



General Election 2019

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# General Election 2019: Target Seats



## Overview



Irrespective of Boris Johnson's position in the polls, if the Conservatives wish to return to Government with a working majority, they will need to retain seats as well as gain them. It is expected that the party will lose seats in remain constituencies to the Liberal Democrats, as well as leave constituencies if the Brexit party stand and divide the votes.

With memories of the 2017 General Election still present in the mind of all parties, the pressure is on. Seats across Scotland, the North and London are at risk and whilst Johnson appears to be soaring ahead, these are areas he needs to retain if he wishes to return to Parliament with a strong majority.

Nigel Farage, the leader of the Brexit Party, has confirmed that the party will only stand candidates in seats the Conservative party failed to win in 2017. This move marks a change of heart for Farage, who had said previously that he would only enter an electoral pact if the Conservatives dropped their Brexit deal.

The decision is likely to help the Conservatives keep seats which they currently hold and will place pressure on leave-voting Labour seats, of which it is estimated is 59 out of their top 100 target seats.

Target seats have always played a vital role in General Elections; however, the pressure is ever mounting after the result of the 2017 General Election which left Labour 64 seats short of an overall majority and the Conservatives 29 seats away from a majority.

Brexit is expected to be the key issue across this General Election and leave voting seats will be detrimental to any party's ability to form a Government.

Candidates have until Friday 15<sup>th</sup> November to submit their official application and deposit, therefore the candidates listed in this briefing are subject to change. Over the coming week it is expected that big names will confirm that they will not stand for re-election as the most volatile General Election draws nearer.

**For further information about Political Party Candidates data please contact your account manager.**



**Belfast North**  
**Currently held: DUP, Nigel Dodds**  
**Majority: 2,081**  
**Who is targeting?: Sinn Féin**

**Why is it Significant?**

A significant seat in Northern Ireland, Belfast North is not only the seat of the DUP leader of the Commons, Nigel Dodds, but was also the seat where the UUP speculated they would stand against the DUP, breaking the union alliance.

Formally, it has been agreed that unionist parties would not stand candidates against each other when there is a chance that Sinn Féin could gain it. However, when first elected, new leader of the UUP Steve Aiken backtracked on this agreement stating that the party will not stand aside in any constituency, though the policy was quickly changed after a huge backlash.

Due to the collapse of talks in Stormont and the confidence and supply agreement, the DUP are expected to lose some seats and the removal of a prominent figure like Dodds will be the headline that Sinn Féin require to push their remain campaign.

**Electoral History**

The 2017 General Election saw a huge increase in the vote for Sinn Féin who weakened the DUP's majority of 5,326 to 2,081. Whilst the seat has never been held by a republican party and has fluctuated between UUP and DUP, Sinn Féin are hopefully that they can build to their already impressive 7 seats in Westminster, despite never sitting.

The seat saw the Sinn Féin's highest vote share ever gained in the constituency in 2017, so it is expected that the party will return to un-seat a prominent DUP figure. The issue of Brexit has also split the seat with 50.4% of the constituents voting remain, this is likely to play well with Sinn Féin who have not shied away from their opposition to Brexit.

**Seat Analysis**

The support of the unionist majority in the area has gradually decreased overtime, a 2011 census found that the nationalist vote is considerable and those from a Catholic background now slightly outnumber those from a Protestant background.

**Candidates**

Whilst DUP MP Nigel Dodds is fighting to retain his seat, Sinn Féin are once again standing John Finucane who secured Sinn Féin's highest vote share back in 2017. He is currently the Lord Mayor of Belfast after previously polling behind Former Lord Mayor of Belfast, Nuala McAllister.

Nuala McAllister is the Alliance Party candidate, she sparked controversy for being outspoken in support of liberalising Northern Ireland's abortion laws and campaigning for marriage equality during her term as Lord Mayor. She is likely to prove an attractive candidate for those who wish to punish the DUP but refuse to vote for Sinn Féin due to their stance on republicanism.

## Bolsover

Currently held: Labour, Dennis Skinner

Majority: 5,288

Who is targeting?: Conservatives and the Brexit Party

### Why is it Significant?

The seat is renowned for being the home of the Eurosceptic “Beast of Bolsover”, Dennis Skinner since the 1970’s, however Labour’s majority has gradually declined with the Conservative party taking a close second place in the last general election. The constituency is the best place for Johnson to market his election strategy of “getting Brexit done” with a clear majority of 70% leave. However, the seat is likely to be a three-way fight with Nigel Farage’s Brexit Party who is hoping to make significant gains which could split the leave vote and return Skinner with a more comfortable majority.

