



Labour Leave Polling Analysis

Labour can win in Stoke-on-Trent

How Labour can win in Stoke-on-Trent by-election, so long as they select a 'staunch' Brexit candidate

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This paper does not represent the collective views of Labour Leave, but only the views of the author.

Key Points

The Labour party must pick a staunch Brexiteer for their candidate selection in Stoke-on-Trent or risk the humiliation of losing the by-election to the resurgence of Nuttall's UKIP. If Labour pick a pro-Remain candidate our polling suggests they will lose the election. Equally, if they pick a Brexit-apatetic candidate, then the opportunity to secure the largest vote share available will be lost, along with potentially the seat.

If the Labour party can secure a candidate that has a proven track record of supporting Brexit and can demonstrate a keen understanding of the issues surrounding the NHS, the Labour party is more likely to secure victory.

- In the upcoming by-election our poll indicates that Labour will receive 25% (-14), Conservatives 10% (-12) and UKIP 35% (+13) of the vote share with 24% still undecided. This is without a Labour candidate selected.
- 30% of voters who indicated 'Don't Know' for the upcoming by-election previously (GE 2015) voted Labour, 10% voted UKIP and 46% for the Lib Dems.
- The Labour party risks potentially losing more votes to UKIP than they possibly could gain from the Conservatives and Lib Dems put together, therefore must pick a Brexiteer candidate to nullify this threat.
- **81% of voters who indicated they are going to vote for UKIP in the upcoming by-election have previously voted for Labour.**
- 59% of voters who identified as voting UKIP and 51% of those who are undecided, would likely vote for Labour *'if the candidate was a staunch Brexiteer'*.
- The Labour party should fight the by-election on two central issues, the NHS (27%) and pro-Brexit (24%).
- 98% of voters who have voted for the Labour party at some point feel the most important issue to them in the upcoming election is the NHS.
- Interestingly, Leave voters' most important issue is a pro-Brexit candidate (34%) and the NHS is only 17%, however, in contrast the Remainers' key issue is the NHS (51%) and anti-Brexit sentiment second, with 15% identifying it as their key voting motivator.

Know yourself, know your enemy

If Labour select a pro-Brexit candidate then they have absolutely nothing to fear in the upcoming Stoke by-election. UKIP are going to throw all their weight behind this seat, and they are likely to receive a disproportionately large share of the media attention, such is the fascination with the idea that UKIP could take its first real political scalp. However, if Labour listen to voters in selecting their candidate then they are likely to be able to hold the seat from the departing Tristram Hunt and the clutches of a very desperate UKIP leader.

In 2015 Labour received a vote share of 39% with Ukip and the Tories effectively tied in second place at 23% of the vote.

Labour Leave's polling suggests that as it stands Labour would only receive a vote share of just 25% (-14), Conservatives 10% (-12), UKIP 35% (+13) with a further 24% still up for grabs. This would mean a likely victory for UKIP with Labour coming in second place, assuming the undecideds were broadly split between Labour and UKIP.

Don't despair, it doesn't have to end this way.

If Labour select a 'staunch' Brexiteer as their candidate then the numbers change completely, and UKIP and Nuttall look weak. 59% of voters who identified as planning to vote for UKIP would be likely or very likely, to switch from UKIP back to Labour (40% very likely). They would be *coming back* to Labour, and not departing from other parties. 81% of potential UKIP voters have previously voted for the Labour party at some point and therefore the majority of these votes are still up for grabs.

30% of the undecideds have previously voted for Labour and could do so again. However 51% of undecideds would be likely (34% very likely) to vote for Labour if the candidate was a 'staunch' Brexiteer.

Nevertheless, UKIP can win this election. With a pro-Remain/anti-Brexit Labour candidate, our polling shows this as likely. They have selected their leader as the candidate and plan to throw the entire party machine, coupled with the bank of Banks, behind his campaign. UKIP have an excellent chance, but if Labour can find the dynamism, pragmatism and the bravery to select a 'staunch' Brexiteer, then Labour can and should win this by-election.

