

English local elections: Farage says ‘it’s the beginning of the end of the Conservative party’ after sweeping Reform wins – as it happened

Amy Sedghi

Farage claims these elections mark 'beginning of the end of the Conservative party'

Nigel Farage, the Reform UK leader, has claimed that these elections mark “the beginning of the end of the Conservative party”.

Speaking at a rally in Consett in County Durham, he said:

[This is] the beginning of the end of the Conservative party. They may well have been around since 1832 and the Great Reform Act, but they’ve been wiped out in the shires of England, wiped out in those West Midlands, southern, south-western areas where they’ve got their members, they’ve got their councillors, they’ve got their base, they raise the money. They all frankly cease to exist.

And they now become an obstacle. Because what is perfectly clear, given those mayoral contests in both Donny [Doncaster] and indeed North Tyneside, is that whilst we clearly are the main challenges to Labour in the Midlands and the north, if you vote Conservative you stop our chances of winning. If you vote Conservative, you get Labour.

But if you vote Reform in the Midlands and the north, from now up until the general election, you get Reform.

Below is a summary of the key events from today:

- **[Nigel Farage claimed he had broken the grip of Britain’s two main political parties](#) as Reform UK gained an MP and swept to a string of victories in England’s local elections, making deep inroads into Labour and Conservative heartlands.** On a sobering day for Keir Starmer and Kemi Badenoch that brought [immediate recriminations](#), Reform UK took hundreds of councillors from the struggling Tories and won the Runcorn and Helsby byelection by just six votes ahead of Labour. Of the six mayoral elections, Labour won three of them, Reform UK won two and the [Conservatives](#) won one.

Nigel Farage says Reform is now main opposition party after local election gains.

- **In further signs of fracturing political loyalties, a BBC projection of how the voting would have looked in a UK-wide election put Reform first on 30% , Labour**

on 20%, the [Liberal Democrats](#) on 17%, the Conservatives fourth with 15% and the Greens on 11%.

- **Speaking at a rally, Farage said the elections marked “the beginning of the end of the Conservative party”.** Toasting newly elected councillors in Staffordshire, Farage said the results of the local and mayoral elections represented a “seismic” change in British politics. He said the next target for Reform UK would be the Welsh and Scottish parliamentary elections.
- **The Liberal Democrats made renewed gains in previously Conservative heartlands, taking control in Oxfordshire as the Tories lost 15 seats, and also taking over in Cambridgeshire and Shropshire.** The Greens picked up dozens of new councillors and came third in the West of England mayoral race, one they had harboured hopes of winning. Lib Dem leader Ed Davey claimed Friday’s results had put his party on track to overtake the Tories at the next general election. He also said the Lib Dems had replaced the Tories as the “party of middle England”.
- **More surprising was the scale of Labour losses**, with the party losing proportionally fewer seats than the Tories, but with some major localised drubbings, such as a net loss of 38 seats in Durham and 27 in Lancashire. Speaking on a visit to a defence factory in Luton, Starmer said: “What I want to say is, my response is, we get it. We were elected in last year to bring about change ... I am determined that we will go further and faster on the change that people want to see.”
- **Kemi Badenoch apologised to Conservative councillors who lost their seats on Friday. The Conservative party leader said that while the public were “fed up” with Labour, they were not yet ready to trust the Tories.** Earlier on Friday Badenoch said the elections were always going to be difficult for Tories, and renewal of her party had “only just begun”.
- **Ros Jones held off Reform UK to keep the Doncaster mayoralty but was among the most vocal critics of Starmer’s record on Friday**, highlighting cuts to the winter fuel allowance as a subject stoking voters’ anger, as well as reductions in disability payments and a rise in national insurance. There was also criticism from a number of Labour MPs, albeit with those going public tending to be from the left of the party.
- **Nigel Farage suggested that [Reform UK](#) could cut diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and climate change policy jobs, as well as ending working from home.** He told the BBC: “If you work from home, forget it. If you’re a DEI [diversity, equity and inclusion] officer, I suggest you look for another job.” Speaking in Staffordshire, the Reform UK leader said: “Maybe a bit of a warning if you do work for Staffordshire county council and you are involved in climate change policy, or involved with DEI, or anything like that. It may be time to go and look for a different job because we want county councils to do what they are there to do.”

Labour will have to take Thursday’s local election results “on the chin”, a senior cabinet minister has said.

Pat McFadden told Sky News:

I think when you get poor results, there's no point in soft soaping it or trying to dance around it, they are poor results, anybody can see that looking at them.

You've got to take that on the chin when you're in government. This happens at local elections sometimes and you've got to respond to them.

Saying he could "understand people's sense of anger and frustration", he insisted that the government was bringing change to the country, reports the PA news agency.

He added:

We have got to keep our foot on the gas, keep changing things and the critical heart of it is people want to see their living standards go up and those waiting lists go down

Staffordshire county council under the Conservatives was "very woke", Reform UK leader **Nigel Farage** has said, as he celebrated his party taking control.

Speaking to reporters at **Staffordshire county showground** on Friday, Farage said:

Here in Staffordshire we are now in charge.

I have been perfectly clear about the excesses of expenditure, about the different areas that this very woke county council under the Conservatives have been involved in.

County councils are there to perform basic functions for taxpayers. We want to slim down the size of local government and re-prioritise it on what its job really is. And you will judge us, quite rightly, on how we do.



Reform UK leader Nigel Farage attends a post-election event at the Staffordshire county showground. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

The government now has a “real problem” after Reform UK’s local and mayoral election wins, Farage added. He said:

They’ve got a bit of headache now haven’t they?

In the House of Commons the other day, Keir Starmer said ‘Nigel Farage will eat the Conservatives for breakfast’. I think he forgot – we’re going to eat the Labour party for lunch as well. He’s got a real problem.

He added:

There is a sense of unfairness, bordering on resentment, that tens of thousands of young men come into our country, get put up in hotels, get given everything.

In Staffordshire they even get given driving lessons, and it’s the people with alarm clocks that get up in the morning, go to work and pay ever more tax to fund it.

I think with this government, this issue could do them as much harm as it did the last Conservative government.

Before this week’s local elections, **John Harris** was on the road in **Doncaster**. You can listen to his reporting in the podcast linked below:

Local and mayoral election results represent 'seismic' change in British politics, says Farage

Reform UK leader **Nigel Farage** said the results of the local and mayoral elections represents “seismic” change in British politics.

Speaking in [Staffordshire](#), he said:

I have been doing this game for about 30 years and in many ways what happened last night is without a doubt the most significant day in my political career.

It is a seismic change in British politics. It is of a proportion nobody could even have dreamt of.

We want our country back, we want to reestablish the right values around family, community and country.

As [Reform UK](#) councillors proposed a toast to the party leader, Farage was offered someone’s half-finished glass of champagne, which he finished. He joked: “Having not been to bed yet, that does taste rather good.”

The next target for Reform UK will be the Welsh and Scottish parliamentary elections, leader

Nigel Farage has said, as he celebrated the party taking control of **Staffordshire county council**.

The PA news agency reports him saying:

I honestly believe, we have cleared this hurdle, next year we will go for the Welsh and Scottish parliamentary elections, and I believe we can and we will win that next general election.

Farage gave a warning to those working in certain policy areas at Staffordshire county council. He said:

Maybe a bit of a warning if you do work for Staffordshire county council and you are involved in climate change policy, or involved with DEI, or anything like that.

It may be time to go and look for a different job because we want county councils to do what they are there to do.

They are not there to fight climate change, they are not there to waste money the way they have been.

He added:

Why don't we say no to the massive wind farm proposed at Staffordshire Moorlands?

Why don't we say no to the huge 120 football pitch solar farm proposed at Cheadle? And we must say no to spending £18,000 on giving asylum seekers driving lessons.

I wish you all the luck in the world – it won't be easy, it will be a learning curve, but it is an incredible opportunity.

Nigel Farage says he believes Reform UK can win the next general election after witnessing “historic” local election gains for the party.

Speaking to newly elected Reform UK councillors at **Staffordshire county showground** on Friday, the party leader said he did not want to hear any more about any deals with the Conservatives.

He said:

About half an hour ago John Curtice on the BBC has put out his projection of what these elections would mean had a general election taken place across the whole of the UK.

The figures are remarkable. They show us at the general election on 30%, the Labour party on 20%, the Liberal Democrats on 17% and the Conservatives on 15%.

That would mean the Conservatives would only win 12 seats. We would have a massive majority.

I don't want to hear any more about deals with the Conservative party. They betrayed trust

over the course of 14 years, we are going to chart our own course. It is truly a historic day.

Farage says Conservative party is 'over' and Reform UK's successes in local elections 'spell the end of two-party politics'

Nigel Farage has said the Conservative party is “over” and will never be able to recover as he addressed new Reform councillors in **Staffordshire**.

Speaking at **Staffordshire county showground** on Friday evening, the [Reform UK](#) leader said:

Forty three years ago today, the British submarine sunk the pride of the Argentinian fleet, the Belgrano.

Yesterday, a motor torpedo boat with me at the helm and all of you on the back, sunk HMS the Conservative party.

