
General Election 2019:
Candidates to Watch

Cavendish
Government Relations and Communications



Foreword

A General Election has always represented an opportunity for change and for political parties it provides a chance to not only strengthen their position in the House of Commons, but also to renew themselves, bring in new talent and assemble a team capable of winning power and holding it in the years to come.

Turnover in parliamentarians is an inevitable part of the democratic process and the 2019 General Election is no different, having seen over 70 MPs stand down from Parliament, equating to over a millennium of collective parliamentary experience.

This means not only a fresh intake of candidates to replace departing incumbents, but the unpredictable nature of this election has the potential to see numerous first time MPs elected in constituencies that have changed hands between parties.

To anticipate how the House of Commons will change following the election requires an understanding of the background and policy interests of those candidates who may soon sit on the green benches. Such an understanding enables an organisation to identify those MPs that have the potential to be useful to your organisation, or to climb to the top of the greasy pole where they can then play a meaningful role influencing and developing policy.

As a leading public affairs firm, Cavendish Communications works intimately with Westminster and has developed a strong understanding of what is required for an MP to make a success of their Parliamentary career and how best to engage with them on behalf of another organisation.

To help showcase our thinking around this, Cavendish has produced this General Election candidates briefing which we hope can shed light on which of the UK's potential MPs stand out as ones to watch, should they successfully win their constituencies on 12 December.



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The Conservative Party

Even by the standards of Westminster (and despite having produced the only two female Prime Ministers in British political history) the Conservative Party has long-been characterised as pale, male and stale. However, this caricature fails to consider the increasing diversity of the modern parliamentary party in terms of gender, ethnicity and social background and which is increasingly reflected in the composition of the cabinet.

The decision by many veteran Conservative MPs to not contest this election, as well as the deselection of large number of anti-Brexit rebels, represents an important opportunity for the Conservatives to usher in a new intake of parliamentarians that can capture a wider base of support outside of their traditional voters. The Conservative Party has been in Government for almost ten years and these new candidates must offer something new to the electorate. This means bringing fresh energy and new policy ideas to the table, as well as a greater sense of discipline. This latter point will be especially important, given the internal divisions of the past three years.

The candidates fighting this election will therefore have been chosen due to their support for the Withdrawal Deal negotiated by Boris Johnson, and their ability to unite around his vision of the future post-Brexit. This agenda is reflected in the large number of current and former advisors who have been selected to contest seats, which may represent an attempt by Number Ten to ensure a strong cadre of loyalists who will stand by the Prime Minister and ensure he does not face the same divisions experienced by his recent predecessors.

Joy Morrisey, Beaconsfield



Currently serving as a Councillor in The London Borough of Ealing, Joy Morrisey is running in the Conservative safe seat of Beaconsfield where she will face former Conservative Attorney General and Arch-Remainer Dominic Grieve. An ardent Brexiteer, Ms Morrisey came to wider attention when she challenged Shaun Bailey to become the Conservative candidate for the London Mayoralty and previously ran against Labour incumbent Rupa Huq in Ealing Acton and Central at the 2017 General Election.

Danny Kruger, Devizes



A former speech writer for David Cameron turned political secretary to Boris Johnson, Danny Kruger will contest Devizes which his predecessor Claire Perry held in 2017 with a majority of twenty thousand votes. Outside of politics Mr Kruger has significant experience in the non-profit sector, having founded the rehabilitation charity, Only Connect, and West London Zone, a programme working with at-risk young people.

Andrew Griffith, Arundel and South Downs



Replacing the long-serving Nick Herbert in the Sussex constituency of Arundel and South Downs, Andrew Griffith has enjoyed a long and successful career in business, being a former investment banker, Chief Operating Officer at Sky, and Chair of food delivery company Just Eat. In July 2019 Mr Griffith was recruited by Boris Johnson to become his business advisor in Downing Street and will likely be among the first candidates to be promoted to a front bench role should he enter the House of Commons.

Laura Trott, Sevenoaks



A Downing Street insider who previously worked as a policy and communications advisor to David Cameron, Laura Trott has been selected to replace outgoing, former Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon as the Conservative candidate in the safe seat of Sevenoaks. Outside of politics, Ms Trott is employed at a PR agency and serves as an ambassador for the Sutton Trust, a charity which aims to improve social mobility and address educational disadvantage.