This would stop UKIP dead in its tracks.

Assuming Labour heeded this advice and selected a 'staunch' Brexit candidate, they could then take up to 51% of the undecided votes and given that these are the Leave voters, the Lib Dems are likely to pick up the remaining 33% of undecided voters. This pushes Labour's vote to approx 33% (+8) vs Ukip's 40% (+5).

59% of Ukip's vote is potentially at risk from Labour. Assuming a more modest deflection come polling day then the numbers start to look a little more familiar, and a lot less terrifying. Labour could receive 10% of Ukip's vote (potentially more depending on turnout), which would create this final set of predications:

- Labour - 43% (+4)
- Ukip - 30% (+8)
- Tories - 10% (-12)
- Lib Dems - 9% (+5)(assuming they mop up former Tory remain votes)

Labour at 43% would easily secure victory and would demonstrate a commanding 4% increase in our majority from 2015.

This type of victory would certainly take some of the pressure of the current Labour leadership and would be something the Leave community could point towards as an example of how Labour needs to approach Leave dominated areas.

It's the NHS, stupid

98% of voters who have voted for the Labour party at some point feel the most important issue to them in the upcoming election is the NHS.

This could not be any clearer. If the party wants to win the Stoke by-election, then the main campaign issue from the 'staunch' Brexiteer candidate should be holding the government to account regarding the current NHS crisis.

Could UKIP steal a march on Labour's holy grail, the NHS? Absolutely not. Unfortunately for them, their leader is on film just a few years ago advocating the need to privatise the NHS. This will be very difficult for Nuttall to spin, and the media are likely to question him on this constantly, allowing Labour to benefit from his poor defense of the issue, without needing to point the finger themselves.

The NHS also does the one thing that Labour needs most of all, it will bring the party's Leavers and Remainers together. Without question or debate, this is the strongest unifying Labour issue, and therefore given that Brexit looks set to happen anyway, with Labour's PLP vote, the Remainers could vote for a 'staunch' Brexiteer candidate, so long as they made the debate more about the NHS than Brexit (once the Leave voters felt confident in the candidates Brexit credentials). Such voters would be motivated by the demoralising threat of a UKIP victory in a historically solid Labour seat.

Sensible campaigning is key

For the first time in half a century constituencies like Stoke-on-Trent can no longer be considered a safe haven for the Labour party, they have been taken for granted for far too long now, and if Labour truly wishes to mount a serious political comeback then places like Stoke will need to remain red.

The biggest difficulty for the Labour party is how do they become pro- and anti- Brexit at the same time, representing different people without seeming disingenuous and disconnected from the everyday voter.

Labour needs to focus its campaigning on Brexit issues that are both popular and highly ranked as Brexit voter motivators, but would be palatable to a typical Remainer. Labour will likely run its campaign messaging on the NHS, given the current government's abject failings, however if they stray too far towards Ukip they risk alienating a larger part of their core base who did vote to Remain. Therefore the best policy ground to fight for the Brexit vote is the return of the UK's sovereignty. Every poll ranks the ability for the UK to control its own laws above its desire to control its borders. This presents an interesting opportunity for the Labour party who really can not be overly zealous on immigration controls. Additionally, much can be made of removing the NHS from the EU's competition laws, which are being used to pry open services to the private sector. Labour should also feel confident in demanding the extra £100m a week promised to the NHS by Vote Leave during the EU Referendum campaign.

It is possible for Labour to carve out a populist niche, where they are pro-Brexit on the grounds of returning lawmaking abilities to Parliament and all the opportunities that this will bring, but also in favour of sensible managed immigration, for sectors that need it such as the NHS. Arguing for a controlled and fair immigration system, with a growing manufacturing and stable services economy helping pay for a compassionate and caring NHS is surely the position the Labour Party must take nationally, if it is to have any hope of returning to power within the next two political cycles.

Stoke-on-Trent provides an excellent potential microcosm for Labour's regeneration in its former heartlands. The commonsense findings made in the paper, if broadly adopted, could set in motion the party's ability to 'defend the line', and to hold on to as many seats as it can in the face of looming disaster.

