

Why I won't be standing as a Candidate in December's General Election

By Graham Eardley, Chairman of UKIP Walsall

I have taken part as a candidate in every General Election since 2005. However, this General Election I am ruling myself out as a candidate.

I do this for a variety of reasons I do not fancy trudging through the streets of the UK during the dark days of late November and December asking people to vote for me whilst they have other matters such as Christmas and Hanukkah celebrations on their minds.

I find it personally sad that UKIP is currently at 1% in the polls and people are in my opinion willing to accept the Withdrawal Agreement that our prime Minister has proposed. And there is the realpolitik: UKIP standing against other pro leave candidates could ruin the chance of the UK leaving the European Union by splitting the pro-leave vote.

This is a lesson fellow leavers should have learnt from this year's Brecon and Radnorshire by election which was won by the pro-remain Liberal Democrats after they came to an agreement with the Green party and Plaid Cymru.

Whereas if the Conservative Brexit Party and UKIP had of joined forces the result could've been very different. Not to negate the arrogance of the Conservative Party fielding a candidate who was the previous MP who succumbed to a petition to have him removed.

Even the President of the United States Donald J Trump seems to understand this. He asked Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson to come together when Farage interviewed him on LBC on 31st of October 2019^[1].

Nigel Farage's interpretation of this was to ask Boris Johnson to dump his Withdrawal Agreement in order for there to be a "Leave Alliance"^[2] as he put it or he would field a candidate in every seat in Great Britain, but not Northern Ireland.

I would argue that Farage knew that Johnson had no alternative but to rebuff the offer from the Brexit Party leader. After all, it is the Conservative party led by Johnson that are leading the polls. Why would he need Nigel Farage's Brexit Party in such circumstances? Many would argue that Farage is in no position to dictate terms in this regard.

I believe it is probable the Conservatives are going to lose a number of seats in London and the Home Counties which are predominantly pro-remain areas.

What Mr Johnson's electoral strategy appears to be is to hope for gains in Labour seats that voted to leave the EU in 2016, many of which are located in the North and Midlands of England. These constituencies should in theory make up for any losses in pro-remain areas and deliver a Conservative majority government albeit with a modest majority over the other parties.

These Labour constituencies in pro-leave areas are the very ones Nigel Farage is also asking Mr Johnson's Conservative Party to step aside for his Brexit Party: something which is clearly never going to happen. I fear the way in which Nigel Farage and to a lesser extent Boris Johnson are currently conducting themselves could allow Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party to retain the seats, although I hope I'm wrong.

What makes me even more fearful was that in the past local agreements were made between parties in a constituency. The Brexit Party does not appear to my eyes have the internal party structure that parties like UKIP do and so might struggle to make such agreements happen.

It is very naive of politicians to pretend that this coming General Election is not a Brexit General Election as this issue will dominate as evidence by various polls. Although the Labour Party keeps trying to turn the main issues of the election to the domestic front they must realise that even here a lot depends on the certainty or otherwise of Brexit happening.

Although at the time of writing, the manifestos have not yet been released, the Labour Party is expected to propose a series of

nationalisations of utilities and public transportation. I would contest that however this is done it could still fall foul of European Union state aid rules.

So this election I find myself in a position of having to hold my nose but vote for the party that will deliver Brexit.

However, I must also ready myself for the next election which – with apologies to “Brenda from Bristol” – may come sooner than we may think and hopefully will fall when the days are somewhat longer!

^[1] <https://www.lbc.co.uk/radio/presenters/nigel-farage/world-exclusive-interview-with-president-trump/>

^[2] <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/nigel-farage-calls-leave-alliance-17185767>