

Euro elections – what to expect in the South East

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*The South East is Britain's biggest European constituency, returning ten MEPs. It is also normally one of the safest regions for the Conservatives, although the UKIP challenge may change this. In our latest preview of the forthcoming European Parliament election, the **Democratic Audit** team show that the Conservatives are likely to hold on to top place in the region, with a UKIP surge and Labour's revival both challenging them all the way. Meanwhile, both the Liberal Democrats and the Greens hold onto vital MEP seats for them here, and will be looking to retain them.*



The famous white cliffs of Dover (Credit: Drew, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The South East of England is traditionally seen as a Conservative heartland; a prosperous, commuter-belt around London merging into some genuinely rural areas, and with relatively fewer and small cities than elsewhere. At the 2010 General Election, under first-past-the-post, the Conservatives picked up 75 of the region's 84 Westminster seats (i.e. 89 per cent) on just 50 per cent of the vote. Under Gordon Brown, Labour held onto only four MPs in 2010, the same as the Liberal Democrats. However, some parts here are relatively good terrain for the Greens, who elected their single MP nationally in Brighton Pavilion. And of course, European elections use the List Proportional representation (PR) system, and so produce nothing like the Tories' artificial Westminster hegemony here.

Still, at all European elections held under PR since 1999 the Conservatives have finished first. Although their vote share has declined some 10% in that time, they have never held fewer than four of the available seats. In common with the rest of England, UKIP's vote has increased impressively. Labour's vote declined, with the party in government slipping from second to fourth during the same period. The Liberal Democrats have historically held steady on around 15% of the vote, while the Green Party have seen their vote increase after winning a seat in the region in 1999 and doing so again in 2004 and 2009.

What happened last time?

At the 2009 European parliament elections, the Conservatives gained more than third of the votes and finished a long way ahead of the other parties, returning four MEPs. UKIP performed strongly, so that two of their candidates returned, but they failed to reach 20 per cent support, despite Labour's weakness in 2009. The Liberal Democrats won 14%, and were lucky to have just enough support to get two candidates returned, while the Greens saw Caroline Lucas re-elected for a second time, beating Labour into fifth place. Labour gained only one in 12 votes in 2009, yet still managed to win a single seat under List PR, thanks to the fragmentation of votes across the top five parties. The British National Party polled just over 4 per cent in a region where they are not strong.

Table 1: What happened last time, June 2009

Party	Vote (in 000s)	Vote share (%)	MEPs elected	Name(s) of MEP elected
Conservative	812.3	34.8	4	Daniel Hannan Richard Ashworth Nirj Deva James Elles
UKIP	440	18.8	2	Nigel Farage Marta Andreasen
Liberal Democrat	330.3	14.1	2	Sharon Bowles Catherine Bearder
Green	271.5	11.6	1	Caroline Lucas
Labour	192.6	8.2	1	Peter Skinner
BNP	101.8	4.4	0	
9 other parties	186.4	8	0	
Total	2,334.9	100	10	

Note: Our vote data are rounded to the nearest thousand votes. Exact 2009 results are available from UK Polling Report [here](#). There has been quite a lot of change in candidacies. Amongst incumbent MEPs, only five (Daniel Hannan, Richard Ashworth, Nirj Deva, Nigel Farage and Catherine Bearder) are seeking re-election for the same parties. Marta Andreasen defected from UKIP to the Conservatives and is standing for the Tories this time. Caroline Lucas stood down from the European Parliament upon her election to the House of Commons in 2010, and was replaced by Keith Taylor (the Greens' number 2 candidate in 2009): he is seeking election in his own right this time. James Elles, Sharon Bowles and Peter Skinner have all stood down.

What could happen this time?

The Conservatives currently hold five MEPs in the region, following Marta Andreasen's defection from UKIP. Table 2 below shows our simplified ballot paper for the region, and indicates that the Tories are unlikely to retain this current dominance. They will be hoping that their share of the vote holds up, and that they can hold off the likely UKIP surge enough to keep their fourth placed candidate (Andreasen) in Brussels. UKIP will certainly be benefiting from the likely collapse of the BNP vote, and with Nigel Farage leading their regional list they will hope to compete for top spot, buoyed by the name recognition he should get from voters in the polling station.

