

The Parties' Manifestos on Devolution and how they relate to Yorkshire

We have looked through the recent general election manifestos, as they have been released, to examine those parts of them that tell us the intentions regarding devolution of the main political parties standing in Yorkshire. We then examined what those parts mean and in particular, what they mean to Yorkshire. For each party, we produced a document including a link to the full version of their manifesto, quoting the relevant text from it, and giving an account of our analysis of that text. We then published the documents on our website (links to these are in the party headings below) in the same order as the parties released their manifestos.

As you might expect, we found quite some variation in the extent of commitment and ideology amongst the various parties and we summarise those variations below:

- [Labour Party](#)

If there were to be any devolution in Yorkshire under a Labour Government it would come under several layers of intermediate control comprising a Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, a Minister for England and a Regional Office to interface between central and local governments. This would render any devolution to Yorkshire inferior to that enjoyed in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland where the only intermediate layer is a Secretary of State. Local Government could be headed by an elected Mayor if the people wish but there is no current scope for accountability and transparency via an elected Yorkshire Parliament. Other than this Labour has no current policy on how to reform democracy at fundamental level and say they will deal with this via a constitutional convention if elected to Government.

- [Liberal Democrats](#)

Constituency boundaries would be redrawn under the Liberal Democrats to respect community ties. This could result in more parts of the traditional county of Yorkshire being included in its political geography. Lib Dems would introduce 'Devolution on Demand' through which different regions can have different levels and models of devolution according to their appetite. They acknowledge Yorkshire as having a greater appetite for devolution and specifically mention a Yorkshire Parliament as a potential outcome. However, they would also introduce an England only stage of devolution, consisting of English MPs on a proportional representation basis, which would effectively restrict powers devolved to Yorkshire unless Devolution on Demand allows otherwise (?).

- [Conservative Party](#)

The terms of devolution would be very much prescribed by a Conservative Government rather than tailored to local demand. Whilst Local authorities would be allowed to combine, any Combined Authority including one of Yorkshire's major Cities would require an elected Mayor to secure any devolution deal. Rural

combined authorities would not need an elected Mayor but the Government would determine what devolution means to the different administrations so that they all operate within a common framework. Devolution would be based only on the geography of combined authorities so would disregard Yorkshire's traditional boundaries. Local authorities would be given some increased control of revenues they raise but how much and what control is not specified, nor is there any reference to central government funding.

- [Yorkshire Party](#)

Yorkshire Party campaign for a single voice for All-Yorkshire. They would achieve this via a transparent and accountable Yorkshire Parliament directly elected through a system which fairly represents the political make-up of voters. Yorkshire Party MPs will demand that the spending per head of population on education and on transport & infrastructure in Yorkshire is increased to similar levels as that enjoyed in London. They will insist that Yorkshire benefits from any Brexit negotiations and future trade deals which could include certain powers that are repatriated from the EU. Whereas Conservatives and UKIP back fracking on economic grounds whilst Labour, Lib Dems and Greens oppose it on environmental grounds, the Yorkshire Party are the only party that would allow the Yorkshire people to decide whether fracking went ahead in Yorkshire or not.

- [Green Party](#)

The Green Party used to advocate devolution via regional assemblies but as this does not feature in their manifesto for these elections whereas a very different policy relating to devolution does, it seems they no longer support assemblies to regions such as Yorkshire. Prima facie, the new policy appears to give local people power to have a say on local decisions. However, this seems to be limited to holding a referendum on decisions councillors have already made and then only if such referendum is secured by at least 40% of the electorate. Considering that the average turnout for the recent local elections in England was less than 40%, it would seem, in reality, local people would rarely have their say.

- [United Kingdom Independence Party](#)

UKIP would focus their devolutionary efforts on establishing an English Parliament rather than on regional devolution. However they do recognise and acknowledge traditional counties (such as Yorkshire) in the system they would implement to elect Members of that Parliament. UKIP would introduce binding bi-annual referenda on the issues most supported by the UK public in approved petitions. This would leave little scope for issues relating only to Yorkshire as they are never likely to be amongst the most supported on a UK-wide basis. UKIP would scrap the HS2 rail link from Yorkshire and the North of England to London and the South East in favour of focussing on improving transport across Yorkshire and the North of England which is bound to be a priority of any future devolved Yorkshire administration. UKIP would look at the duties carried out by local government and may redirect some of these to

national level on what they consider a cost effective basis. This would indicate a leaning more toward central control rather than toward devolving powers beyond the UK's constituent nations.

We appreciate that there are many issues within the manifestos that people will consider in deciding who to vote for in this General Election. However, focussing solely on whose manifesto offers the best devolution opportunity for Yorkshire, two clear leaders emerge. They are the Liberal Democrats and the Yorkshire Party. Whereas the Liberal Democrats' 'Devolution on Demand' would allow for a Parliament for Yorkshire, the model we believe is best for Yorkshire, the Yorkshire Party actively campaign for a Parliament for Yorkshire; both parties campaign for a fairer PR type of voting system and whereas the Liberal Democrats' constituency boundary changes has scope to include all the traditional county of Yorkshire within a political boundary, the Yorkshire Party actively campaign for one voice for All-Yorkshire.

The main difference between the two parties according to their respective manifestos, as we see it, is therefore that whilst the Liberal Democrats will allow for these desirables to be realised, the Yorkshire Party will actively campaign for them to be realised. Further, regional issues regarding Yorkshire are bound to be of a lower priority to a national party such as the Liberal Democrats than they are to a regional party focussing on Yorkshire. In conclusion, then, purely on the issue of devolution to Yorkshire, we would recommend that you vote Yorkshire Party where you can and Liberal Democrat where you cannot. However, should any party disagree with our conclusion here, we would welcome learning of their reasoning behind this.

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