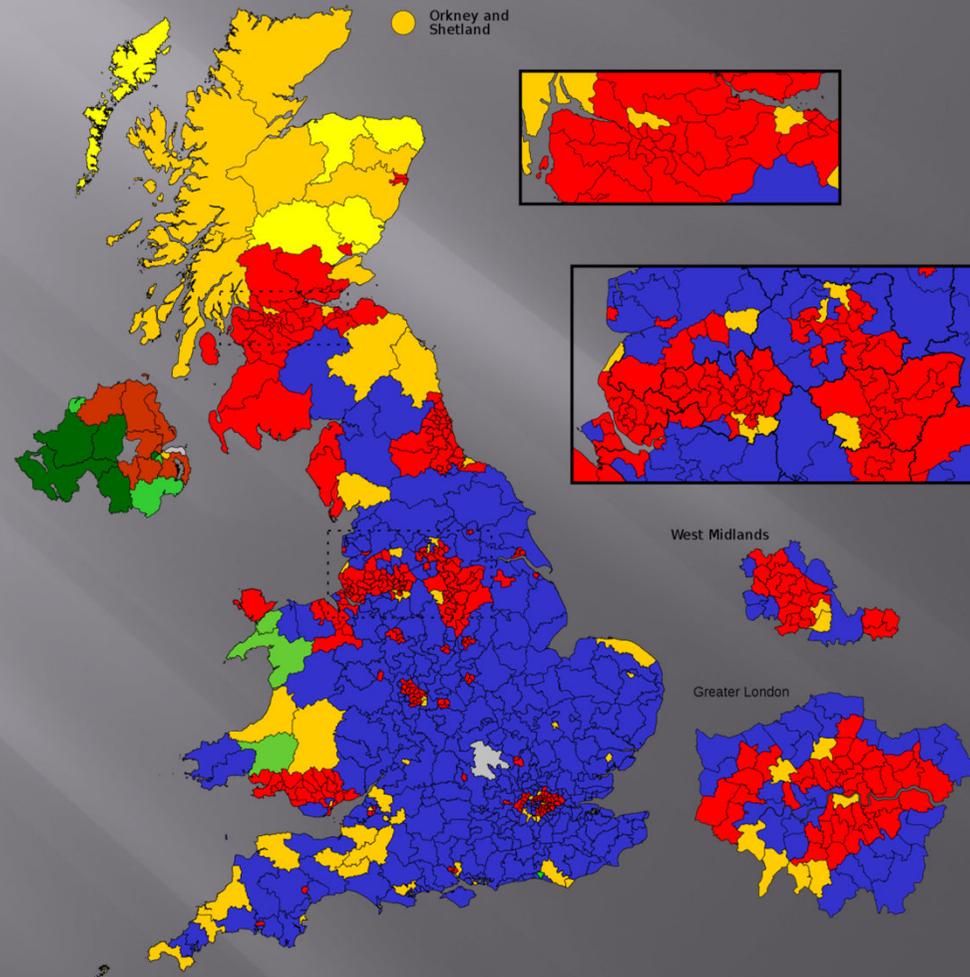


THE SWING SEATS OF 2015

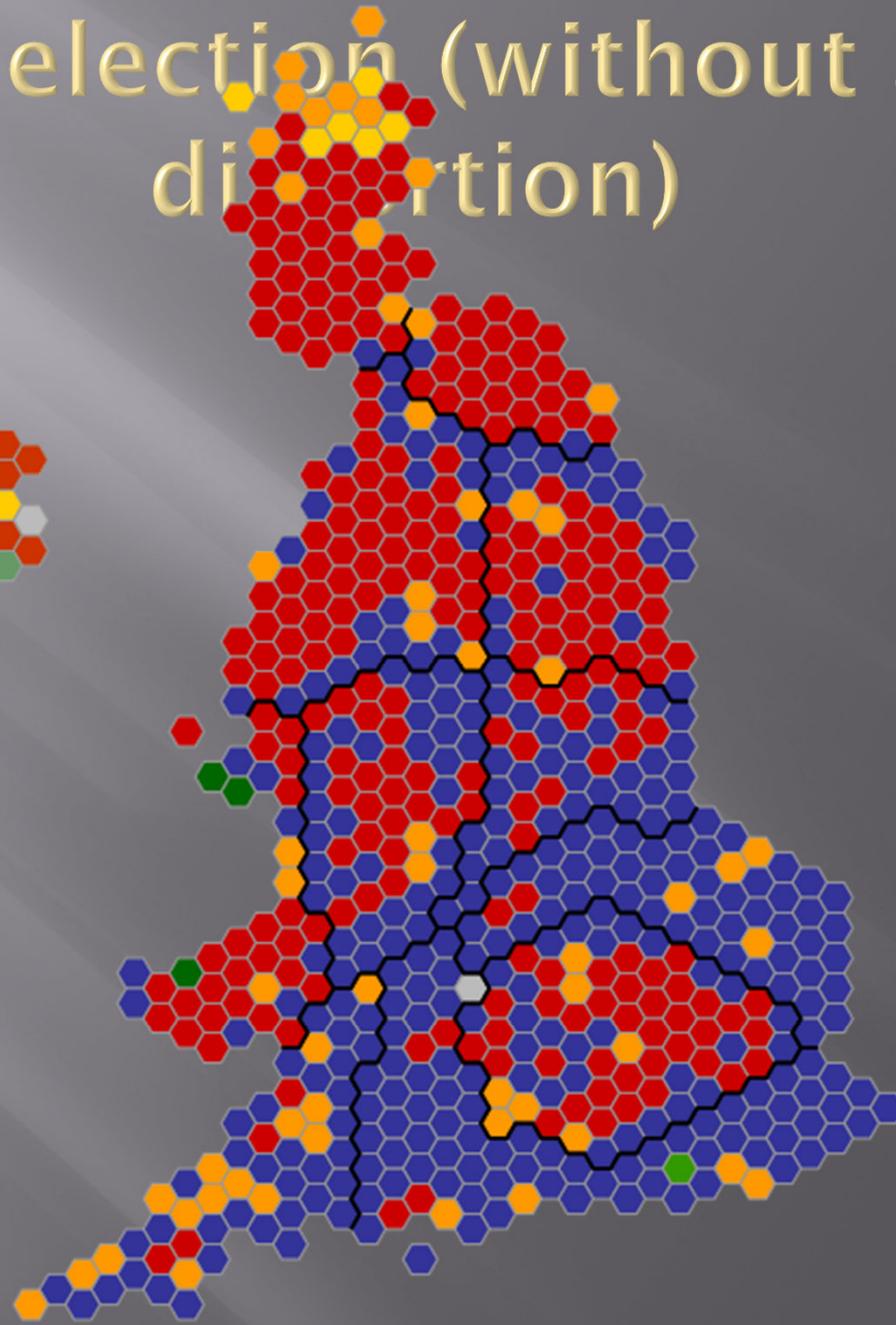