Labour's support has recovered a good deal in the region according to opinion polls, and they will hope to move up from fifth last time to perhaps third this time. They should pick up a second MEP, while their incumbent top candidate is practically guaranteed re-election. The Green Party is polling well amongst students, and there are many universities in the region, plus they will hope to benefit from a stronger profile at Euro elections and so see their number one candidate re-elected. The Liberal Democrats are defending two seats at a time when their national support has slumped, and they can be only relatively confident of holding onto one. Retaining both in the face of UKIP's surge and Labour's revival looks unlikely.

Table 2: Simplified ballot paper

	CONSERVATIVES	UKIP	LABOUR	GREEN	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
1	<u>Daniel Hannan</u>	<u>Nigel Farage</u>	Anneliese Dodds	<u>Keith Taylor</u>	<u>Catherine Bearder</u>
2	<u>Niri Deva</u>	Janice Atkinson	John Howarth	Alexandra Phillips	Anthony Hook
3	<u>Richard Ashworth</u>	Diane James	Emily Westley	Derek Wall	Dinti Batstone
4	<u>Marta Andreasen</u>	Ray Finch	James Swindlehurst	Jason Kitkat	Giles Goodall
5	Richard Robinson	Donna Edmunds	Farah Nazeer	Miriam Kennet	Ian Bearder
6	Graham Knight	Patricia Culligan	James Watkins	Beverley Golden	Allison Moss
7	Julie Marson	Nigel Jones	Maggie Hughes	Jonathan Essex	Steven Solitt
8	George Jeffrey	Alan Stevens	Christopher Clark	Jonathan Kent	Bruce Tennant
9	Rory Love	Simon Strutt	Karen Landles	Stuart Jeffrey	John Vincent
10	Adrian Pepper	Barry Cooper	Tracey Hill	Ray Cunningham	Alan Buillion

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 top parties' candidates

The top candidate for the **Conservatives** is the incumbent MEP [Daniel Hannan](#). Popular within his own party, he was first elected in 1999. Well known for his strong right wing and anti-EU views, expressed through his widely-read [Telegraph blog](#), Hannan also achieved notoriety for opposing the continued existence of the NHS. He currently serves on the Committee on Constitutional Affairs and the delegation to the ACP–EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly. The independent organisation [Votewatch EU](#) collates details about all MEPs' records in the European Parliament, and his personal profile can be found [here](#). He is active on social media, and his Twitter account can be found [here](#). He is certain to be re-elected.

[Niri Deva](#) is second on the Conservative Party list, and has been an MEP since 1999 (having previously been an MP at Westminster). He was born in Sri Lanka and was the first Asian born person to be elected as a Conservative MEP. In the European Parliament, he serves as co-ordinator on the Committee on Overseas Development and Cooperation, and is a bureau member of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly. He is also a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament. More details about his roles and record in the European Parliament can be found on his [Votewatch EU profile](#). His Twitter account is [here](#). He too can be very confident of being re-elected.

[Richard Ashworth](#) is third on the Conservatives' list, and has been an MEP since 2004. In the European Parliament he was the Leader of the Conservatives' small group there in 2012-13, before being replaced by Syed Kamall. He was then the Conservative spokesman on budgets. Full information about his record as an MEP can be found on his [Votewatch EU profile](#). Prior to his election, he worked as a dairy farmer and a businessman. His Twitter account is [here](#). Ashworth stands a very good chance of being re-elected, unless UKIP's surge should prove very dramatic.

[Marta Andreasen](#) is fourth on the party's list. She was elected for UKIP in 2009, and served with the party in Brussels until February 2013 when she defected to join the Tories. Her full record as an MEP is on her [Votewatch EU profile](#) [here](#). Her Twitter profile is [here](#). She was previously the European Commission's Chief Accountant, having raised concerns about their accounting system and anti-fraud protections. She stands a good chance of being elected this time, but with both UKIP and Labour bouncing back it is far from guaranteed.



[Richard Robinson](#) is the Conservatives' fifth choice candidate. He stands almost no chance of being elected.

