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.

83 Ilford North						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
LN	5,404	45.7	34.3	12.7	1.9	Wes Streeting

Ilford North is a slice of suburban London, consisting of the north-east side of the borough of Redbridge. Although the Conservatives gained it in 2005, there was a low swing in 2010 and it is highly competitive. The low swing had much to do with rapid demographic change, which has seen some of the more comfortable suburbs in the seat becoming ethnically diverse. Labour won a seat in Clayhall, one of the most affluent wards on the east side of London, for the first time in 2010. However, there are also areas, notably council-built Hainault, where the Labour vote has been weakening – it elected one British National party councillor in 2006 and three Tories in 2010. Winning the seat requires a broad coalition of support.

84 Preseli Pembrokeshire						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	PC 2010 %	Candidate
WA	4,605	42.8	31.2	14.5	9.2	Paul Miller

Preseli Pembrokeshire is in west Wales, but it is one of the more Conservative sections of that country – Pembrokeshire has long been tagged ‘Little England Beyond Wales’ and its voting behaviour has been a bit reminiscent of England in its Conservative inclinations. Labour gained it in 1992 but it was not a surprise when the seat (on different boundaries) went Tory in 2005. It is also Conservative at Welsh assembly level. The main towns in this seat are Haverfordwest, Fishguard and Milford Haven.

85 Brigg and Goole						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
YH	5,147	44.9	33.1	14.6	4.0	Jacky Crawford

Brigg and Goole is a constituency created in 1997, and since then it has gone with the national tide. Brigg is a north Lincolnshire market town, which tends to the Tories. Goole is a working-class Yorkshire inland port and chemical works town that votes Labour. Some of the flat countryside skirting Scunthorpe is highly Conservative, making the seat as a whole a rather blue-tinted marginal. The Conservative vote seemed to be holding up well in May 2011 in the only local elections here before 2015.

86 Crewe and Nantwich

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
NW	6,046	45.8	34.0	15.0	2.8	Adrian Heald

The by-election in Crewe and Nantwich in 2008 was a disastrous defeat for Labour in a seat that had been held by the party since 1945 – albeit sometimes, as in 1983, thanks to the personal vote of former MP Gwyneth Dunwoody.

The legacy of the by-election affected the result in 2010, helping the Conservatives to a bigger win than they might have expected. In general, the effect of by-elections fades over time and Crewe is probably more winnable for Labour than the raw figures indicate. However, unlike in the by-election, the party will need to appeal not only to the traditional working-class vote in the railway town of Crewe, but also to the increasingly suburban remainder of the seat.

87 Bristol North-west

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
SW	6,056 (over Lab)	38.0	25.9	31.5	2.3	Darren Jones

Bristol North-west is a classic swing seat, going with the winner of the national popular vote in every election since 1966 despite occasional boundary changes. Labour's cause in 2010 was harmed by boundary changes, which brought in some heavily Tory suburbs from Bristol West (Westbury-upon-Trym and Stoke Bishop) and took out marginal Filton, and by the retirement of the incumbent MP since 1997, Doug Naysmith. Coming third was a severe disappointment. As well as the Tory suburbs the seat contains the working-class port of Avonmouth and some council-built estates such as Southmead where Labour has recently reversed Liberal Democrat gains. New Tory MP Charlotte Leslie is well regarded and will be tough opposition in 2015.

88 Battersea

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
LN	5,977	47.3	35.1	14.7	1.0	Will Martindale

Labour's chances of holding Battersea in 2010 were remote, because the majority in 2005 had been trimmed to a shaky 163 votes, and in this part of south-west London demographic change has been very favourable to the Conservatives. Outgoing Labour MP Martin Linton did well to hold the drop in Labour's vote share below the national average. Half of Battersea's population is aged 25-44 and 57.4 per cent have high-level educational qualifications – both figures are the highest in the UK. The stereotype of Battersea being full of young professionals is true. An active campaigning local Labour party has kept the seat competitive, but it is tough ground.

90 Calder Valley

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
YH	6,431	39.4	27.0	25.2	2.3	Josh Fenton-Glynn

Calder Valley, like Colne Valley, is a marginal Pennine seat on the western edge of the county of West Yorkshire. The constituency has gone for the national winner in every election since February 1974. The main towns are Sowerby, Elland and the defiantly independent and quirky little towns of Hebden Bridge and Todmorden, all in the borough of Calderdale. The population of the seat is overwhelmingly white, in contrast to nearby towns such as Halifax and Huddersfield, but it is otherwise not far from the national average in most of its demographic statistics.