Lewis Baston
June 2014

For Travel Matters conference, ABTA

The political map of Britain 2010

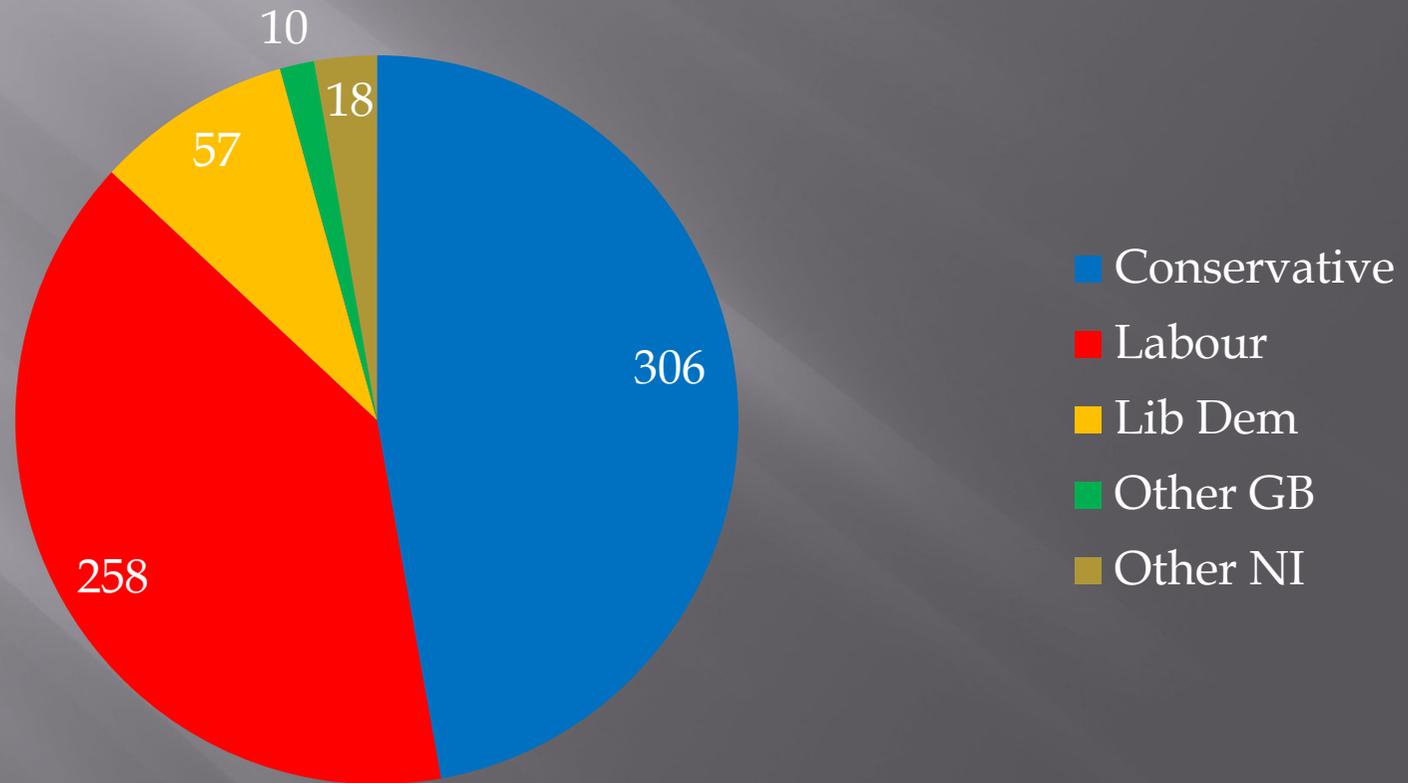


2010 election (without area distortion)