The Leader of **UKIP** [Nigel Farage](#) tops his party's list for the region. He is in his second spell as UKIP's leader. He has been an MEP since 1999, having been re-elected in 2004 and 2009. His [Votewatch EU profile](#) provides details about his record as an MEP. A controversial and well-known character, his leadership of his party and his recent frequent TV appearances are key to UKIP's prospects in the region. He has unsuccessfully stood for a number of Parliamentary seats, most notably contesting the Speaker's Buckingham constituency unavailingly at the 2010 General Election. His [Twitter profile](#) is [here](#). He is a certain to be re-elected. Second place UKIP's list is [Janice Atkinson](#). She previously worked in marketing communications for FTSE 100 companies before setting up her own business. She was previously a member of the Conservative Party prior to joining UKIP, standing on one occasion as a Parliamentary candidate for them. Her [Twitter account](#) is [here](#). She has a good chance of being elected. Third on the party's list is [Diane James](#). She is best known for coming second in the Eastleigh by-election following the resignation of Chris Huhne. She is currently a [councillor](#) on Waverly Borough Council, and has worked as a Management Consultant. She is on Twitter, and her account can be found [here](#). If UKIP can really break through in this region she stands some chance of being elected. Fourth for UKIP is [Ray Finch](#), the party's Group Leader on Hampshire County Council, who currently works as Assistant to Nigel Farage. He was previously a cable engineer, and stood for UKIP unsuccessfully in 2009. He is very unlikely to be elected.

Labour's top candidate for the region is [Anneliese Dodds](#), currently a Senior Lecturer in Public Policy at Aston University. She has previously worked in academia and research in a number of capacities. She unsuccessfully stood for Labour in the Reading East constituency in 2010. She is almost certain to be elected to the European Parliament. She is on Twitter, and her profile can be found [here](#). Labour's second placed candidate is [John Howarth](#). He is a businessman and Labour campaigner, having stood for the party a number of times with varying degrees of success. He has served on Berkshire County Council, and worked for the Labour Party. He is active on social media and his [Twitter account](#) is [here](#). He stands a reasonable chance of being elected if Labour can push its vote share above 15 per cent. [Emily Westley](#) is Labour's third choice candidate. She is currently a Councillor in Hastings and Rye, having first been elected in 2010. She has worked in law and for a former MP. She is on Twitter, and her profile is [here](#). It would be a major shock if she were to be elected.

For the **Green Party** [Keith Taylor](#) is their top candidate and the party's incumbent MEP. He was appointed to the European Parliament when Caroline Lucas became a Westminster MP in 2010, and so he automatically filled her position as the Green's number two candidate in 2009. He was previously the Leader of the Green Party group on Brighton and Hove Council, and a party staffer for a number of years. In Brussels he is a member of the Development, Transport and Tourism, and Petitions committees in the European Parliament and his record as an MEP can be found on his [Votewatch EU profile](#). His [Twitter profile](#) is [here](#). He stands a good chance of being elected. Last time the Greens came third and only if they can push their support above 15 per cent is their second candidate [Alexandra Phillips](#) likely to be elected. She is a councillor in the Green stronghold of Brighton and Hove, and has worked in public affairs.

The top **Liberal Democrat** candidate for the region is the incumbent MEP [Catherine Bearder](#), who was first elected in 2009. She is also vice-chair of the Lib Dem European Group and vice-president of the Green Liberal Democrats. In the European parliament she is a member of the Regional Development and International Trade committees. Full information about her record as an MEP can be found on her [Votewatch EU profile](#). She was formerly a Liberal Democrat member of Cherwell and on Oxfordshire County Council, has twice been a European candidate and parliamentary candidate for Banbury in 1997 and Henley in 2001. More information about her can be found [here](#). Her [Twitter profile](#) is [here](#). The party's number two candidate is [Anthony Hook](#), currently a criminal barrister and Vice Chair of the Liberal Democrat



European group. His Twitter account is [here](#). It would be remarkable if he could hold onto the party's current second seat, but it looks unlikely. The Liberal Democrats third placed candidate is [Dinti Batstone](#), a lawyer and a linguist, who has been a councillor for the party and is on Twitter [here](#). She stands no chance at all of being elected.



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The **South East** region wraps around London, to the south, west and north west – excluding London itself, which is a separate European Parliament constituency. The western border of the South East stretches from the most northern part of Oxfordshire all the way down to the Isle of Wight, and the rest of region then extends across to the easternmost point of Kent.

You are in the **South East region** if you live in the cities of Milton Keynes, Oxford, Reading, Slough, Southampton, Portsmouth, Brighton and Hove, Medway, Canterbury or Dover; or in any of the surrounding counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey and West Sussex, or in the Unitary Authorities of West Berkshire, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, and Windsor and Maidenhead,.