They are over, they are finished, they have literally been gutted in these counties, it is a position from which they will never, ever recover. Up north what we have seen is that if you vote Conservative, you get Labour.

We clearly are now the second place party, we clearly are the challengers to the government, so that is something we will be pushing over the course of the next couple of years.

Reform UK's successes in the local elections “spell the end of two-party politics”, Farage said.



Reform UK leader Nigel Farage (C) attends a post-election event at the Staffordshire county showground. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

The Reform UK leader visited Staffordshire to congratulate the party's newly elected councillors on Friday and celebrated the party taking control of the county council with champagne.

He told councillors:

The result clearly spells the end of two-party politics as we've known it all our life.

But actually there is something much more significant happening in these shires. Here in the heart of England and in many other places too, these are the areas the Conservative party has relied on for ever.

These are the areas where they have councillors, these areas are where the activists work with the councillors, areas where they have strong fundraising, strong branches, strong membership.

He added:

We are witnessing the death of a party that has been around for almost 200 years. They cannot, they will not recover from that position.

Reform UK win control of Doncaster council from Labour

Reform UK have won control of **Doncaster council** from Labour, in another blow to **Keir Starmer** in his party's traditional heartlands.

Reform UK have taken 29 seats on the council, with Labour on three and [Conservatives](#) two, with several results still to be declared, according to the PA news agency.

Labour previously controlled the council with 41 seats, with Conservatives on 11 and independents on three.

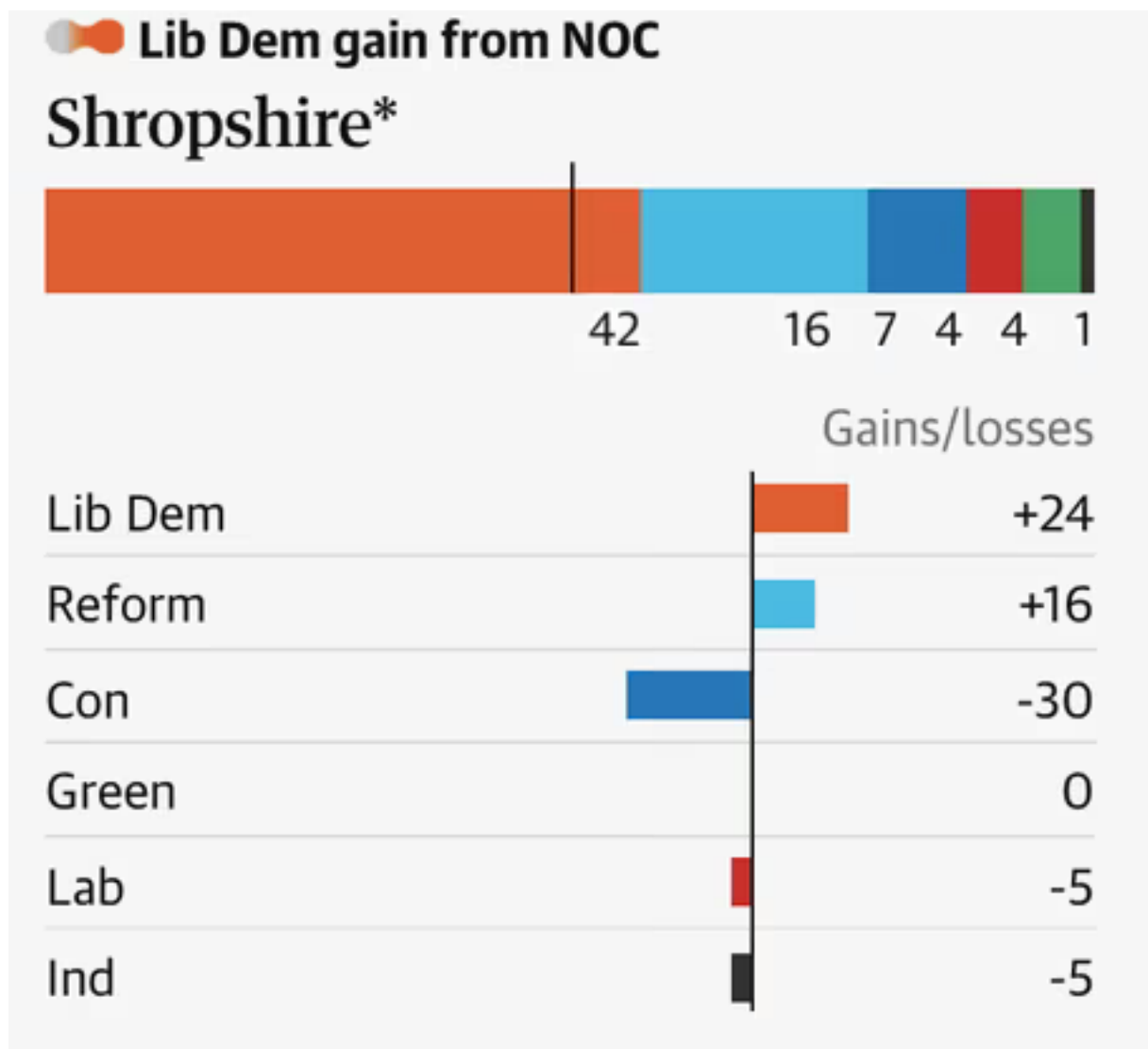
Lib Dems take control of Shropshire council