Nickie Aiken, Cities of London and Westminster



The respected Leader of the Westminster City Council, Nickie Aiken will run on behalf of the Conservatives in the Cities of London and Westminster, replacing long-serving incumbent Mark Fields. While nominally a safe seat, this central London constituency voted Remain in the 2016 Referendum and Ms Aiken will face former Labour MP, turned Lib Dem, Chuka Umunna who will look to tap into this dissatisfaction and overturn the slim majority won by the Conservatives in 2017.

Claire Coutinho, East Surrey



Won by the Tories in 2017 with a majority of 23,000, the constituency of East Surrey is one of the safest Conservative seats in the country. Previously held by Sam Gyimah, who defected to the Liberal Democrats, the Conservative challenger at this election will be Claire Coutinho who has previously worked at KPMG and recently served as a Special Advisor to the Chief Secretary to HM Treasury Rishi Sunak, himself a rising star from the 2015 parliamentary intake.

Darren Henry, Broxtowe



Darren Henry is a former RAF Squadron Leader who now works in the private sector as a manager at a food distribution company. In this election Mr Henry will challenge former Minister Anna Soubry who held Broxtowe for the Conservatives but will now contest her old seat as an independent. Mr Henry also has experience as a Wiltshire Councillor and previously contested Wolverhampton North East at the 2015 General Election.

James Wild, Norfolk Northwest



Replacing the long-serving Sir Henry Bellingham in Norfolk North West is James Wild, who currently serves as Deputy Chief of Staff at Number Ten. Should Mr Wild hold this constituency for the Conservative Party, he will find himself sharing the Palace of Westminster with his wife, Baroness Evans, who has served as Leader of the House of Lords since 2016.



Theodora Clarke, Stafford



Theodora Clarke will contest the West Midlands constituency of Stafford, previously held by Conservative incumbent Jeremy Lefroy. Ms Clarke has impressive non-profit sector credentials and is the founder and CEO of the Bill Gates-funded Coalition for Global Prosperity. The candidate is also known as the niece of Leader of House of Commons, Jacob Rees-Mogg, and is close friends with Carrie Symonds, partner of the Prime Minister. Ms Clarke is also a distant cousin to Theodore Roosevelt, after whom she is named.

Dr Ben Spencer, Runnymede and Weybridge



Dr Spencer has been chosen to replace the former Chancellor Philip Hammond in the Conservative safe seat of Runnymede and Weybridge. A psychiatrist who has spent the past ten years working in the NHS, Dr Spencer champions reforms to the Mental Health Act (having played an active role in the recent review) and volunteers for a homeless charity in London.



The Labour Party

As Jeremy Corbyn fight his second General Election as Labour Leader, his priority will be to try and shift the narrative from Brexit to ground of his own choosing, namely public services and social injustice. In the years since his election as Labour Leader in 2015, Mr Corbyn's greatest challenge to delivering a more radical agenda has often come from within his own Parliamentary Party, with many moderates challenging his position on foreign affairs and economic policy.

This General Election will therefore provide Mr Corbyn with a useful opportunity to install new MPs who share his political outlook, with many candidates being recruited from the trade union movement and amongst pro-Corbyn grassroots movements like Momentum. This will enable Mr Corbyn to surround himself with a praetorian guard of loyalists who will not only support his leadership, but also continue the Corbyn project if and when the 70-year-old Mr Corbyn chooses to retire from front line Parliamentary politics.

Charlotte Nichols, Warrington North



Charlotte Nichols has been selected to contest the safe Labour constituency of Warrington North, following the decision by veteran MP Helen Jones to stand down at this election. Deeply immersed in Labour Party politics, Ms Nichols has previously served as a Young Labour Women's Officer and a GMB Union Political Officer. A Corbyn Loyalist, Ms Nichols is well connected with the Labour Leadership and will serve as an important ally for Mr Corbyn in the Parliamentary Party.

