

Campaign briefing

UKIP in the 2014 Local Elections

Advice and background from ALDC and LDHQ on how to approach UKIP in the forthcoming local elections on May 22nd.

Introduction

It's vital that you do not let UKIP divert you and your campaign, from your key campaign message and strategy. Make sure you continue to do the things that you know work - squeeze the third party, attack your main opponent and turn out our supporters.

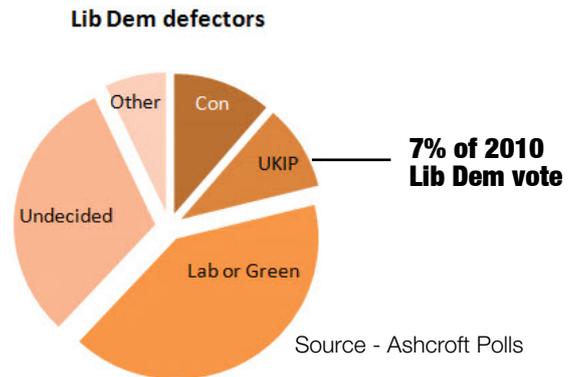
UKIP have the ability as to destabilise the established dynamics of many local elections campaigns up and down the UK. They are not the first group to do so and probably won't be the last but activists and supporters are unnerved by an "unknown" in an already difficult electoral climate when we are defending 700 plus councils seats in England.

Many will feel strange to be lumped by UKIP supporters as part of "them"; part of the establishment as we have been instinctively on the side of those fighting Labour and Tory town hall bosses. Others will simply be repulsed by their anti-Europeanism and racism. But understanding where UKIP's voters are coming from and how we should approach it are important.

It's important however not to panic. But it's also important not to believe that it's our job, alone, to respond to their lies. It's a natural instinct for many Liberal Democrats to assume that if we simply pointed out UKIP's factual errors and their representatives' failings, then people would not vote for them. Sadly that's not the case as the rest of this factsheet will make clear.

Work out what your messages are for your ward, using the grids and guidance available on the ALDC website and from your Regional Campaigns staff and stick to them. Part of that message should be about Europe but it's better to focus on our positive message about jobs in Europe rather than being diverted on to their territory.

Quantifying UKIP's impact on



Lib Dem support levels

According to a Lord Ashcroft poll of 20,022 respondents in March 2013, 7% of people who voted Lib Dem in the 2010 General Election have shifted their support to UKIP.

In addition, our internal polling shows that only a very small percentage of our considerers are UKIP supporters.

From the Ashcroft report 78% are home owners, 71% are over 50 – but this is the highest voting age group in elections

The point is simply this: there are relatively few people who choose between the Lib Dems and UKIP, at least in a General Election.

Far more choose between us and Labour/the Tories or are undecided voters, a relatively small proportion of whom may choose between us and UKIP.

UKIP voters are quite evangelical and are not open to much persuasion on national issues - most suggested attacks such as the corruption of their MEPs etc had little impact. Many saw it as a protest vote and wanted to give all the establishment parties a good kicking.

Importantly, local hard work and a good local record would affect their voting intentions in local elections.

The Lib Dem Strategy

Before taking a closer look at UKIP and its supporters, we need to consider our own strategy, because any response to UKIP should be consistent with it.

Our aim is to become a more frequent feature of all levels of government in the 21st century. To do that, we need to build a liberal party in the centre ground of politics that is relevant and credible to centre ground voters, on issues where we show their values.

If we do, our market research and an analysis of seat demographics show we can relatively quickly grow our party to over 100 seats in the House of Commons, win more council seats and continue to grow from there.

To be relevant to centre ground voters, we need to offer policy solutions that are grounded in the values we share with them and address the issues they care most about. To be credible to centre ground voters, we need to deliver on those solutions in government, and ensure that they know we have. Both our quantitative research and focus groups of Lib Dem considerers reveal that centre ground voters share a particular set of values.

They believe in the core British values of individual freedom and equality before the law. They are fair-minded - they want opportunity for all, not just for some.