The [Liberal Democrats](#) have taken control of **Shropshire council** after winning the 38 seats needed for a majority.

The council was previously in no overall control (NOC) with the [Conservatives](#) on 37 seats and the Lib Dems 18.

The [Liberal Democrats](#) believe they have won control of **Shropshire county council** for the first time, but there hasn't been an official declaration yet.

The Lib Dems need 38 seats for an overall majority here. I'll update once there is a confirmation of the results.



Shropshire county council result. Illustration: The Guardian

Nigel Farage has declared a new dawn before, but this time things could really be different, writes my colleague [Kiran Stacey](#).

The government needs “a change of plan”, a long-serving [Labour](#) MP has said following the local elections.

Emma Lewell, who has represented **South Shields** since 2013, said in a post on X:

Trust matters. If you promise people that you will be focused on serving the public and then do not listen to them, do not expect them to vote for you.

Withdrawal of winter fuel, denial of compensation for the Waspi women, and proposed disability cuts, have all broken that trust.

And, referring to Starmer’s post-election comments (see [11.35am](#) BST), Lewell wrote:

It is tone deaf to keep repeating we will move further and faster on our plan for change.

What is needed is a change of plan.

Farage suggests Reform UK could cut DEI jobs and working from home

Nigel Farage has told BBC Look North that Reform UK will be a “radical, a breath of fresh air in county hall” and that his party will have a “very different approach to local government”.

He also suggested that [Reform UK](#) could cut diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) jobs and working from home. Farage told the BBC:

There is too much wasteful expenditure, and trying to do too many things, we want to try and change that.

If you work from home, forget it. If you’re a DEI [diversity, equity and inclusion] officer, I suggest you look for another job.

Davey claims today's results put Lib Dems on track to overtake Tories at next general election

Voters have “chosen our community politics over the Conservative party’s neglect and disdain”, Liberal Democrat leader **Ed Davey** has said.

Davey said:

We have overtaken the Conservatives at these local elections, putting us on track to overtake them at the next general election too. From Wiltshire to Oxfordshire, from Shropshire to Devon, the Liberal Democrats have replaced the Conservatives as the party of middle England.

