

Euro elections – previewing the election in the North West

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2014-5-20

*In our final regional preview for this week's European Parliament elections, the **Democratic Audit team** look at the North West of England, a large region that elects eight MEPs. In 2009 the opposition Conservatives won the highest number of votes here and three seats, and the far right British National Party also won an MEP. This year the big movements are likely to prove to be a recovered Labour Party vote and a surge from UKIP, who both seem well-placed to win additional seats.*



Manchester (Credit: [Tecmark](#), CC BY 2.0)

The North West is a sprawling region on the west coast of England west of the Pennines, stretching up from its southern borders in Cheshire to sparsely populated Cumbria bordering Scotland in the north. The two major urban centres, Greater Manchester and Merseyside, lie towards the southern end, with a range of other former industrial towns but large rural and suburban areas also. In population terms the North West is one of the largest UK regions, electing eight MEPs.

Traditionally the region is a Labour stronghold. The party is the largest force in local government across much of the region, with the notable exception of affluent Cheshire. Almost two-thirds of the region's MPs are Labour. However, at the 2009 European Parliament election the opposition Tories won over 27 per cent of the vote and came first, electing three MEPs, compared to Labour's 21 per cent vote and two MEPs.

Two leading members of the UK's political far-right parties can be found among the North West's Brussels delegation. Paul Nutall is the Deputy Leader of UKIP, while Nick Griffin is the national Leader of the BNP. The Liberal Democrats provide the region's other MEP.

Table 1: What happened last time, June 2009

	Votes (in 000s)	Vote share %	MEPs elected	Name of MEP elected
Conservatives	423.2	25.6	3	Robert Atkins Sajjad Karim Jacqueline Foster
Labour	336.8	20.4	2	Arlene McCarthy Brian Simpson
UKIP	261.7	15.8	1	Paul Nuttall
Liberal Democrats	235.6	14.3	1	Chris Davies
BNP	132.1	8.0	1	Nick Griffin
Green party	127.1	7.7	0	
Seven smaller parties	135.2	8.2	0	
Total	1651.8	100	8	

Note: Our vote data are rounded to the nearest thousand votes. Exact 2009 results are available from UK Polling Report [here](#). Five of the region's current MEPs are seeking re-election: Sajjid Karim, Jacqueline Foster, Paul Davies, Chris Nuttall and Nick Griffin. Three incumbent MEPs have stood down: Robert Atkins for the Conservatives; and both Arlene McCarthy and Brian Simpson for Labour.

What will happen in 2014?

Opposition parties normally do well at European elections, and Labour has recovered a lot in the polls since 2009. So the party should top the poll, although it would probably need to score above 30% to win another seat against competition from UKIP and the smaller parties. Labour will probably be helped by the local elections being held concurrently. A large number of Labour-held metropolitan boroughs are up for election in this region, which is likely to [bring out the party's vote](#) in greater numbers than if the European elections were held alone.

The Conservatives seem likely to lose one of their three current seats, and if a strong UKIP surge pushed them below 20% they might risk going down to a single MEP. UKIP will expect to benefit from the BNP's low point, including gaining Nick Griffin's current very vulnerable seat. With the national surge in their support the party might do even better and add a third seat to their tally, especially if the Liberal Democrats lose a lot of votes, or northern Tory voters defect in numbers to them.

The Liberal Democrats gained the penultimate seat last time, and they face a fight to hang on to their current MEP in the North West, unless they can retain close to a tenth of the overall vote. The Green Party has some way to go towards winning a seat, but might just have some hope of electing its first North West MEP, perhaps by attracting disaffected Liberal Democrats.

Table 2: Simplified ballot paper

	LABOUR	UKIP	CONSERV-ATIVES	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	GREEN	BNP
1	Theresa Griffin	<u>Paul Nuttall</u>	<u>Jacqueline Foster</u>	<u>Chris Davies</u>	Peter Cranie	<u>Nick Griffin</u>
2	Afzal Khan	Louise Bours	<u>Sajjad Karim</u>	<i>Helen Foster-Grime</i>	<i>Gina Dowding</i>	<i>Dawn Charlton</i>
3	Julie Ward	Steven Woolfe	Kevin Beaty	<i>Jo Crotty</i>	<i>Laura Bannister</i>	<i>Clive Jefferson</i>
4	<i>Wajid Khan</i>	<i>Shneur Odze</i>	<i>Deborah Dunleavy</i>	<i>Qassim Afzal</i>	<i>Jill Perry</i>	<i>Eddy O'Sullivan</i>
5	<i>Angeliki Stogia</i>	<i>Lee Slaughter</i>	<i>Joe Barker</i>	<i>Jane Brophy</i>	<i>John Knight</i>	<i>Simon Darby</i>
6	<i>Steve Carter</i>	<i>Simon Noble</i>	<i>Daniel Hamilton</i>	<i>Sue McGuire</i>	<i>Ulrike Zeshan</i>	<i>Kay Pollitt</i>
7	<i>Pascal Lamb</i>	<i>Peter Harper</i>	<i>Chris Whiteside</i>	<i>Gordon Lishman</i>	<i>Lewis Coyne</i>	<i>Derek Adams</i>
8	<i>Nick Pamell</i>	<i>John Brian Stanyer</i>	<i>James Walsh</i>	<i>Neil Christian</i>	<i>Jake Welsh</i>	<i>David O'Loughlin</i>