### Electoral History

The seat has traditionally been seen as a strong hold for Labour, with neither the Conservatives or Liberal Democrats getting more than 30% of the vote. In 2017 the seat became a target for the Conservatives who saw their support rise from 10,764 in 2015 to 18,865 eating into the Labour majority. Whilst UKIP hasn’t made substantial gains in the seat, achieving only 2,129 of the votes in 2017, it is apparent that Labour’s hold is slowly slipping. Unsurprisingly, the Liberal Democrats have found their support declining, with a large percentage of voters switching to Conservative in 2015.

### Seat Analysis

A strong working-class town, this seat is the type of seat the Brexit Party will utilise as a test bed for their appeal to the working class leave voters who feel disenfranchised by Labour but could never vote Conservative.

### Candidates

Candidates selected by parties have remained relatively low profile. Conservatives have selected Mark Fletcher who has previously stood as a candidate in Stockton North and gained votes from previous UKIP voters. The Brexit Party have selected Kevin Harper who doesn’t appear to have a political background, and the Liberal Democrats have selected David Hancock, a District Councillor for Tupton Ward. Dennis Skinner has confirmed that he will stand again for re-election.



**Brecon and Radnorshire**  
**Currently held: Liberal Democrats, Jane Dodds**  
**Majority: 1,425**  
**Who is targeting?: Conservatives**

**Why is it Significant?**

Brecon and Radnorshire has been on the Conservative Parties target list since it was lost to Lib Dems in a by-election this year, overturning a majority of 8,000. The Conservatives finished second at the by-election, just 1,425 votes behind the Lib Dems as the Brexit Party came in third. The seat was the first test of the so called “remain alliance” with the Green Party and Plaid Cymru not standing candidates. However, the Brexit Party did stand a candidate, and effectively split the leave vote. The seat is a big indication of the leverage Brexit Party will have on Conservative seats that have a small leave majority.

**Electoral History**

The seat has switched hands from Liberal Democrats to Conservatives, with the Conservatives holding a comfortable majority of 5,000 since 2015 (the second largest the constituency had ever seen), the majority was then increased in 2017 to 8,000.

**Seat Analysis**

Previous MP Chris Davies failed to hold on to the seat at the by-election called after he was convicted over expenses irregularities, therefore it seems logical that the Conservatives will put forward a new candidate for the General Election if they wish to stand a chance in over-turning the slim Liberal Democrat majority.

**Candidates**

Liberal Democrat MP, Jane Dodds is returning to fight for the seat she only won in August in a by-election. She is the leader of the Welsh branch and her campaign previously stayed clear of Brexit, focusing instead on public services.

Labour has selected Tom Davies a councillor for Brecon Town since December 2018. He previously stood in the by-election but only received 1,680 votes, leaving him fourth behind the Brexit party.

Conservatives have selected Fay Jones, who has previously worked for National Farmers Union, the UK Government’s Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs and in Prince Charles’ private office. She is one of three women selected for a target seat.





## Broxtowe

**Currently held: Anna Soubry, The Independent Group for Change**

**Majority: 863**

**Who is targeting?: The Conservative Party**

### Why is it significant?

The Nottinghamshire seat has historically acted as a marginal between the Labour and Conservative Parties. The incumbent MP, Anna Soubry was re-elected in 2017 with a margin of 863 votes as a Conservative candidate. Since then however, she defected from the Conservative Party and now acts as the Leader of the Independent Group for Change. The ardently pro-European party that coalesced disenfranchised centrists from both the Conservative and Labour Party.

It is interesting to note that since their inception in February 2019, Change UK has seen a dramatic drop in its polling ratings. Gaining only 3.4% of the vote in May's European Elections, currently the Party is polling at a dismal 0%. These low polling ratings for the Party could negatively influence Soubry's ability to retain her seat. Indeed, a lack of grass-roots support for Change UK could undermine her ability to project her pro-remain vision.

The newly announced 'remain alliance' pact as ensured that the Liberal Democrats will no longer stand against Anna Soubry which could potentially galvanise votes from traditional remainers. However, the Labour Party will continue to put forth a candidate, which could split the result in the remain vote being divided.