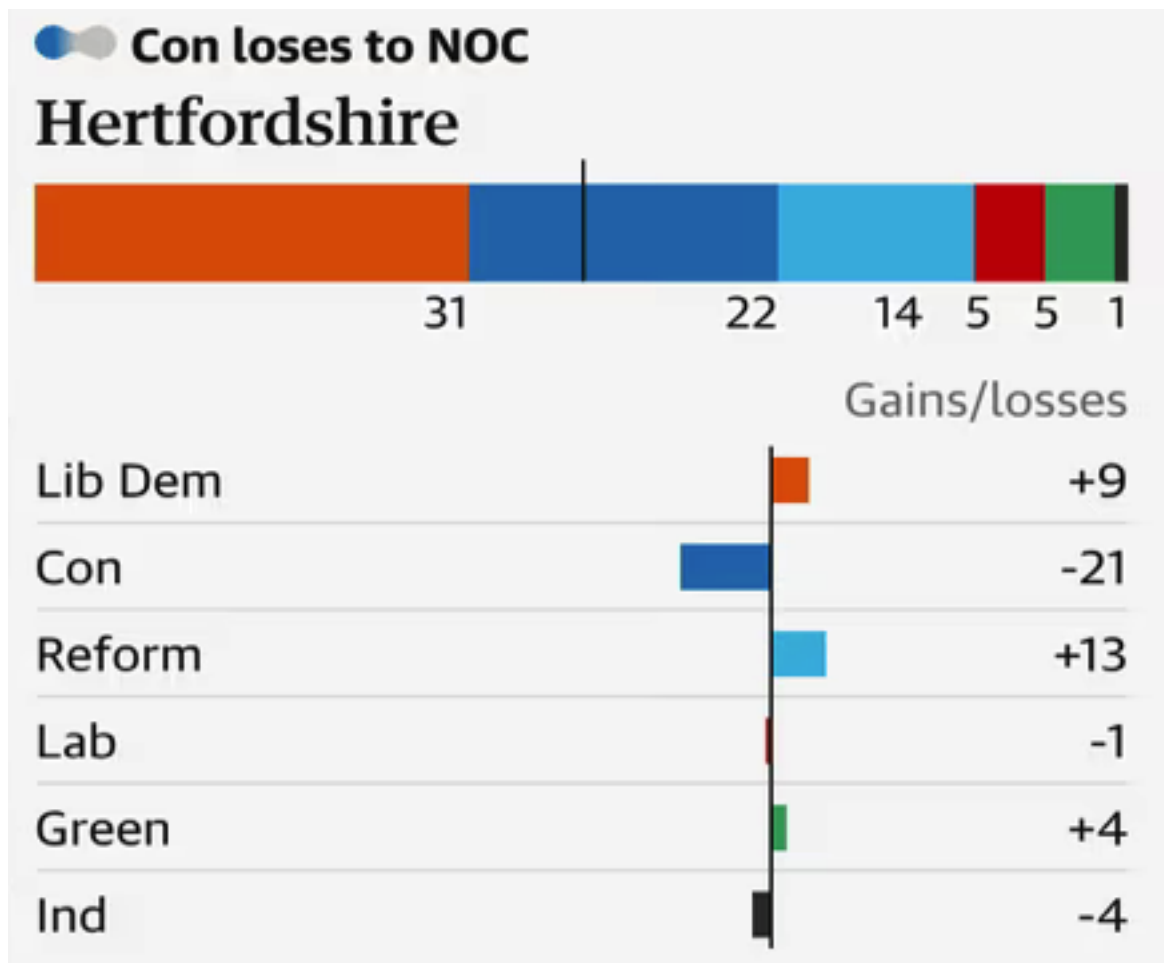
Lifelong Conservative voters have put their faith in the Liberal Democrats because they are appalled by the Conservatives lurching to the extremes and cosyng up to Nigel Farage.

Kemi Badenoch sneered at the Liberal Democrats for being the party that will fix your church roof. Today voters across the country have chosen our community politics over the Conservative party’s neglect and disdain.”

Tories lose control of Hertfordshire to NOC

The Conservatives lost control of **Hertfordshire** to no overall control (NOC) after losing 21 seats as Reform UK gained 13 and the [Liberal Democrats](#) nine, reports the PA news agency.

The new council has the Lib Dems as the largest party with 31, [Conservatives](#) on 22, Reform UK on 14, Labour and Greens five each and one independent.



Hertfordshire council result. Photograph: Guardian

After final results were in from **16 of the 23 English councils holding elections**, Reform UK had almost 500 councillors, after gaining 476 seats, with the [Liberal Democrats](#) in second place with 237, up 86.

The [Conservatives](#) had 199 seats, down 411, and Labour 56, after losing 137 seats, leaving **Keir Starmer**'s party one behind the Greens, who were up 29, while independents had 55 councillors, down 61.

Kemi Badenoch has said that Labour, the [Liberal Democrats](#) and Reform UK are all threats to the Conservatives.

Speaking to reporters, Badenoch said:

This is a very competitive political environment, all of the parties have always been competitors to us.

They are all threats, whether it's Labour, Lib Dem or Reform, and the way we win is by making sure that people can see that this is an authentic Conservative party that stays true to its principles and its values, and that those values reflect the values of the majority of people in the country.

The [Liberal Democrats](#) have said they have replaced the Tories as the "party of middle

England” after winning control of **Oxfordshire county council** for the first time.

A Lib Dem spokesperson shared the following statement:

We have replaced the Conservatives as the party of middle England.

Kemi Badenoch’s party have taken a pasting at these elections in a set of results that can only been described as a humiliation.

The Lib Dems also won control of **Cambridgeshire county council** for the first time ([see 5.27pm BST](#)).

The Lib Dems gained 16 seats in Oxfordshire to win the council from no overall control (NOC), with Greens up four, [Conservatives](#) down eight, independents down three, Labour down two and Reform UK down one. The new council is Lib Dem 36, Labour 12, Conservative 10, Green seven, independent two, resident one and Reform UK one.

The Lib Dems also gained control of Cambridgeshire from NOC after picking up eight seats, with [Reform UK](#) gaining 10 and Greens three, as the Conservatives lost 10, independents six and Labour five. The new council is Lib Dem 31, Conservative and Reform UK both 10, Labour five, Green three and independents two.