They expect the Government to deliver those opportunities, but they also believe people should take responsibility for using them by working hard to get on in life.

They are tolerant - for example, they generally support gay marriage and if they don't, they wouldn't let their opposition dictate their vote.

They are forward-looking – most support an energy policy that champions renewables, for instance. While anxious about the future, and especially about the economy and immigration, they do not operate from fear.

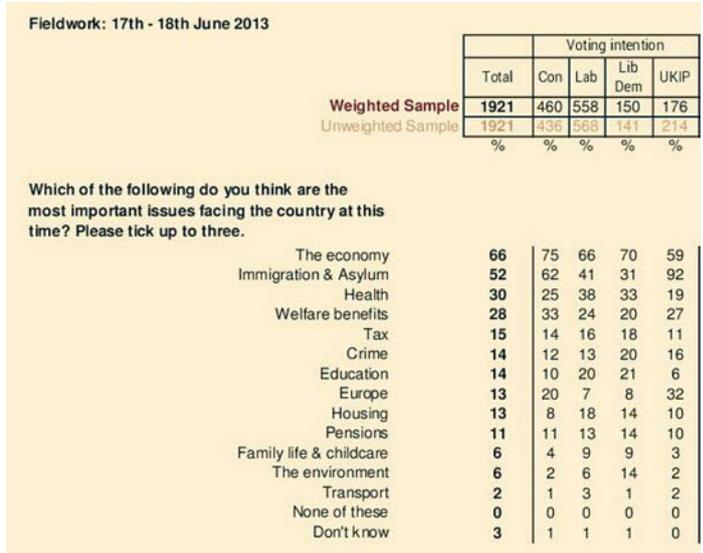
Rather, they tend to feel empowered to confront the future and want the Government to help them do it.

They may be frustrated with life during a time of austerity, but they are not governed by anger. They may not be dyed-in-the-wool liberals with a ready reference to Mill or Berlin over a pint down the pub, but they are moderate in their views and open to reason.

These, then, are the people we need to win over if we are to build a liberal party of government in the centre ground of our politics.

Understanding UKIP's market

There are two kinds of UKIP voters: first, people who used to be traditional Conservative (and some Labour) supporters who dislike the social change we've seen in Britain over recent decades; second, protest voters who are alienated and angry, and are using UKIP to



deliver their protest.

When compared to Lib Dem voters, UKIP voters care much more about immigration and Europe and much less about the economy, health, education and the environment.

The first sort of UKIP voters were never Lib Dem supporters and never will be. There is nothing we can offer them.

Many of the second sort, however, once used the Lib Dems as a vehicle for their protest against both main parties and are now using UKIP for that purpose.

While it is understandable that campaigners should be upset that someone who once canvassed Lib Dem is now voting UKIP, the simple truth is that protest voters do not turn to governing parties to express their feelings.

More importantly, however, we cannot build a liberal party of the centre ground by appealing to people who don't share our core values or reject the value of being in power. And so not only are we unable to give most UKIP supporters what they want, but to stay true to our own strategy, we shouldn't seek to give them what they want either.

This may sound harsh but that is exactly the kind of clear choice we must make if we want to build our party sustainably in the years ahead.

The economy, immigration and Europe

What makes the UKIP challenge particularly difficult for us is that centre ground voters, and indeed Lib Dem supporters themselves, are concerned about the same issue that most animates UKIP voters -immigration.

Fieldwork: 16th - 17th May 2013

	Voting intention				2010 Vote			
	Total	Con*	Lab*	Lib Dem*	UKIP*	Con*	Lab*	Lib Dem*
Weighted Sample	1809	420	564	135	205	556	438	390
Unweighted Sample	1809	400	600	120	239	534	467	419
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

Which of the following issues will be important to you in deciding how you vote at the next election? Please tick up to three or four

The economy in general	56	60	58	70	48	57	59	59
Immigration	44	57	29	26	81	64	28	35
Health	38	32	47	45	26	29	48	44
Unemployment	29	15	38	30	27	16	38	30
Europe	28	41	17	24	49	43	19	23
Pensions	26	25	29	23	21	26	30	29
Welfare benefits	26	25	30	21	29	26	28	25
Schools and education	23	18	28	29	11	15	25	29
Crime	19	24	20	7	17	23	21	13
Housing	11	4	15	13	11	5	14	14
Transport	7	4	9	15	4	4	9	10
Same-sex marriage	7	7	5	6	7	6	4	11

Immigration is the top issue for UKIP voters, but also is a big issue for over 1 in 4 Lib Dem voters.

'Europe', for reasons that are obvious (often media driven), has become an issue that's interwoven with immigration in recent years. UKIP leaning voters often view Britain's economic difficulties through the prism of immigration – jobs, benefits, housing, etc and feel threatened by it.

Our potential supporters, however, do not respond to their concerns about immigration in the same way that UKIP's potential supporters do.

While they want existing immigration laws to be properly enforced and the system to ensure their economic opportunities and access to public services are not compromised, they are generally more tolerant, less anxious and more open to fact-based argument than UKIP supporters.

We must therefore not feel pressure to try to outbid UKIP on immigration, because we cannot do so and stay true to our core values.

Rather, we should stick to the position set out by Nick Clegg - a tolerant Britain that welcomes legal immigrants who contribute to our society, but we also want the law enforced to ensure that illegal immigrants don't abuse the system - fair but firm.

That position is both consistent with our values and likely to make sense to centre ground voters.

We need to accept that there is, ultimately, a point at which some voters simply disagree with us. That's life in a democracy – it shouldn't bother us as long as there is a pool of potential voters that we can grow while remaining true to our core values.

How to hold Lib Dem supporters considering UKIP

Our core message in the European Elections is that we are the party of "In" – and the Tories and UKIP are putting millions of jobs at risk.

What then can we do to stop some Lib Dem supporters shifting to UKIP in local elections without compromising our values or strategy, given that they are generally disaffected protest voters who are frustrated and angry about the status quo? Four things:

1. The biggest thing we do for the local elections is develop strong bonds with our supporters by representing them well.

That means doing the basic work of representative and community politics - the surveys, the contact on the doorstep, the focus leaflets, the ward and constituency surgeries, the case work. The better represented people feel, the less likely they are to want to protest in the first place, and the less likely they are to desert us when we're in government.

This means that electors must know we do more work than the others. Two leaflets and one attempted canvass will not be enough. You should aim to have talked to all those who will be on your Supporters list three times between now and polling day. This does not mean ignoring literature. A winning campaign should do at least three more items of literature by the end of March. Then one a week till polling day (about 10 in all from now).

2. We must make a case for the value of being in government and being in Europe.

Most protest voters won't buy this pitch, but we must nevertheless argue that being in government is a more effective way to change things than being a voice of protest on the outside.

We need to be a strong voice for being in Europe – leaving would put 3 million jobs at risk.

3. We must show them what we have achieved in government, under difficult circumstances.

If we are to make credible the case for being a party of government, we must show that we have used our time in government to deliver positive change.

In particular, this means communicating that we have cut tax for 23 million people and implemented job creating policies enabling the private sector to add over a million jobs since 2010.

4. We must say what we mean and mean what we say, so that no one can dismiss us with the claim that "they're all the same".

We have different vision and values to the other parties and we need to clearly demonstrate that through our record, policies and actions

We must show authenticity, consistency and passion in order to present a compelling offer to voters who are understandably cynical about politicians and political parties.

There is therefore no silver-bullet that will magically stop former Lib Dem protest voters shifting to UKIP.

The solution lies in the four steps outlined above, but each of them requires hard work and consistency over time to be effective.

These measures will not stop all protest voters shifting to UKIP, but they will minimise our losses.

All four are consistent with our strategy and so can be taken without compromising our strategic objective, which is to be in government so that we can put our values to work.

How it relates to the European Election

Having a European election on the same day with the associated publicity means a few things should be kept in mind.

1. We must keep to our positive message on protecting British jobs and being the party of IN.
2. UKIP voters are more likely to vote, certainly in the European elections.