Feryal Clark, Enfield North



Deputy Mayor on Hackney Borough Council, Ms Clark will contest the constituency of Enfield North, a safe Labour constituency previously held by Joan Ryan, who defected from the Labour Party to join the Independent Group. A member of Hackney Council since 2006, Ms Clark has strong local government credentials, having also served as Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care.

Faiza Shaheen, Chingford and Woodford Green



A cockney turned think tank director, Faiza Shaheen is the well-regarded director of the Centre for Labour & Social Studies (CLASS). Tilting for the constituency of Chingford and Woodford Green, Ms Shaheen will attempt to unseat Conservative grandee Iain Duncan Smith, who is fighting to hold the constituency with a slim majority of 2,438. The former Work and Pensions Secretary is therefore vulnerable, and the capture of his constituency would represent a major scalp for the Labour Party.

Florence Eshalomi, Vauxhall



An experienced figure in local government, Florence Eshalomi will succeed Arch-Brexiteer Kate Hoey in the very Remain supporting, safe Labour constituency of Vauxhall. A member of the London Assembly where she represents Lambeth and Southwark, Ms Eshalomi is well regarded for her work as Chair of the Transport Committee, and previously served on Lambeth Council where she was also Chair of the Housing Committee.

James Murray, Ealing North



London's Deputy Mayor for Housing, James Murray beat his fellow Deputy Mayor for Business to be selected to replace the retiring Stephen Pound in the plum Labour constituency of Ealing North. Mr Murray previously served on Islington Borough Council where he became close to Jeremy Corbyn who backed his selection for Ealing North. None the less, Mr Murray is on the soft left of the party and due to his policy experience will likely be a shoo-in for a role in the Housing, Communities and Local Government front bench team.

Nathalie Fleet, Ashfield



Nathalie Fleet has been chosen to replace the departing incumbent Gloria De Piero as the Labour candidate in the Nottinghamshire constituency of Ashfield. Once a Labour stronghold, Ashfield was held by the Labour Party in 2019 with a slim majority of only 441. Ms Fleet can therefore expect a strong challenge by both the Conservatives and Brexit Party and will hope her appeal as a local candidate will enable her to hold the constituency for Labour.

Nadia Whittome, Nottingham East



Nadia Whittome will contest the seat of Nottingham East, formerly held by Shadow Chancellor Chris Leslie before his defection to the Independent Group. The daughter of a working class immigrant family, Ms Whittome has played an active role in the pro-second referendum campaign group, Another Europe is Possible, which enjoys the support of senior Labour MPs.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy, Streatham



Replacing the defected and departed Chuka Umunna in the safe Labour constituency of Streatham is Bell Ribeiro-Addy. Chief of Staff to Shadow Home Secretary Dianne Abbott, Ms Ribeiro-Addy defeated two local councillors to become the Labour candidate and enjoys the support of both Momentum and the major trade unions.

Abena Oppong-Asare, Erith and Thamesmead



Abene Oppong-Asare has been selected to be the Labour candidate in the constituency of Erin and Thamesmead, replacing outgoing Labour incumbent Theresa Pearce. The Chair of the Labour Women's Network and a former member of Bexley Borough Council, Ms Oppoiing-Asare defeated her more left wing opponents to secure her selection, in what is seen as a victory for the more moderate wing of the party.

Sam Tarry, Ilford South



Sam Tarry has been chosen to replace Mike Gapes as the Labour candidate for the safe seat of Ilford South. The long-serving Mr Gapes left the Labour Party earlier this year in protest over Jeremy Corbyn's leadership and will challenge his replacement as an independent, hoping that his personal profile can help see him returned to Parliament.

An officer in the TSSA Union, Mr Tarry also serves as President of the think tank CLASS. He is supported by the Labour leadership and enjoys the backing of both Momentum and the major unions. He will therefore be well placed to rise high within the Parliamentary party should he be elected to the House of Commons.



The Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats walked away from the 2017 General Election with 12 MPs. They now go into the 2019 campaign with 21, having enjoyed a remarkable few years in which they have successfully defined themselves as clear cut opponents of Brexit and taken advantage of defections by both Conservatives and Labour MPs.