91 Redcar (LIBERAL DEMOCRAT)

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
NE	5,214	13.8	32.7	45.2	4.5	Anna Turley



89 Finchley and Golders Green

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
LN	5,809	46.0	33.7	17.0	1.7	Sarah Sackman

The successor to the Finchley constituency, represented in parliament by Margaret Thatcher from 1959 until 1992, was one of many surprise Labour gains in the London suburbs in 1997, and it stuck with the party until 2010. With a minor assist from boundary changes, Conservative candidate Mike Freer won it fairly easily in 2010. It is the most Jewish constituency in Britain, with 21.1 per cent of the population regarding themselves as Jewish by religion. Barnet borough politics is disputatious and the 2014 borough elections will be hard fought. It is a difficult constituency but the right Labour candidate can triumph, as Andrew Dismore did in the London assembly election in 2012.

Redcar was one of the most extreme results of the 2010 election, with Vera Baird losing to Liberal Democrat candidate Ian Swales on a 22-point swing in a seat that had been Labour since its creation in 1983. 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 party, and one of the marginals in the strong Labour region of the north-east, Redcar is a very attractive target seat that Labour should gain. However, Swales is no pushover, the majority is a substantial 5,214, there are plenty of Liberal Democrats still on the local council and the steelworks reopened in 2012.

92 Crawley						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
SE	5,928	44.8	32.3	14.4	2.9	Chris Oxlade

Crawley is a New Town between London and Brighton. It was one of Labour's first-time victories in 1997, but the writing was on the wall when the majority shrank to 37 votes in 2005 and popular incumbent Laura Moffatt retired before the 2010 election. The Conservatives gained the council – for the first time – in 2007 and still control it. Labour did, however, do notably well in the 2013 county council elections in the seat. Demographic change has worked in two directions – Crawley is the most ethnically diverse of the 1940s New Towns, with a 20 per cent BME population, and it has added a new heavily Tory suburb at Maidenbower by the M23. As with other New Towns, many of Crawley's voters are volatile, sceptical and not much attached to any party.

94 Reading West						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
SE	6,004	43.2	30.5	20.1	3.2	Victoria Grouleff

Reading West is a volatile constituency that seems to specialise in large swings: 7.4 per cent to Labour in 2001, 12 per cent to the Conservatives in 2010 when popular incumbent Martin Salter retired. It does not look like an extraordinary constituency on the ground – some urban areas within the borough of Reading, with high levels of social housing and council property such as Whitley, and affluent suburbs like Tilehurst, plus a west Berkshire section including Theale and Pangbourne. And in terms of economics and demography it is not an outlier in any way for a bit of urban England. Its electoral swings are testament to a considerable number of Conservative-Labour switchers. Labour won a hefty victory in the Reading borough wards in 2012, but are weaker in the west Berkshire wards.

95 Rugby						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
WM	6,000	44.0	31.4	19.9	0.9	Claire Edwards

Rugby was a much-altered constituency in 2010 – even though its predecessor, Rugby and Kenilworth, went Tory in 2005, this seat would have been Labour and the incumbent Tory MP chose to fight the safe Kenilworth and Southam seat rather than this marginal. In the event, the Conservatives had a surprisingly easy win in Rugby and even in 2012



93 Hornsey and Wood Green (LIBERAL DEMOCRAT)

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
LN	6,875	16.7	34.0	46.5	–	Catherine West

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 the Liberal Democrats that led to Labour losing the seat in 2005 and 2010 to Lynne Featherstone. It is an ethnically and socially diverse inner London residential area, tending to youth and liberal social attitudes. The 2014 elections will show how much damage the coalition has inflicted on the Liberal Democrats' fortunes in their trendy north London heartland.

they polled well in the council elections. This 'middle England' town had a previous reputation for going its own way – swinging Labour in 1970 for example – but Labour has a lot to do to make it a serious fight in 2015. It was still lagging at the time of the 2013 county council elections.