3. They will probably be the one of the “big stories” of the campaign.

4. Labour will probably try to use the “UKIP threat” in similar way it did when they were fighting the BNP - as a motivational tool to get the Labour vote out, even when there is no UKIP candidate.

Spotting UKIP in Voter ID

One of the recurrent problems we have had with smaller parties is that they are difficult to pick up whilst canvassing, and we often underestimate them in our voter ID. Some of course will tell you upfront, but many, particularly previous Lib Dems will be more hesitant.

It's not wise to lump “won't says” into any specific category but if you are getting more than usual, or people are undecided at a late stage of the election it may be a sign that they are shy of admitting what they are planning to do.

Ideally we would like to tease out voters' intentions. Classically if you suspect a “won't say” of voting Tory you suggest that they are going to vote Labour, the resulting kneejerk reaction tells you their true intentions. If you can identify that they are not intending to vote Lib Dem, Tory or Labour but will vote, they're probably UKIP. Asking a voter ID question on the European election may also be effective.

Two ways of identifying potential UKIP voters are:

- Those who are ambivalent about their voting intention, but spontaneously mention immigration
- Those who often dismiss all parties of government (“a plague on all their houses”)

Once identified, unless they are hard UKIP, it's probably worth adding them to any mailings that emphasise the local work our candidate is doing.

So what should we do?

- Emphasise the hardworking local record of our local candidates. This works for all electors but will be particularly effective for UKIP supporters. Make sure that you are seen as fighting the town hall bosses (Tory or Labour). In most cases we are defending so action files, record of action leaflets, and letters to those you've done casework for.

- Get as much of our support as possible on to postal votes and get them to use them early - in previous elections UKIP has peaked late.
- Include references to UKIP in squeeze material, graphs “Other parties/UKIP cannot win here” etc.
- Remember that a strong, active campaign on local issues with a lot of face-to-face contact will persuade a lot of the anti-politics UKIP voters that we're the best people for the job.
- The choice is between the hard-working local Lib Dems and the Conservatives/Labour. You should have really strong messages against your local opposition and you should keep running them.
- The most effective thing you can do is squeeze the third party and get your own vote out.
- Only the Liberal Democrats have a track record of delivering for people locally and in government
- If UKIP had their way then millions of jobs would be lost across the country

Message for the European Elections

Don't forget that it's crucial to integrate the European Election campaign message into your local election campaigns.:

Liberal Democrats want Britain to stay in the EU because we are fighting for a stronger economy - millions of British jobs are linked to our trade with the EU, and being in Europe gives us more strength when negotiating trade deals with global players like the US, China, India and Brazil.

We are the party of in – In Europe, In Work.

Liberal Democrats are working to defend millions of British jobs, create millions more and put thousands of pounds back in your pocket by making it easier for British companies to export and slashing red tape for small businesses.

The Tories and UKIP are putting millions of British jobs at risk and jeopardising billions of pounds of investment by undermining our membership of the EU through their Eurosceptic obsession.

Labour can't be trusted with the economy at home or abroad. Their silence on Europe puts millions of British jobs at risk.

Above all else, do not let UKIP divert you from your fight against the main opponent and the things that you know work.

Hold your opponent to account, stick to your message, squeeze the third party, work the postal vote and run a top-notch Polling Day.

Tory Facing Wards

- Don't panic - they will take more Tory votes than they take from you. Let the Tories worry about them.

Labour Facing Wards

- Don't discount UKIP leaning voters assuming they're anti-Lib Dem. Actually a lot of them are our target squeeze group.
- Squeeze UKIP as well as the Tories (just squeezing the Tories ("Cons can't win") isn't enough if UKIP are standing - we need people to know that a vote for both of them is a vote for Labour, and give them a positive reason to pick us over Labour.

What if UKIP have stood before and have worked the area?

- This is a bit of an exception, but if they've polled about 20% previously in your ward and they are doing a full campaign, then contact ALDC or your local campaigns officer for further one to one advice.

Message for UKIP floating voters

If you do come across a voter on the doorstep or the phone, who is considering voting Lib Dem or UKIP, it's important to remind them of these two key points: