

Funding the Future

The local elections: so far, so good for Anything But C...

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As I write this the local election results have produced this overall trend according to The Guardian:



The consequence is that looks as though there is a modest swing from Tory to Labour, markedly disrupted in many locations by swings to the LibDems and Greens.

These results have a long way to go as yet, and most of the significant results are in London and the South as yet, but there still seem issues worth noting.

Labour's wins in Westminster, Wandsworth and Barnet are very big news. As a former (18 year) resident of Wandsworth I am especially pleased by that result, but Westminster is bigger, having been Tory since 1964. Barnet is also deeply significant, because this is the Tory council that tried to outsource everything, and which had been utterly indifferent to housing need. It also has three Tory MPs. That is big news then.

So too though is Labour taking Southampton, which I always think, again as a former resident, should be a natural Labour city.

As for the Red Wall: Labour by and large kept seats held in 2018 before the Red Wall collapse, and won Cumbria, a Tory area in MP terms. But it was not convincing, so far.

The LibDems are reported to have virtually wiped out the Tories in Richmond on Thames and have made big gains in Oxfordshire. News from the South West will now be interesting. News from Hull already is: it's now LibDem.

And Greens have made big gains.

What it looks like is that the informal coalition between left of centre parties has worked in that case. The Anything But Conservative message of voting for the candidate most likely to beat a Tory has worked, even if they might not otherwise have been a person's preference. I hope so. I have no enthusiasm for having to do this in our corrupt voting system in England and (so far) Wales: I just wish we could move to single transferable voting as Scotland has done. It makes no sense to use anything else.

So, what of the Tories? I have a number of observations and a question. First, there are signs of some anger at Johnson, but not enough to force him out, I suspect. These results can be brushed off as mid-term. Unless they are more strategic, and that is not a Tory quality these days, Tory MPs are not going to be demanding his demise after these results.

Second, if there is a trend it is that higher earning / educated areas are turning against the Tories, which is now a working-class supported party despite doing nothing for working-class voters. The big question is whether that blue-collar Tory support will survive the recession to come.

Third, being toxic in London, which Johnson obviously now is, is not enough to suggest he is toxic everywhere. It will, however, be interesting to see the Scottish result and those in Wales. If they too treat Johnson as toxic and the LibDems do well in the South West then the Tories may be in more trouble, but London is not setting the scene and needs to realise it.

Fourth, the question: where was Carrie Johnson yesterday? She was not out to vote with Johnson when photographs always require it. Has she had enough of being dumped on by him (wallpaper, parties, fines, etc?). Maybe, and maybe not, but if she has that could be a serious mood indicator. If she feels like a victim of a toxic Downing Street then Tory MPs might pick up the mood. There may be serious questions being asked.

Overall? If ever there was evidence that we need proportional representation to properly reflect the diversity of opinion in England, then this election is proving it. I look forward to the Scottish result as a consequence. If Labour comes second there it will be big. But so far Labour is not really convincingly suggesting it's picked up the narrative as yet, because it plainly has not.