Election result 2010

Seats



The aims

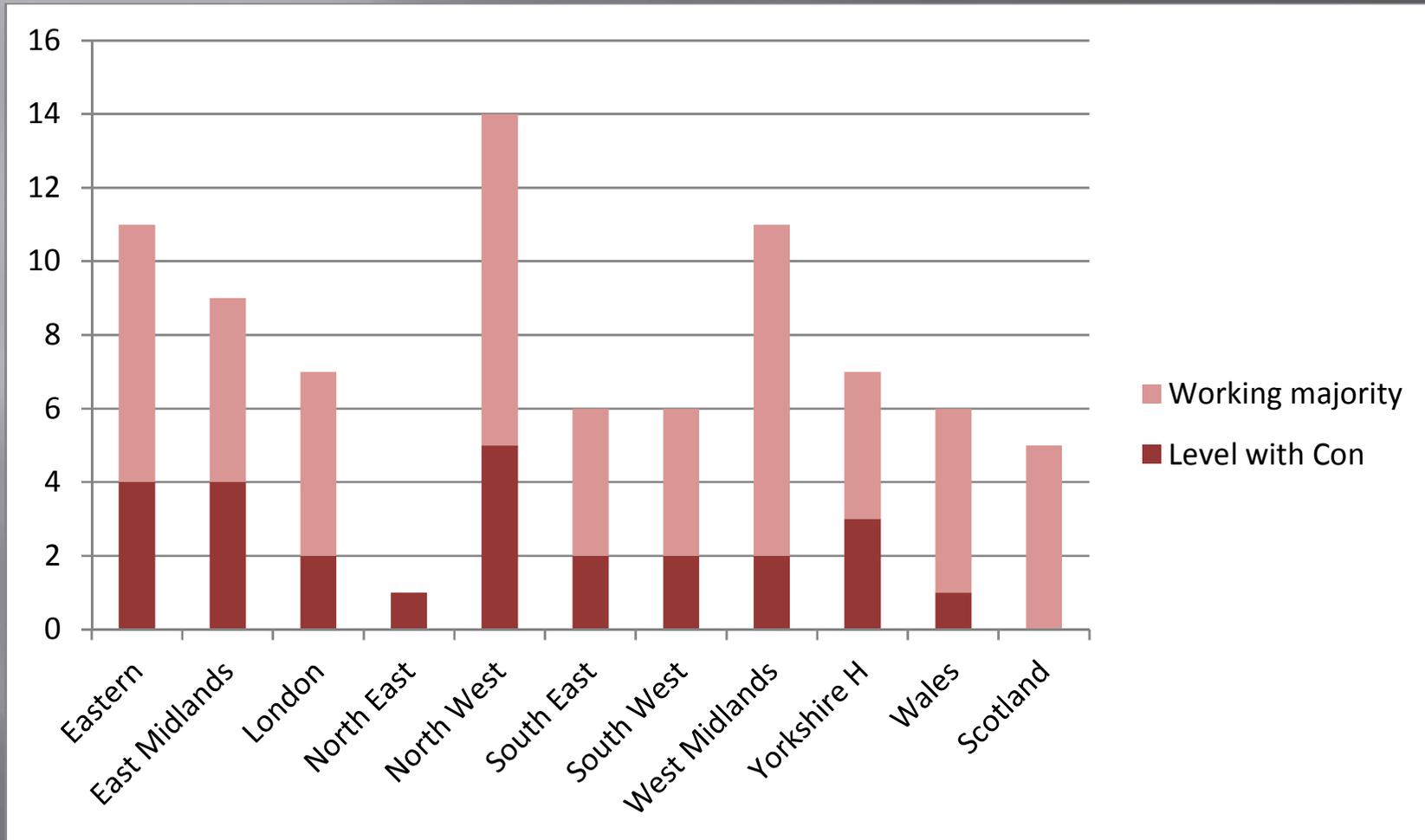
- ▣ The winning post is 326 seats (effectively 323)
- ▣ The Conservatives need a net gain of 20 seats to get to 326.
- ▣ Labour needs a net gain of 68 seats to get to 326.
- ▣ Both parties aspire to win more seats for a more comfortable majority.
- ▣ The Lib Dems need Lab and Con to fall short, and to have enough MPs to make a Lab + LD or Con + LD majority, or ideally both.

Not many seats matter

- ▣ The election will be decided in the top 80 or so Labour targets and the 40 Conservative targets.
- ▣ Fewer seats change hands for a given change in national voting than in the 'good old days'.
- ▣ The 2010 result was close enough for the parties to focus hard on a small number of crucial seats.
- ▣ Regional, local and personal factors seem to be of growing importance in determining election results in marginal seats – and thus who governs.

Where are the key
seats?

Where are the Labour targets?



What sort of places
are the key
battlegrounds?

Reasons for (Lab/Con) marginality

- ▣ Microcosm seats, representing national average demographics (e.g. Worcester)
- ▣ Seats with lots of swing voters (e.g. Stevenage)
- ▣ Seats with strong and nearly balanced core votes for Lab and Con (e.g. Keighley)
- ▣ Seats with popular candidates that defy trends (e.g. Stroud)
- ▣ Seats in demographic/ social transition (e.g. Hove, Battersea)
- ▣ Seats with split votes (e.g. Norwich South)

What about the Lib Dems?

- ▣ Seats usually the product of strong local candidates and campaigns
- ▣ Difficult to defend liberal urban seats against Labour (Hornsey & Wood Green, Manchester Withington) or any seats in Scotland
- ▣ May do better against Conservatives...
- ▣ ... particularly where Lib Dems have incumbency.

What about UKIP?