96 Burton						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
WM	6,304	44.5	31.9	15.8	2.9	Jon Wheale

Burton has only rarely been a Labour constituency, despite the densely packed terraces and ethnic minority population of the Victorian brewing town. The town does indeed tend to Labour, but turnout is often low and there is a strong Tory vote in the rural wards; the other town in the constituency, Uttoxeter, is marginal. Just outside Uttoxeter is the

headquarters of JCB, a local employer and a major source of donations to the Conservatives. The Tories retained the local council in 2011. The county council elections in Burton in 2013 were too close to call.

97 Cardiff Central (LIBERAL DEMOCRAT)

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	PC 2010 %	Candidate
WA	4,576	21.6	28.8	41.4	3.4	Jo Stevens

Cardiff Central is a middle-class constituency, fairly diverse in its population, and containing the city centre north of the main rail line, the university and a number of residential areas such as Cyncoed and Pentwyn. Its main peculiarities are the very high proportion of students (the third highest in England and Wales) and people renting their homes privately. All three main British parties have been competitive here – it was Conservative until 1992, Labour from 1992 until 2005, and Liberal Democrat since then – no surprise in such a student-dominated liberal electorate. Labour won the Welsh assembly constituency on a high swing in 2011, and took control of Cardiff city council in 2012, although the Liberal Democrat vote held up in Cardiff Central, with 11 councillors to Labour's eight.



98 South Basildon and East Thurrock

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EE	5,772	43.9	31.0	13.4	5.9	Mike Le-Surf

This seat is basically the Basildon seat that Angela E Smith represented for Labour from 1997 to 2010 but which before that was more associated with Labour disappointments in 1959, 1970, 1983 and, above all, in 1992, when the declaration of its result indicated Labour was not on course to win the election. Basildon has often been badly treated by the Boundary Commission and the town is divided between two seats, which is something of a help for the Conservatives. This one pairs some of the most Labour areas of Basildon with the marginally Tory east end of Thurrock around Stanford-le-Hope. Parties to the right of the Tories (the BNP in the mid-2000s, now Ukip) can poll quite well here and helped Labour eke out a narrow lead in the 2012 local elections.

99 Tamworth

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
WM	6,090	45.8	32.7	16.2	4.9	Carol Dean

The south-east Staffordshire town of Tamworth has formed the basis of a constituency since 1983. It was Conservative until a big Labour win in a 1996 by-election, then remained Labour until an unsurprising Tory victory in the 2010 election. It is not technically a New Town, but it is rather similar in its social characteristics and physical appearance. Like Basildon or Redditch, it has a lot of white, car-owning, owner-occupying lower middle and skilled working-class voters who may be trending towards the Tories but are willing to vote Labour when the party's offer is right. The Conservatives held on well in the local council elections of 2011 and still control the council despite a better Labour showing in 2012.

100 Redditch

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
WM	5,821	43.5	30.3	17.6	3.4	Rebecca Blake

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). Council elections in Redditch, like general elections, are hard-fought Conservative-Labour contests and Labour gained a one-seat majority in 2012. In 2013 Ukip did extremely well, with Labour just ahead on a three-way vote split.

101 Chatham and Aylesford

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
SE	6,069	46.2	32.3	13.3	3.0	Tristan Osborne

Chatham and Aylesford was one of a number of southern urban areas with a defence history where Labour did astonishingly well in 1997 and 2001 (see also Gosport, Portsmouth North, and Plymouth). It is a very high-swing seat, giving Labour's Jonathan Shaw some strong victories in 1997-2005 but moving enthusiastically towards the Tories in 2010. Some of central Chatham is very working-class territory, but the hinterland around Aylesford by the M20 tends more to the Conservatives. The first-term Conservative incumbent, Tracey Crouch, will be difficult to displace in the 2015 election without a large national swing.

102 North Swindon

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
SW	7,060	44.6	30.5	17.2	3.7	Mark Dempsey

The northern half of Swindon has, for the most part, been built fairly recently as privately developed family homes have spread across the landscape in places like Abbey Meads. The seat, and Swindon in general, has trended to the Conservatives over the decades – it was Labour in all general elections from 1945 to 1983 but since then has gone for the national winner. It has extreme 'middle England' demographics, being low in BME and student populations and high in car ownership and skilled working-class and lower middle-class

occupations. The Honda factory is a major local employer. It is the seventh most mortgaged constituency in England and Wales (42.5 per cent). As shown in the local elections in 2012 when Labour won the most votes but the Tories hung on to control, Swindon is challenging but vital territory for Labour and winning it will probably need converts from the Tories.