It is possible therefore that the seat, which voted leave by a margin of 54.5% will be inclined towards the Conservative Party which is likely to inject significant resources into reclaiming the seat on the back of its pro-Brexit policies. The Conservative Party's ambition of reaching out to Brexiteer seats could yield results.

### Seat Analysis

It is interesting to note, that Broxtowe constituents have been split on Anna Soubry's decision to leave the Conservative Party. An interview among constituents by a local [newspaper](#) has argued that their many were against Soubry's decision, especially due to the sharp contrast in Brexit views that many hold.

### Electoral History

Since 2010, Anna Soubry has represented the constituency as a Conservative MP before this, the Labour Party held the seat between 1997-2010.

### Candidates

Anna Soubry (Change UK) the incumbent MP, was a former Conservative MP since 2010 before forming Change UK. Darren Henry, the Conservative candidate formerly served in the Royal Air Force. Greg Marshall is standing for the Labour Party and is a borough councillor. Meanwhile, the Brexit Party is standing Calvin Robinson, a computer scientist and the Greens are standing a councillor, Kat Boettge in the seat.

**Hastings and Rye**  
**Currently held: Independent, Amber Rudd**  
**Majority: 346**  
**Who is targeting?: Labour and Conservatives**

### Why is it Significant?

The seat of former Cabinet minister Amber Rudd is the key battle ground for both the Conservative and Labour party. With 55% of the constituency voting to leave, and a small majority of 346, the seat will be one to watch. Both the Green Party and Brexit Party have confirmed that they will not be standing candidates and Rudd has confirmed that she will not be standing as an independent, this leaves the seat in a head to head battle.



### Electoral History

In 2005 the Conservative party managed to overturn a 2,000 majority of the Labour MP, with Amber Rudd gradually building on her majority until the 2017 election, which saw the Cabinet minister fall to a mere 346.

### Seat Analysis

HS1 was a big focus for the 2017 General Election with a disagreement forming between Rudd and Labour candidate Peter Chowney, who criticised the MP for misleading the voters on the timescale of HS1. Unlike its more affluent neighbour Brighton, Hastings and Rye currently has limited rail services to the capital. The constituency itself is divided with Hastings mostly voting Labour and Rye, along with the rest of the area, voting Conservative.

### Candidates

Both Labour and Liberal Democrats are running the same candidates as the 2017 election, with Labour hoping to re-claim the seat. Amber Rudd has confirmed that she will not be standing as a candidate in the election, reducing the pressure this will have on the Conservative candidate Sally-Ann Hart who is currently Rother district councillor since 2015 and fought for North West Durham in 2017.

Labour candidate Peter Chowney who is the leader of Hastings council will be looking to overturn the small Conservative majority. However, he has recently come under criticism for his work as a councillor to get the area greener, with a proposal to build solar energy farms in Hastings Country Park which has proven unpopular with many of the residents.

Liberal Democrats, Nick Perry has previously stood as a candidate in 2010, 2015 and 2017 elections, however he has failed to move beyond third place. The Liberal Democrats have gained votes from the absence of the Green Party, nevertheless it is unlikely that they will make any momentous gains this December.

**Kensington**  
**Currently held: Labour, Emma Dent Coad**  
**Majority: 20**  
**Who is targeting?: Conservative, Liberal Democrat**

**Why is it Significant?**

A traditionally Conservative seat taken by Labour in 2017 has become even more interesting as former Conservative turned Liberal Democrat, Sam Gyimah, joins the contest now his party have added it to their list of targets. Overturning 20 votes would be all that Conservatives need to reclaim this London target which will be central to the strategy of reclaiming a foothold in London.

**Electoral History**

Once thought to be a safe Conservative seat, the Labour party were a surprise winner in 2017 in an area which had been subject to much media attention following the Grenfell Tower disaster. Labour closed a 21% majority claim victory following three recounts - and was one the last seat to be declared as the staff had to take a break before the third recount. The seat had previously been held by Conservatives Victoria Borwick and Malcolm Rifkind, both with solid majorities.

**Seat Analysis**

This West London seat was new in 2010 and comprises the northern section of the old Kensington and Chelsea constituency, including Earl's Court, South Kensington, High Street Kensington and Holland Park combined with the southern section of the current Regent's Park and Kensington North constituency including Ladbrooke Grove and Notting Hill. With ongoing media attention around the Grenfell investigation this seat will certainly be a focus for the media in the weeks to come.

