

Euro elections – previewing the contest in Yorkshire and the Humber

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*This Thursday Yorkshire and the Humber will elect six MEPs. Despite its reputation as a Labour heartland-region in Westminster politics, at the European Parliament level at least five parties are in with a chance of winning a seat. However, the **Democratic Audit** team predict that Labour, UKIP, and the Conservatives are each likely to emerge with two seats a piece.*



York Minster, Credit: vgm8383, CC BY NC 2.0

Yorkshire and the Humber is generally a Labour-friendly region in House of Commons elections, and the party has won most the votes and seats of any party for the last four general elections, even in the low point of 2010. The Conservatives are strong in the rural north of the region, while Labour does well in the large urban areas such as Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield, Doncaster and Hull.

However, the list PR system in use for European Parliament elections guarantees a different distribution of seats, and in the past smaller parties gained representation in Brussels. As with the most of the rest of the country, the three European Parliament elections held in 1999, 2004, and 2009 have seen a gradual decline in the main two parties share of the vote. Labour's vote share in particular shrank from 31% in 1999 to 18% ten years later. The

Conservatives have seen a similar decline (despite finishing first in 1999 and 2009), edging down from 36% to 24.5% over the same period. More votes went to smaller parties, such as UKIP and the BNP, with the parties adding 10 percentage points to their combined share of the vote over the same period.

In 2009, the opposition Conservatives finished first against the Gordon Brown-led Labour Party, returning two MEPs to the European Parliament. Labour came second, but secured only one MEP. UKIP saw their controversial MEP Godfrey Bloom elected on over 17% of the vote, and the Liberal Democrats came fourth on 13%, gaining one MEP. In this region the far right British National Party won one of their two seats nationwide at the 2009 election, with 9.8% of the vote being just enough for them to pick up a seat.

Table 1: What happened last time, June 2009

Party	Votes (in 000s)	Vote share (%)	MEPs elected	Name of MEP elected
Conservative	299.8	24.5	2	Edward McMillan-Scott Timothy Kirkhope
Labour	230	18.8	1	Linda McAvan
UKIP	213.8	17.4	1	Godfrey Bloom
Liberal Democrat	161.5	13.2	1	Diana Wallis
BNP	120.1	9.8	1	Andrew Brons
Green	104.5	8.5	0	
Others	96.5	7.9	0	
Total	1,226.2	100	6	

Note: Our vote data are rounded to the nearest thousand votes. Exact 2009 results are available from UK Polling Report [here](#). Only two incumbent MEPs are standing for the same parties again: Timothy Kirkhope and Linda McAvan. Edward McMillan-Scott is standing for re-election as a Liberal Democrat, having defected from the Conservatives. Rebecca Taylor, was the third placed Liberal Democrat on the party's 2009 list, and she replaced Diana Wallis in 2012 when the latter resigned. Taylor is not standing for re-election. Godfrey Bloom was expelled from UKIP and has stood down, and Andrew Brons is not seeking re-election.

What will happen in 2014?

Labour tend to perform strongly in the region, and with their recovery in national opinion polls especially strong in northern England they should finish first, and return two MEPs. UKIP did well in this region in 2009 and they can expect to do better again this year, especially since the sizeable BNP vote from last time is likely to collapse in their direction. If they can push the Conservatives into third place, then they should be able to return two MEPs here. Our simplified ballot paper below shows the likely range of outcomes.

Table 2: Simplified ballot paper

YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER REGION (6 MEPs)

	LABOUR	UKIP	CONSERVATIVES	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	GREEN
1	<u>Linda McAvan</u>	Jane Collins	<u>Timothy Kirkhope</u>	<u>Edward Mcmillan-Scott</u>	Andrew Cooper
2	Richard Corbett	Amjad Bashir	Alex Story	James Monaghan	Shan Oakes
3	Eleanor Tunnicliffe	Mike Hooken	John Proctor	Joe Otten	Dr Vicky Dunn
4	Asgar Khan	Gary Shores	Carolyn Abbot	Chris Foote-Ward	Denise Craghill
5	Helen Mirfin-Boukouris	Jason Smith	Michael Norton	Jacqueline Bell	Martin Hemingway
6	Darren Hughes	Ann Murgatroyd	Ryan Stephenson	Aqila Choudhry	Kevin Warnes

Key:

Certain to be elected	Could well win a seat
Remote chance of winning a seat	No chance of winning a seat

Candidates with names underlined are current MEPs

The Conservatives are shorn of their top candidate from last time, following his defection from the Liberal Democrats, and have been hit by a more general weakness in northern England. So they are vulnerable in this region and their chief ambition will be to hold onto the lion's share of their vote from last time. They will certainly retain one MEP, but if they are even a close third they may just scrape electing a second MEP. The Liberal Democrats have lost a lot of support here since the formation of the coalition, and they are defending two seats (because of McMillan-Scott's defection from the Tories). They would be lucky to hold on to even the one they gained last time.

The BNP seem to have collapsed organizationally across the country, so it would be surprising if come anywhere near their vote share from last time. The Greens will hope to see an increase in their vote, but this is not a region where they historically do well. Given the small number of seats here, the main contest in this region looks to be a three way carve up between Labour, UKIP, and the Conservatives.