The Liberal Democrats, led by their new leader Jo Swinson, will look to build upon this momentum and use the General Election to recapture those seats lost in 2015 and specifically target constituencies disaffected by the Brexit policies of the other two major parties. This includes Conservative held seats in the South West and South East, as well as the metropolitan constituencies held by Labour in London and the North. While many of the Liberal Democrat candidates hoping to enter the House of Commons will be new to Westminster, there are several who will seem more familiar due to having previously represented another party in the Commons, but who now face the challenge of fighting and winning a new seat on behalf of the Liberal Democrats.

Munira Wilson, Twickenham



As the long-serving Sir Vince Cable stands down from Parliament after some twenty years in the House of Commons, Munira Wilson has been chosen as his replacement to contest the London constituency of Twickenham on behalf of the Liberal Democrats. A local resident, Ms Wilson has served as both a councillor and school governor and worked in a senior leadership role at a global science and technology company.

Paul Kohler, Wimbledon



Paul Kohler will face off against Conservative incumbent Stephen Hammond in the heavily remain London constituency of Wimbledon. Currently serving on Merton Borough Council, Mr Kohler enjoys a strong local profile, having campaigned against cuts to local policing following his own violent attack in 2014. Outside of politics, Mr Kohler is employed as lecturer and tutor at the School of Oriental and African Studies.

Laura Gordon, Sheffield Hallam



Looking to recapture Sheffield Hallam from the Labour Party is aid worker Laura Gordon. Prior to standing as an MP, Ms Gordon worked for the Department for International Development and has also been employed by Oxfam and Save the Children to support countries affected by conflict, Ebola and natural disasters. Previously held by former Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, Sheffield Hallam was lost to Labour in 2017. However, following the controversial tenure of Labour MP Jared O'Mara, the constituency is once again within the grasp of the Liberal Democrats.

Chuka Umunna, Cities of London and Westminster



One of several recent defectors from the Labour Party to the Liberal Democrats, Chuka Umunna is an experienced Parliamentarian and former member of the Labour Shadow Cabinet who currently serves as the Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. Having previously represented the seat of Streatham, Mr Umunna will now contest the marginal constituency of the Cities and London and Westminster. Long-held by the Conservative Party, success in this constituency would be a huge victory for the Liberal Democrats and represent a personal political victory for Mr Umunna, following his departure from the Labour Party.

Luciana Berger, Finchley and Golders Green



Luciana Berger is another former Labour MP who defected to the Liberal Democrats due to a failure by Jeremy Corbyn to effectively address anti-Semitism within the Labour Party. She now serves as the Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Health and Social Care. Formerly the Labour MP for Liverpool Wavertree, Ms Berger will contest the London marginal of Finchley and Golders Green. With a large proportion of Jewish voters, a victory for Ms Berger in the constituency would represent a blow to both the incumbent Conservatives, and a repudiation of Jeremy Corbyn's response to accusations of anti-Semitism.

The other parties

While it can be very easy to focus on the contest between the Conservatives and Labour to become the party of the Government (with the Lib Dems fighting to hold the balance of power) it is important to remember that there are several smaller parties (often regional or driven by a single issue) fighting to increase their presence in the House of Commons.

These include the Greens, Plaid Cymru and Brexit Party who are too small to likely hold much influence over the balance of power (although this should not be discounted in the event of a hung parliament) but will seek to cause an upset in certain key constituencies where the major parties are unpopular and their message will hold impact. In some cases, the Liberal Democrats, Greens and Plaid Cymru have even agreed to stand aside in certain seats, to ensure that an anti-Brexit candidate can become an MP.

Largest and most prominent of the regional parties will be the Scottish Nationalist Party. As things stand now the SNP look set to recover from the surprise losses inflicted at the 2017 General Election. They will most likely remain the largest party in Scotland and potentially the third largest in the House of Commons. In the event of a hung parliament, the SNP have indicated that they are prepared to support a Jeremy Corbyn led Labour Government on the promise that he will deliver a second referendum on both the membership of the European Union and Scottish Independence.

They therefore remain a major threat to the ambitions of the Conservative Party to win a working majority in the Commons and the Conservatives will be hoping that their support for the union can serve as a rallying cry to those voters who may not naturally be conservative politically, but are opposed to further moves towards an independent Scotland.