**Candidates**

The Brexit Party candidate, Jay Aston Colquhoun, will be well known to many as the former member of Eurovision-winning group Bucks Fizz. When announced by party leader Nigel Farage she said: "I want to stand for the Brexit Party and fight to uphold democracy for the sake of the people".

Felicity Buchan will stand for the Conservative Party, with a background in financial services she has emphasised the importance of women being in senior business roles.

Emma Dent Coad has confirmed she will re-stand for the Labour Party, on being elected in 2017 she said her constituency was a microcosm of what is wrong with the country, and said she wanted to focus on the unforgivable inequality between extreme wealth and extreme poverty in the area, along with housing and air pollution.

Chair of the West Central London Green Party Vivien Lichtenstein stands for the Green Party in Kensington.

Sam Gyimah will stand for the Liberal Democrat. Gyimah is a former Conservative universities minister and was the MP for East Surrey until Parliament dissolved. After having had the Conservative Whip removed, he joined the Liberal Democrats and became their spokesperson for business, energy and industrial strategy.



**North East Fife**  
**Currently held: Stephen Gethins, Scottish National Party**  
**Majority: 2**  
**Who is targeting?: The Liberal Democrats**

**Why is it Significant?**

Acting as the most marginal seat in the country, with a slim majority of two, the SNP's could potentially lose the seat to the Liberal Democrats who are a close second.

The battleground of North East Fife will be most prominently fought between two ardently remain forces. It is therefore likely that the Liberal Democrats may increasingly brandish their pro-Unionist appeal to galvanise potential Labour and moderate Conservative voters to win the reclaim the seat.

It is also interesting to note that the Conservative Party gained a substantial vote in the 2017 election, drawing around 24.1% of the overall constituency ballot. Although with the drop in the Scottish Conservative Party's support since the resignation of Ruth Davidson, there is a solid chance that the Conservative vote could decline. Nonetheless, the Conservatives are confident that the potential split between the Remainer camps could lead to their gain, with Michael Gove claiming he looked forward to seeing "*Conservative representation in North East [Fife](#)*".

**Seat Analysis**

North East Fife is home to St Andrews University and therefore provides a significant increase in the community's exposure to students who may traditionally represent a more globalist and pro-Remain demographic. Moreover, the constituency is characterised by its large agricultural sector which potentially plays into the local community's fears of a withdrawal from Europe that could cost farmers a loss in hefty subsidies.

**Electoral History**

Historically, North East Fife has been a stronghold of the Liberal Democrats. Indeed, the former leader of the Party, Menzies Campbell represented the seat from 1987-2015. Following the upsurge of SNP support in 2015 however, the seat swung in favour of Stephen Gethins.

**Candidates**

The incumbent MP, Stephen Gethins was a former peacekeeper and devolution specialist is on the frontbench as Spokesperson for International Affairs and Europe but has an uncertain future as he only won his seat by a majority of two in 2017. Wendy Chamberlain is the Liberal Democrat candidate, having previously stood as both a council and general election candidate in 2017. Tony Miklinski, the Conservative candidate is a councillor.

**Stirling**  
**Currently held: Stephen Kerr, Conservative Party**  
**Majority: 148**  
**Who is targeting?: Scottish National Party**

**Why is it significant?**

The seat acts as a clear pro-European hub, with 67.7 % of constituents backing Remain. Stephen Kerr's consistent support for the Government line may well result in the Conservatives losing the seat to the SNP, who came narrowly second in the last election. Indeed, as with the Scottish Conservatives more broadly, their appeal has waned significantly since the departure of Ruth Davidson earlier this year.

Stirling may well be a key strategic target in the SNP offensive against the Conservatives. Indeed, like many other seats in this election, Brexit will play an important role in shaping the potential way in which the electorate votes. Based on these prospects, it is very probable that the 'no-deal' Brexiteer Kerr could lose his seat. Moreover, his more overtly socially conservative voice such as voting against legalising same-sex marriage and abortion rights in Northern Ireland could put him at odds with more 'progressive' elements of Stirling's population.

**Seat Analysis**

It is also important to note that logistical factors could impact the electoral outcome in this seat, especially due to the potential impacts that a winter election could have on the turnout. Indeed, pollsters have highlighted that in December there is the possibility of snow or heavy rain, reducing the number of people travelling to polling booths in larger constituencies such as Stirling.

**Electoral History**

Stirling is a typical example of the volatility of Scottish politics since the turn of the century, during the premiership of Tony Blair the seat was represented by the Labour Party from 1997- 2015 until a short upset by the SNP, which was followed by the Conservatives gaining the seat in 2017.