Key:	Certain to be elected	Could well win a seat
	<i>Remote chance of winning a seat</i>	<i>No chance of winning a seat</i>

Candidates with names underlined are current MEPs

The top parties' candidates

Labour's previous two MEPs Arlene McCarthy and Brian Simpsons have both decided to stand down, meaning that two new Labour MEPs are likely to be returned to Brussels. Topping the list is [Theresa Griffin](#). She is a trade unionist and Labour Party campaigner of long standing. She served on Liverpool City Council during the 1990s. Her Twitter account is [here](#), and she looks a certainty to be elected. [Afzal Khan](#) is second on Labour's list. He is a councillor in Manchester (a Labour local government stronghold), and a former Lord Mayor of the city, the first of Asian or Muslim descent. He has also worked as a solicitor, and has been honoured with an MBE for his services to race relations in Britain. He is on Twitter, and his account is [here](#). He, too, can be very confident of being elected. [Julie Ward](#) is third on Labour's list, and is a poet and community activist. She ran a regional arts and disability charity in the North East for a number of years, before moving to the North Pennines. She stands an outside chance of being elected. Her Twitter account is [here](#). Fourth-placed candidate [Wajid Khan](#) is a councillor in Burnley: he is very unlikely to be heading for Brussels.



The Conservatives' lead candidate is one their incumbent MEPs, [Jacqueline Foster](#). She was first elected in 1999 before being defeated in 2004, and then elected again in 2009. In Brussels she is Deputy Leader of the Conservative MEPs and their spokesperson on transport and tourism. The well respected independent research organisation [Votewatch EU](#) provides details of all MEPs in the European Parliament, and her profile is [here](#). She is also on Twitter [here](#) and she looks a certainty to achieve re-election. [Sajjad Karim](#) is second on the Conservative list. He was first elected to the Parliament in 2004, the first British Muslim elected to Brussels. He is now legal affairs spokesperson for the Conservatives and Reformists group and his [Votewatch EU](#) profile is [here](#). He is also on Twitter account [here](#), and he stands a good chance of being elected, assuming that Tory support holds up. [Kevin Beaty](#) is third on the Conservative Party's list for the North West constituency. He is currently a dairy farmer, and a councillor for Penrith and the Borders. His Twitter feed is [here](#). His prospects of being elected are pretty remote.



UKIP's list is headed by [Paul Nuttall](#), who is the party's Deputy Leader, and was first elected to Brussels in 2009.

His Votewatch EU profile is [here](#), giving full information about his record in the European Parliament. His Twitter account is [here](#) and he will almost certainly be re-elected. Second on their list is [Louise Bours](#) (who has previously gone by the name Louise Van Der Bours). She is currently a councillor in Congleton and has a reasonable chance of winning a second seat for UKIP. [Steven Woolfe](#) is third on UKIP's list for the region. He has worked as a criminal lawyer and as a regulatory lawyer in the City of London. He is the party's primary spokesman on [financial matters](#), and his Twitter account is [here](#). If UKIP's support surges as strongly as some recent opinion polls suggest he might well be elected, in which case the North West would be one of only two regions where the party gains two MEPs.



The Liberal Democrats' only hope in this region is their incumbent MEP [Chris Davies](#). He is a former MP, who served in Westminster 1995-97, and was elected to the European Parliament in 1999. He has served on the Fisheries and Environment Committees and his VoteWatch EU profile is [here](#). Second on the party list is [Helen Foster-Grime](#), a former councillor in Stockport Borough, who previously contested the same seat in 2009. She is on Twitter [here](#) but stands no chance of winning.



[Peter Cranie](#) is the **Green Party's** top candidate. He is an anti-racism activist, and a former elections co-ordinator for the party nationally. He currently works for a parenting support charity. The Greens narrowly missed out on winning a seat last time, when the BNP just pipped them. He will be hoping to increase support enough scrape the last seat against Labour and UKIP running strongly. He is on Twitter [here](#). The second placed candidate, [Gina Dowding](#), stands virtually no chance of being elected.



The **British National Party's** top candidate is their Chairman, [Nick Griffin](#), who is an incumbent MEP. His Votewatch EU profile provides details of his activities in the European Parliament [here](#). Griffin is well known for his extremely controversial views on race, multiculturalism, homosexuality and a number of other issues, and his Twitter profile is [here](#). The BNP seems to have suffered a national collapse since their high watermark in 2009 and he is likely to lose his seat.



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