

Torridge and Tavistock Parliamentary Constituency

Constituency profile

March 2025

Parliamentary elections

This is traditionally a strong Liberal area. However, the Liberal Democrats last won the seat in 2001. John Burnett, who was MP for Torridge and West Devon from 1997 to 2005, now sits in the House of Lords. Since winning the seat, Geoffrey Cox had steadily increased his share of the vote from 43% in 2005 to 60% in 2019, however in 2024 his % share dropped to 32%. Despite losing the seat in 2005, the Liberal Democrat party remained a strong challenger with 37% of the vote in 2005 and 40% in 2010. The coalition years and the Brexit issue saw a sharp decline in the Liberal Democrat vote, which dropped to 13% in 2015. In 2017 we were knocked into third place by Labour but recovered our second place with 18% in 2019. In 2024 we saw a 5% increase in the vote to put us in a much stronger 2nd place despite Labour's strong showing nationally which impacted on our overall % share. So much so that we are in the top 10 of target seats in the next election.

Reform have arrived and despite being pushed into 4th place they had 18% of the vote. This may well account for a significant part of the conservative's loss of vote share, but we also saw an increase of 6% despite the impact of Labour's national poll muddying the waters. It is interesting to note that despite Reform's 18% of the vote share it is no higher than UKIP's 18% in 2015 due to Brexit demands. In terms of raw numbers Reform were over 1,000 votes down in comparison to UKIP's result in 2015 but with an increase in population of over 18,000, be it 4% down on turnout. However, the raw numbers show a voter turnout base of 40,740 in 2015, compared to 50,814 in 2024. We on the other hand saw our best raw data since 2010 (When we went into Coalition) and an increase of over 4,500 compared to 2015 low point after coalition. So, it is clear Reform are back but their % share has not increased, and their raw data is less. They pose a threat, but it may not be as great as the National pollsters and papers would have us believe. – see appendix for data.

District councillors

We have 9 Lib Dem councillors in Torridge and 4 in West Devon. The district elections of 2023 with 4 by-elections following saw us vastly increase our vote, making us the political party with the largest number of seats in Torridge, and helping to deprive the Conservatives of their majority on West Devon Borough Council. In addition, there are sizeable numbers of independent councillors in both local authorities who are liberal-leaning or former Lib Dems. We also have Lib Dem representation on town and parish councils in Bideford, Northam, Abbotsham, Torrington, Winkleigh, Woolsery, Burrator, Buckland Monachorum, and

Tavistock. It should be noted that although most West Devon wards correspond to our constituency, some are in Central Devon parliamentary constituency and there is considerable cooperation with the Liberal Democrat party there. Burrator and Buckland Monachorum will go to the new South West Devon constituency when the new boundary changes come into effect.

Constituency profile

The constituency is geographically large, stretching from Appledore in the north to Bere Ferrers in the south – over 50 miles. The latest boundary proposals will see the constituency renamed to Torridge and Tavistock, the loss of the Remain-voting Buckland Monachorum and Burrator wards, and some minor changes around Beaworthy, giving us a reduced electorate of 74,802 (from 80,716). Most of the population live in the urbanised areas around Tavistock or the Bideford/Northam conurbation. Between the two there are sparsely populated rural areas with small market towns and traditional villages. Tourism is an important source of income but the prevalence of second homes/holiday lets is also a concern because of its impact on the rental housing market and on the viability of communities outside the holiday season. In recent years there have been significant demographic changes due to incomers from other parts of the country and an aging population, both of which have put pressure on housing, GPs and hospital services.

Although there are significant differences between the north and the south of the constituency, overall, we have a high age profile and score high, compared to the rest of the country, on ill health, the percentage of households classed as deprived, and the number of UK born citizens. We have lower proportions of people in the ABC1 social classes and in top occupations.¹ In Torridge, 61% voted to leave the EU, in West Devon 53%. The British Election Study classifies the Torridge and West Devon ‘tribe’ as ‘Kind Young Capitalists’, that is, quite right wing, mildly globalist, and mildly liberal socially. Leaving aside the ‘young’ (!) this is probably a useful generalisation: the constituency contains a large number of small and micro businesses, farms, and self-employed people who are pro independent entrepreneurship. At the same time there is a great appreciation of the environment, community, and public services.

Appendix: data charts

1. Recent General Election results – raw figures

	Con	Labour	Lib Dem	Green	UKIP/Reform	BNP	Total voters	Turnout
2005	25,013	6,001	21,777	2,003	3,790		58,584	71%
2010	25,230	2,917	22,273	1,050	3,021	766	55,257	71%
2015	28,774	6,015	7,483	3,941	10,371		56,584	72%
2017	33,612	12,926	10,526	1,622	794		59,480	74%
2019	35,904	10,290	10,912	2,077	547		59,730	74%
2024	16,049	12,099	12,099	2,350	9,152		74,727	68%

2. Recent General Election results – share of vote

¹ Data from Election Calculus March 2025

	Con	Labour	Lib Dem	Green	UKIP/Reform	BNP
2005	43%	10%	37%	3%	6%	n/a
2010	46%	5%	40%	2%	5%	1%
2015	51%	11%	13%	7%	18%	n/a
2017	57%	22%	18%	3%	1%	n/a
2019	60%	17%	18%	3%	1%	n/a
2023	32%	21%	24%	5%	18%	n/a