The top parties candidates

Labour's top candidate is the incumbent MEP [Linda McAvan](#), who is seeking re-election for the fourth time, having first gained a seat in a 1998 by-election. Information about [her record](#) in the Parliament can be found on the website of the independent organisation Votewatch EU. She is the Vice President of the European Parliament's Socialist Group. She is married to the Labour MPP [Paul Blomfeld](#). She is on Twitter, and her account can be found [here](#). She looks a certainty to be re-elected. Second on Labour's list for the constituency is [Richard Corbett](#) who was a Labour MEP for region between 1996 and 2009, when he lost his seat. He is well known known for his in-depth knowledge of the workings of the European Union and as an advocate for democratic reform. He has worked as an adviser to Hermann Von Rompuy, a spokesman for Labour and the Party of European Socialists in the European Parliament, and in the voluntary sector. His Twitter account can be found [here](#). He also looks likely to win a seat.



Labour's third placed candidate is [Eleanor Tunnicliffe](#), a solicitor, who stands an outside chance of being elected. She is active on Twitter, and her profile can be found [here](#).

UKIP's list for the region is topped by [Jane Collins](#), who has replaced the controversial outgoing MEP Godfrey Bloom. She previously stood unsuccessfully as a Parliamentary candidate for the party in two Yorkshire by-elections. Her Twitter account is [here](#). She is very likely to be elected. [Amjan Bashir](#) is second on the party's list. He gained media attention for publicly challenging former Deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine to a debate over his accusations that UKIP is racist. He is a businessman and entrepreneur, and can be relatively confident of his chances of becoming a member of the European Parliament. [Mike Hookem](#) is UKIP's third place candidate, and is currently the Chairman of the party's Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire Region committee. He has previously stood unsuccessfully at various council elections and the Hull East seat at the 2010 General Election. He is on Twitter [here](#). It seems very unlikely that he will be elected.



The top **Conservative** candidate for the region is the incumbent [Timothy Kirkhope](#), who has been an MEP since 1999. Before that he was the MP for Leeds North East from 1987 to 1997, and served as a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Home Office. In the European Parliament he was previously the Leader of the small Conservative Party grouping and he is now the Deputy Chair of the European Conservative and Reformist grouping. Information about his career as an MEP can be found on his Votewatch EU [profile](#). He is on Twitter [here](#). Even if the Conservatives finish a poor third, he is very likely to win re-election. The number two candidate for the Conservatives is [Alex Story](#). He was the unsuccessful Tory for Wakefield at the 2010 General Election, and he previously represented Britain at the Olympic games as a rower, from which he was forced to give up following injury. He stands a fair chance of being elected. The third place candidate for the party is [John Proctor](#), the Deputy Leader of the Conservative group on Leeds council. He stands next to no chance of being elected.

Seeking election for the **Liberal Democrats** for the first time is the incumbent MEP [Edward McMillan Scott](#). He only joined the party in 2010, having defected from the Conservative Party following a disagreement with David Cameron over the decision to withdraw the party from the main European parliament grouping for moderate centre-right parties. He was previously the leader of the Conservatives grouping in the European Parliament, and a Vice-President of the European Parliament and has been in Brussels for 30 years now. He was first elected as MEP for York from 1984 to 1994, and then was the MEP for North Yorkshire from 1994 to 1999, and an MEP for the Yorkshire and the Humber region from 1999 onwards. Full details of his record as an MEP can be found on his Votewatch EU [profile](#). He is on Twitter [here](#). His chances of being elected for the first time under the Liberal Democrat banner do not look assured, but he will be hoping that his long record as an MEP in the region persuades voters to back him once again. [James Monaghan](#) is the party's second placed candidate. He has a background working for NASA and owns a software business. His Twitter account is [here](#). It would require something approaching a miracle for him to win a second Liberal Democrat seat.



[Andrew Cooper](#) is the **Green Party's** top candidate for the election. He is a Kirklees councillor of 15 years standing, and is the party's energy spokesman. He works in sustainable energy and is on Twitter [here](#). He stands an outside chance of winning enough votes to scrape election, if the Liberal Democrat vote were to collapse over to let his party to let beat one of the top three parties to the last available seat. There are five other candidates standing for the Greens, none of whom has a remote chance of winning.



The **British National Party's** top candidate is [Marlene Guest](#). She is standing following the resignation from the party of the incumbent MEP Andrew Brons, who now chairs the new and little known far-right splinter group the 'British Democratic Party'. Guest stands almost no chance of winning a seat, unless by some fluke she could hold onto past BNP levels of support against the national trend.



The **Yorkshire and Humberside** region borders has border with Teeside to the north, Lancashire to the west, and Lincolnshire to the south. It includes the whole of the historical large county of Yorkshire, plus the southern shore of

the Humber in Lincolnshire. You are in this region if you live in the big cities of Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Sheffield, Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, Huddersfield, Wakefield, Hull or York; or the surrounding counties of North Yorkshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire; or the council areas for Calderdale and Kirkless, or North and North east Lincolnshire.



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