Methodology

In the upcoming Stoke by election, which political party do you plan to vote for?

Tories	10%
Labour	25%
UKIP	35%
Lib Dems	2%
Other	5%
Don't Know	24%
NET	100%

Weight: Weighted EU Referendum Vote Share for Stoke on Trent; sample size = 182; total sample size = 204; 22 missing; effective sample size = 150 (82%); 95% confidence level and a 4% margin of error.

Stoke-on-Trent weighing method

	Leave	Remain
Votes cast: 117,680 (65.7%)	81,563 - 69.31%	36,027 - 30.61%

<http://www.stokesentinel.co.uk/how-stoke-on-trent-and-staffordshire-voted-in-the-eu-referendum/story-29439155-detail/story.html#ttKIBkR9mEBLrOpi.99>

	Tories	Did not vote	Greens	Labour	Lib Dems	Other	NET
Tories	42%	0%	26%	0%	38%	0%	10%
Don't Know	6%	46%	21%	30%	46%	21%	23%
Labour	2%	5%	42%	50%	0%	18%	24%
Lib Dems	2%	0%	11%	2%	16%	0%	2%
Other	6%	24%	0%	3%	0%	18%	5%
UKIP	41%	24%	0%	15%	0%	43%	35%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

In the upcoming Stoke by election, which political party do you plan to vote for? Who did you vote for at the last general election in 2015?

Weight: Weighted EU Referendum Vote Share for Stoke on Trent; sample size = 179; total sample size = 204; 25 missing; effective sample size = 147 (82%); 95% confidence level

81% of voters who indicated they are going to vote for UKIP in the upcoming by-election have previously voted for Labour.

	Tories	Don't Know	Labour	Lib Dems	Other	UKIP	NET
No	31%	15%	3%	17%	31%	19%	15%
Yes	69%	85%	97%	69%	69%	81%	85%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Have you ever previously voted for the Labour Party by In the upcoming Stoke by election, which political party do you plan to vote for?

Weight: Weighted EU Referendum Vote Share for Stoke on Trent; sample size = 175; total sample size = 204; 29 missing; effective sample size = 143 (82%); 95% confidence level

	Tories	Don't Know	Labour	Lib Dems	Other	UKIP	NET
1 - Least Likely	44%	33%	26%	83%	18%	28%	31%
2	8%	1%	17%	0%	0%	2%	6%
3	15%	14%	28%	0%	18%	12%	17%
4	8%	17%	11%	0%	21%	19%	15%
5	25%	34%	18%	17%	45%	40%	31%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

In the upcoming Stoke by-election, if the Labour candidate was a staunch Brexiteer would you be more or less likely to vote for them? by In the upcoming Stoke by election, which political party do you plan to vote for?

Weight: Weighted EU Referendum Vote Share for Stoke on Trent; sample size = 179; total sample size = 204; 25 missing; effective sample size = 147 (82%); 95% confidence level

	%
Anti-Brexit	6%
Economy	8%
Housing	4%
Jobs	7%
Local Politics	3%

NHS	27%
Other	14%
Pro-Brexit	24%
Social Care	6%
NET	100%

In the upcoming by-election what is the single most important issue that would motivate you to vote for the Labour party? SUMMARY

Weight: Weighted EU Referendum Vote Share for Stoke on Trent; sample size = 192; total sample size = 204; 12 missing; effective sample size = 153 (80%); 95% confidence level

	Anti-Brexit	Economy	Housing	Jobs	Local Politics	NHS	Other	Pro-Brexit	Social Care	NET
No	19%	22%	17%	10%	40%	2%	23%	17%	10%	13%
Yes	81%	78%	83%	90%	60%	98%	77%	83%	90%	87%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Have you ever previously voted for the Labour Party by In the upcoming by-election what is the single most important issue that would motivate you to vote for the Labour party?

sample size = 176; total sample size = 204; 28 missing; 95% confidence level