**Candidates**

The incumbent MP, Stephen Kerr pulled off an unexpected victory on election night 2017, taking the Stirling constituency for the Conservative Party with a majority of just 148. Meanwhile, SNP MEP Alyn Smith has been selected to fight the seat. Interestingly, a 19-year-old university student, Mary Kate Ross will be standing for the Labour Party on an anti-second referendum campaign. The prospective candidate for the Liberal Democrats is Fayzan Reman while the Scottish Greens are fielding Bryan Quinn.

**Thurrock**  
**Currently held: Conservative, Jackie Doyle-Price**  
**Majority: 345**  
**Who is targeting?: Labour**

**Why is it Significant?**

Originally considered a potentially a three way race, the seat of Thurrock in Essex voted 72.3 per cent to leave in the EU Referendum, has a 0.3 per cent swing to win and has been a strong performing seat for UKIP in the past. However, with the Brexit Party no longer standing in the Conservative seat the focus will be on Labour's efforts to take the seat. The 345 voter difference between Labour and Conservatives will make the race tight but Conservative campaigners will be hoping to absorb voters from the leave voting constituents who may have voted for the Brexit party.

**Electoral History**

The seat has been a close race for several years, and it is no surprise it makes the seats to watch lists. A couple of hundred votes separated Conservative MP Jackie Doyle-Price from second place in 2017. The election in 2015 saw the seat become a three way marginal with the Conservative vote coming out on top in a result which saw Labour, Conservatives and third placed UKIP take almost exactly a third of the vote share each.

**Seat Analysis**

The constituency of Thurrock, borders Greater London, includes the towns of Grays, Tilbury and Purfleet and covers 18 miles of the north bank of the river Thames. Thurrock is a unitary authority within Essex and therefore bare responsibility for provision of all local government services within a district. The constituency has seen debate over the closure of Orsett Hospital over the course of the year. It was also brought to public attention when 39 bodies were found in a lorry container in West Thurrock after travelling into the UK, prompting local media attention on port and border security.

**Candidates**

Local Councillor in Thurrock John Kent will stand for Labour and has been a vocal opponent to changes to the NHS at a local level.

The Liberal Democrat candidate Kevin McNamara has been outspoken on social justice and has held the roles of Vice-President of the Young Liberals and the Liberal Democrat Campaign for Race Equality.



**Workington**  
**Currently held: Labour, Sue Hayman**  
**Majority: 3,925**  
**Who is targeting?: Conservatives, Brexit Party**

**Why is it Significant?**

When campaign teams looked at the potential for swing voters and the impact of Brexit Workington clearly identified as a key seat. Sat in the North West region, the “Workington Man” was labelled as key to Boris Johnson’s election strategy by the think tank Onward. A Labour seat which is strongly in favour of Brexit, it is one of a selection of so-called Rugby League towns which the Conservative Party will be aiming to overturn in December.

A key battleground in the fight for the North West brought to public attention by think tank polling it also saw Nigel Farage visit at the launch of the Brexit Party campaign. Labour will certainly be out in force to safeguard a seat in their traditional heartlands. While the Conservative campaign has already placed a lot of stock on NHS spending commitments, safeguarding public services and security - all thought to be key to winning the seat.

**Electoral History**

Sue Hayman held the seat for Labour in 2017 with 51% of the vote share, however the Conservative party will be encouraged by their 11% climb in vote share. Unusually the seat has not changed hands since 1979 when Labour took it from the incumbent Conservative MP and beyond that three year period Labour have won every election in the seat since 1918.

**Seat Analysis**

Surrounded by rural countryside the seat of Workington covers an area made up of the lake District’s National Park. Holding several former coalmining villages, the seat’s Labour support is thought to come from the traditionally working-class West Cumberland Strip, which includes towns such as Workington and Maryport. The populace has normally voted for Labour, however with increased frustrations felt over Brexit and a desire for more spending on public services, it has become a battleground for multiple parties.

**Candidates**

Local Councillor and Deputy Leader of Allerdale Borough Council, Mark Jenkinson, was selected as the Conservative candidate. On his selection he accused the Labour Party of have neglected Allerdale and Workington particularly on the issue of Brexit.

Friends of the Earth campaigner, Parish Councillor and former teacher, Jill Perry, has been selected for the Green Party aiming to focus on the environment and poverty.



Essential information and connections

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