Alyn Smith, Stirling

SNP



Currently serving as MEP for Scotland, a role he has held since 2004, Mr Smith will attempt to unseat Conservative incumbent Stephen Kerr, who is attempting to hold the constituency of Stirling with an ultra-thin majority of only 148. Given his experience and heavy weight profile as a MEP, should Mr Smith prove victorious in Stirling he can likely expect a prominent role on the SNP front bench in the House of Commons.

Amy Callaghan, East Dunbartonshire

SNP



27-year-old party activist Amy Callaghan will attempt to unseat Liberal Democrat Leader Jo Swinson in her constituency of East Dunbartonshire. Ms Swinson lost to the SNP in 2015, only to recapture the constituency two years later in 2017 with a majority of 5000 votes. The constituency is still vulnerable, however, and the SNP will hope that Ms Callaghan can repeat the success of the similarly youthful Mhairi Black and score a high-profile victory in East Dunbartonshire.

Richard Tice, Hartlepool

Brexit Party



Chairman of the Brexit Party and MEP for the East of England, Richard Tice will contest the seat of Hartlepool. Although a long-standing Labour constituency, Hartlepool voted to leave the EU by almost 70 percent in 2016 Referendum. Mr Tice will therefore hope that the weakness of the Labour Party's message on Brexit, can allow a Brexit Party currently struggling in the polls to achieve a shock victory in the North East.

Aled ap Dafydd, Ynys Môn

Plaid Cymru



Contesting the constituency of Ynys Mon on the Isle of Anglesey is Aled ap Dafydd, a Welsh Language broadcaster who joined Plaid Cymru in 2019, first as a strategist and now as a candidate. Ynys Mon is a perennial target for Plaid Cymru and although the party was beaten into third place by Labour and the Conservatives in 2017, he will hope that the resignation of long-serving Labour incumbent Albert Owen (as well as the decision by the Lib Dems not to stand a candidate in the constituency) will provide an opportunity for Plaid to capture a fifth seat in Westminster.

Carla Denyer, Bristol West

Green Party



Another beneficiary of a Remainer alliance with the Liberal Democrats is Carla Denyer who is standing in the constituency of Bristol West where she serves as a local councillor and played an important role in Bristol declaring a climate emergency in 2018. Although won by Labour incumbent Thangam Debbonaire in 2017 with an enormous majority, both the Greens and the Lib Dems have traditionally performed strongly in the constituency and it is hoped by the Green Party that a collapse in support for Jeremy Corbyn can propel Ms Denver to the House of Commons.

About Cavendish

Cavendish is a leading independent public affairs consultancy, established in 2003. Since then we've been helping companies, charities, campaign groups and public bodies with their political relations at all levels in the UK and in Brussels.

We come from a variety of political backgrounds, but we all share an enthusiasm, and respect, for the political process. As such integrity and transparency are foundations of everything we do. We're full members of the APPC and PRCA and adhere to their codes of conduct. Our services include:

Policy and legislation

We provide clients with advice on shaping the policy agenda to support their organisational aims. This includes influencing party-political manifestos, feeding into government spending decisions, departmental consultations and the passage of legislation through Parliament and the devolved administrations.

Campaigns

Cavendish has a strong track record of developing and executing campaigns that bring pressure to bear on key decision makers within central and local government. Our campaigns have focused on everything from securing favourable decisions, to achieving changes in policy, and working with civil servants on the implementation of policy.

Corporate Reputation

Politics and the media are interlinked, and MPs are increasingly aware of the impact they can potentially have on brands through what they say, as much as anything they do. Cavendish works with organisations and brands to help them cultivate pools of supporters in politics that can be drawn upon when required to either promote or protect their brand.

B2G

While some clients have a specific policy that is of concern to their business, Cavendish also works with those who want to sell their products or services to government, or who simply want to enhance their reputation within Whitehall and Westminster. We know how to position a business and shape key messages to bolster a supplier's profile and reputation with the right politicians and civil servants.

Political due diligence

Whether it is in relation to taxation, funding streams, labour market rules and conditions, enforcement by agencies, or sector-specific regulations, an entire range of factors in the political sphere can have an impact on the value of an asset. Cavendish has billions of pounds worth of experience in advising investors and conducting political due diligence projects.

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