

Politics v political parties

Published: January 14, 2026, 10:00 am

As I have already noted here, I was out birdwatching yesterday. These occasions are rarely, however, wholly free of debate about the politics of the moment because they are usually shared with my wife, who is a much more active partner in the activities underpinning this blog than public perception usually suggests.

Yesterday we were discussing the difference between politics and political parties.

Politics is about the choices we make when deciding how we live.

Political parties are about securing power.

Too often the two overlap only a little these days.

And, much too often, given the crass electoral system that we have in the UK, those aligned to political parties now reduce the decisions that they are willing to present to the electorate as binary choices. The trouble is, that is almost always a misrepresentation of reality. Most of life does not involve binary choices. It involves nuance, and complexity, as well as an honest acceptance of uncertainty.

Politics, it seems, is able to embrace these realities of life.

Political parties rarely seem able to do so.

No wonder the political choices that most parties present us with are so unappealing.

And no wonder politics has moved towards hardcore neoliberal thinking, unrelated to anything even vaguely approximating to the real world, as that philosophy is.

I happily do politics, as do many people.

Party politics is an altogether different place for me, and most of us. That place is one where I would rather not go right now.