
VOTERS PUNISH MAY AND LABOUR FOR BREXIT IMPASSE AHEAD OF EU POLLS

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Voters severely punished the two main UK parties in local council elections on Thursday (2 May), offering a preview of what is likely to happen in the European elections later this month.

Theresa Mays Conservatives suffered very heavy losses and are on course to lose around 1,000 local councillors, but the opposition Labour party also performed poorly, losing control of several cities and around 70 councillors.

The main beneficiaries were the pro-Remain Liberal Democrats – who recorded their best results in over a decade – and the Green party, as well as independent candidates.

While the Conservatives losses are slightly heavier than expected – Theresa Mays party lost around one of every four seats it was defending – Labours poor performance is more surprising.

The partys equivocation over Brexit appears to have cost it votes, particularly in its northern heartlands, most of which had voted for the UK to leave the European Union.

Earlier this week, Labours national executive agreed to stick to a convoluted policy of supporting Brexit provided that the UK stays in a customs union with the EU. In the event of failing to obtain that, or a general election, Labour would support a new referendum on EU membership. That has punished the party in both Leave and Remain-supporting areas.

The reality is people dont know where it (Labour) stands at the moment as regards to Brexit, said Labour MP Jess Phillips.

She added that the Labour party need to genuinely decide whether they are going to be a party that backs Brexit, or they are going to be a party that doesnt back Brexit.

However, Labour officials and candidates in Leave-voting areas say that leaving open the option of a second referendum is costing them votes from Brexit supporters.

In the meantime, Labour are continuing to hold talks with Mays government on a cross-party Brexit agreement, although party officials have warned that these talks will not bear fruit before the European elections on 23 May.

There were also reports of record numbers of spoilt ballot papers across the country.

The Liberal Democrats also reported informal campaign pacts with the pro-Remain Change UK party which is only standing candidates in the European elections.

Local polls offer May some Brexit respite

The UKs local elections on Thursday (2 May) will offer a test of the damage done to Theresa Mays Conservative party by her failure to deliver the countrys exit from the European Union.

Both main parties will expect to perform much worse at the European elections, where both Change UK and Nigel Farages recently formed Brexit party will take part. Neither new party stood candidates in the local polls.

Richard Tice, the Chairman of the Brexit Party, described the results as clearly disastrous for the Conservatives and Labour.

The Brexit party expects to win the European elections and has opened up a nine-point lead over Labour - 30% to 21% - in opinion polls, with the Conservatives on 12%.

The scale of losses for Labour and the Tories will increase the small and newly formed parties hopes of breaking the UKs two-party system.

It is clear that the last few years have broken any bonds between the electorate and Westminster. Their failures to deliver Brexit, and the dishonest way in which they are trying to thwart the biggest democratic vote in our history has put a spotlight on a system that is broken beyond repair, said Tice.

Speaking at a Welsh Conservative conference, May conceded that the results were very difficult but insisted that voters had given a simple message to the Conservatives and Labour to just get on with Brexit.

Kaynak/Source: