

Liberal Democrats’ manifesto on devolution and how it affects Yorkshire

What they say:

“We will cancel the boundary review due to report in 2018. While new constituencies would need to be established for a new voting system, we believe constituency boundary reviews should respect natural geographical communities, with greater flexibility for the Boundary Commission to deviate from exact equality to take account of community ties and continuity of representation.

Liberal Democrats support an English-only stage in legislation affecting England, so English MPs can have a separate say on laws that only affect England. However, this should be on a proportional basis, genuinely reflecting the balance of opinion in England.

In some areas of England there is a greater appetite for powers, but not every part of the country wants to move at the same speed and there cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach. All areas should however have access to the same opportunities and Mayoral authorities should not be ranked higher in terms of the powers with which they can be granted. We will therefore introduce Devolution on Demand, enabling even greater devolution of powers from Westminster to Councils or groups of Councils working together – for example to a Cornish Assembly or a Yorkshire Parliament.”

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From the top, this means:

1. If Liberal Democrats form government, they will establish new constituencies with geographies that respect community ties. This could therefore result in the whole of the traditional county of Yorkshire being represented by constituencies that comprise only of parts of the traditional county of Yorkshire, thereby giving the true extent of Yorkshire (the three Ridings) a political boundary as well as a traditional one.
2. Liberal Democrats support a level of devolution for England. This would place a layer of government between the UK government and any future Yorkshire government. It would therefore have the effect of restricting powers that may otherwise have been devolved to Yorkshire which could prevent Yorkshire from enjoying the same level of powers as is enjoyed in parts of the UK outside England.
3. Liberal Democrats acknowledge that Yorkshire is one of the areas where there is a greater appetite for devolution and, if they form government, would introduce a system where different areas would be granted different models and levels of devolution according to their appetite, for example, a Yorkshire Parliament. However, they say the powers would be devolved from Westminster to councils or groups of councils so it would seem that a ‘Parliament’ in this sense may not equate to a Parliament in the sense of that in Scotland where powers are devolved from

Westminster directly to their Parliament, not via Scottish councils. Point 2 above should also be considered here.