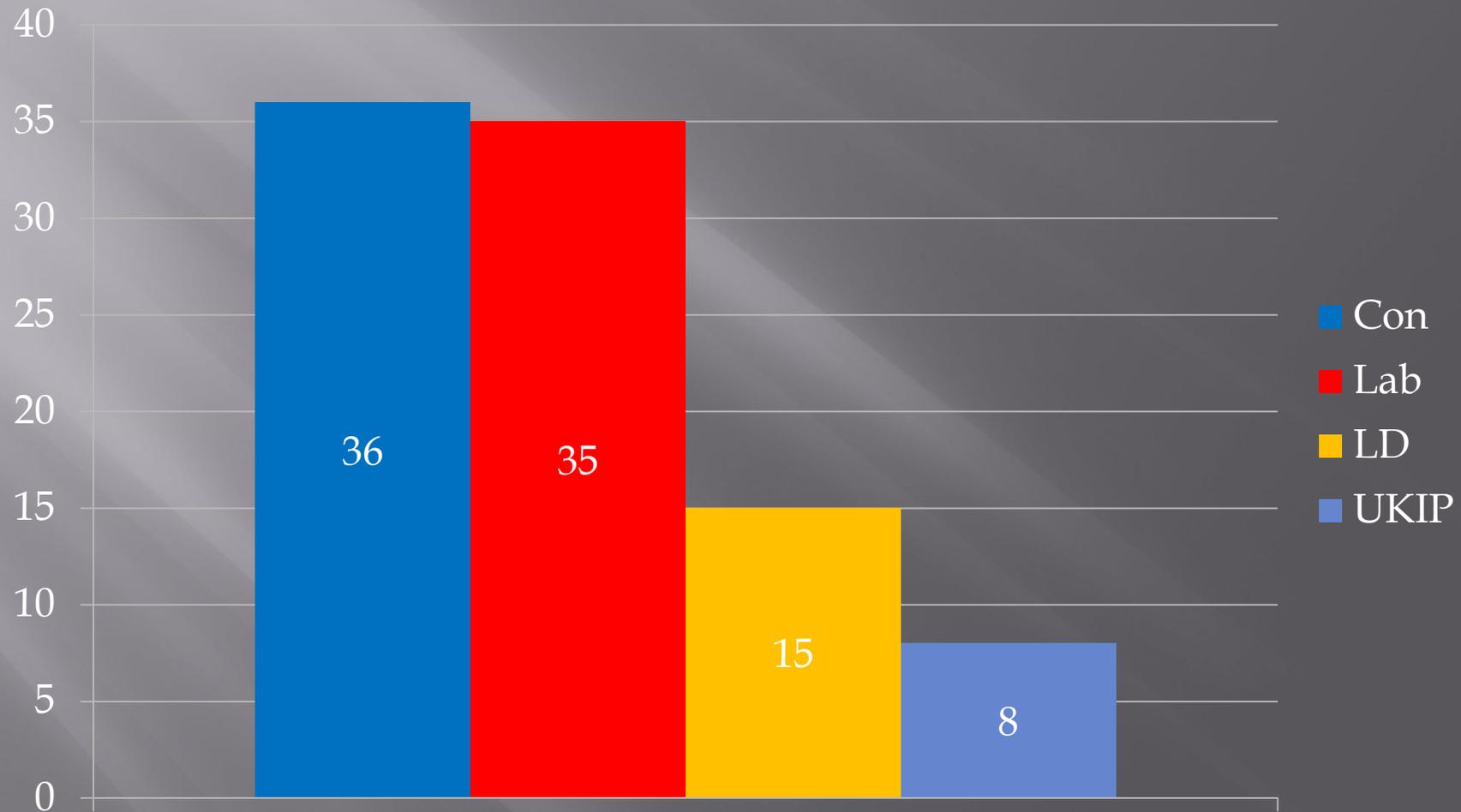
- ▣ Probably no seats at all –
- ▣ One or two not impossible on the east coast (Grimsby, Boston, Thanet) or Farage personal
- ▣ Likely to get best votes in some safe Conservative and safe Labour seats without winning
- ▣ Effect seems neutral between Con and Lab at the moment – will it be so in 2015?

What are the
prospects for 2015?

Vote share prediction

- ▣ WARNING! Educated guess coming up...

Vote share prediction



What about seats?

Incumbency

- ▣ Incumbency is a massive advantage to Liberal Democrat MPs
- ▣ Their vote will fall most where it matters least to them (others' safe seats, and Con/Lab marginals)
- ▣ 'First term incumbency' helps many MPs beat the national swing – prime example was 2001
- ▣ This effect works mostly to help marginal Conservative incumbents – but also several Labour incumbents (e.g. Bolton West, Wirral South)
- ▣ But Labour hope a superior 'ground game' will counteract this factor

Local and national issues

- ▣ Parties fight national 'air war' on general issues
– economics, Europe, health etc
- ▣ Candidates fight local campaigns:
- ▣ Some of which reflect national narratives (e.g. hospital closures)
- ▣ Some reflect purely local concerns
- ▣ Infrastructure often plays differently locally and nationally (Heathrow, HS2...)
- ▣ Coastal port/ resort seats often marginal

What to expect?

- ▣ Lib Dem incumbents hanging on despite national trends (and an uptick in Lib Dem support during the election campaign)
- ▣ Effect of national swing is dampened by regional differences, incumbency etc
- ▣ Labour probably needs a lead rather larger than 2 per cent to win outright...
- ▣ ... but the Conservatives also need a double-figure lead to win outright

What to expect?

- ▣ In other words, another hung parliament.
- ▣ Labour may well be the largest single party.
- ▣ The result could end up in the territory where Lib Dems have a genuine choice of coalition partner and thus more power than they had in 2010

Heath's law of elections

- ▣ 'The next election will resemble the last election more than most people believe it will'

DO NOT TAKE THIS BIT TOO SERIOUSLY!

There's nearly a year to go.

It's based on back-of-envelope calculations.

Local campaigns matter, increasingly.

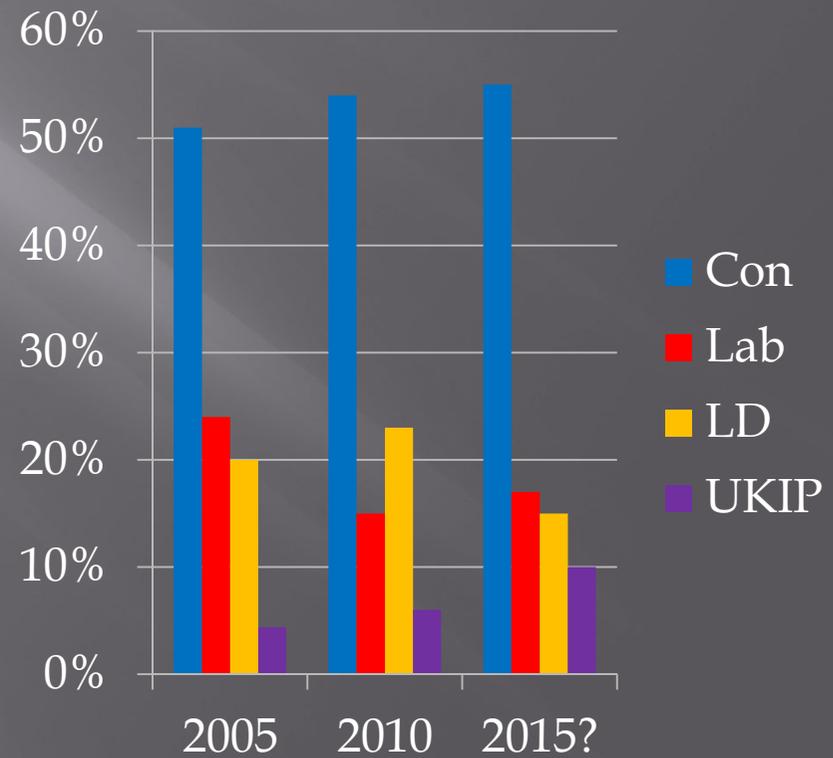
I don't know everything...

Mid Worcestershire

SAFE CON SEAT

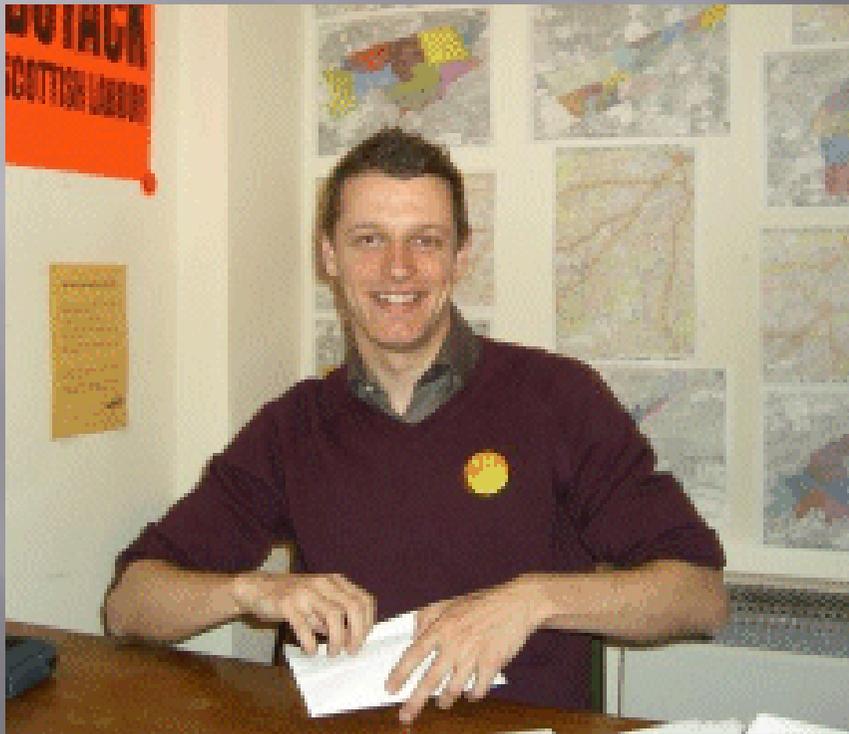


CON HOLD

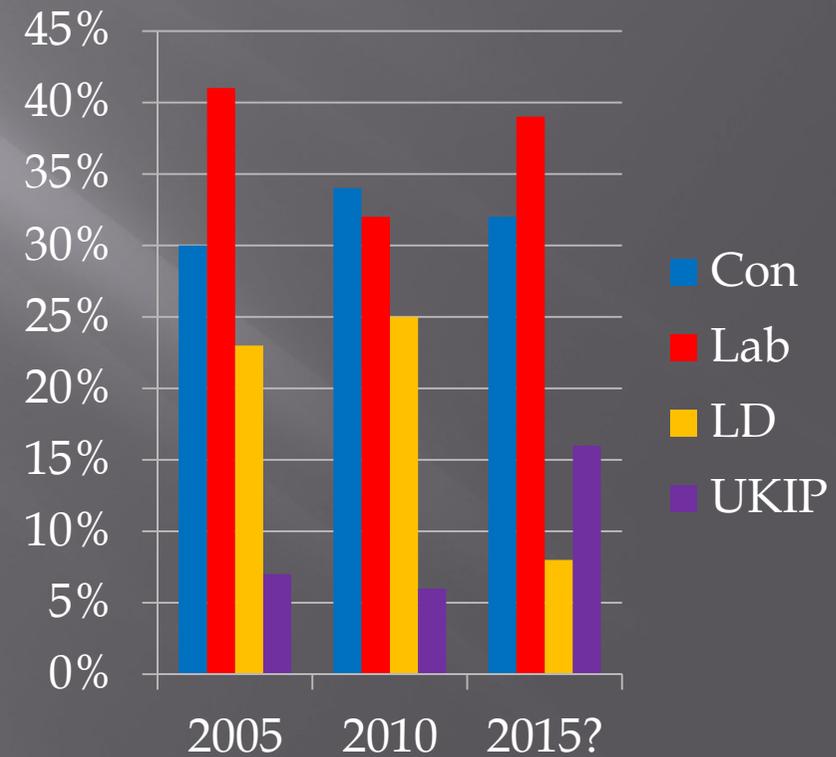


Plymouth Sutton & Devonport

KEY MARGINAL



LAB GAIN



Harrogate & Knaresborough

LD/CON MARGINAL

CON HOLD