103 Cambridge (LIBERAL DEMOCRAT)						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
EE	7,447 (over Lab)	25.6	24.3	39.1	2.4	Daniel Zeichner

Cambridge, like many constituencies dominated by the liberal professions and academic institutions, was mostly Conservative until the chill blast of Thatcherism struck, but shifted Labour in 1992 and Liberal Democrat in 2005, when Labour lost a lot of liberal and student support because of Iraq and tuition fees. The swing from Liberal Democrat to Labour in the local elections in 2011 and 2012 has been huge, with even well-established Liberal Democrat councillors losing their seats, and the ring of working-class estates around the city has reasserted its Labour strength. Cambridge is a liberal, environmental constituency that may dislike the coalition but is to be convinced as to whether replacing parliamentary science advocate Julian Huppert with a Labour MP will suit its purposes.

105 Bristol West (LIBERAL DEMOCRAT)						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
SW	11,366	18.4	27.5	48.0	1.2	Thangam Debbonaire

Bristol West is the city centre and the genteel, intellectual west end of this large city. It was a Conservative seat for generations until Labour suddenly won from third place in 1997, but Labour's dominance was brief as this seat, with its heavy presence of students and liberal professionals, turned against the Iraq war and tuition fees in 2005. Boundary changes in 2010 made it more winnable for Labour with the exchange of some Tory suburbs for an inner area at Easton, but Liberal Democrat MP Stephen Williams still won easily, and the result in the 2013 local elections in the constituency was extremely close. The Liberal Democrats have dominated council elections in the west end around Clifton and Redlands but lost ground in 2013.

106 Leeds North-west (LIBERAL DEMOCRAT)						
Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
YH	11,521 (over Lab)	26.6	21.0	47.5	1.4	Alex Sobel

Leeds North-west is a wedge of the city stretching from the inner city at Headingley through suburbs such as Weetwood and Adel and out across open country to the little old Wharfedale town of Otley. As one might expect from this composition, it is a very mixed seat, being won by the Conservatives from its creation in 1950 until Labour gained it in 1997, only to be displaced by the Liberal Democrats in 2005. Like some other seats with a similar political history (such as Bristol West), Leeds North-west is influenced by a population of university and public sector professionals like teachers and doctors. In the 2012 local elections Labour won Headingley, but were still second behind the Liberal Democrats across the constituency as a whole. **P**



Steve Rennie/Mail on Sunday/Rox Features

104 Bermondsey and Old Southwark (LIBERAL DEMOCRAT)

Region	Majority	Con 2010 %	Lab 2010 %	LD 2010 %	Ukip 2010 %	Candidate
LN	8,530	17.1	29.2	48.4	-	Neil Coyle

Bermondsey and Old Southwark is the stretch of south London across the Thames from the City and the inner East End. Simon Hughes has represented Bermondsey for 30 years, since the by-election in February 1983: the boundaries of the seat have changed relatively little although it has had three unnecessary changes of name. Hughes has managed the astonishing feat of keeping his Liberal Democrat electoral machine in a dominant position despite the transformation of the electorate from an ageing, mainly white and Catholic working-class council-estate constituency in 1983 to a very diverse seat in 2013 with a large African community and some expensive riverside developments that – a new phenomenon in Bermondsey – sustain a significant Tory vote. The 2014 local elections will be a test of whether the grip of the Hughes machine has been loosened by the experience of coalition, but, even if it is, Hughes will be a tough opponent in 2015.

Holder of seat is Conservative unless otherwise noted.

Vote share is given for Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Ukip in most seats. In Scotland and Wales the nationalist parties are listed instead of Ukip, as are the Greens in Brighton and Norwich South.

Demographic statistics and rankings quoted are from the 2011 census.

Projections of local election results onto parliamentary constituencies should always be taken with caution.

Region key: EE – East of England, EM – East Midlands, LN – London, NE – North-east, NW – North-west, SE – South-east, SW – South-west, WA – Wales, WM – West Midlands, YH – Yorkshire and the Humber

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