



Japan Local Government Centre, London

Monthly Report for June 2009 (England and Ireland) – Local elections results

England

Local elections were held in England for the 27 county councils and in eight unitary councils on 4 June 2009. Three directly elected mayors were also chosen the same day. The elections coincided with the European Parliamentary elections, which were subject to an order passed by Parliament¹ to allow for both to be held on the same day; under the 1972 Local Government Act the ordinary day for local elections is always the first Thursday in May. At the last European Parliamentary elections in 2004, the elections for some English and all Welsh local councils and the Greater London Authority were also rescheduled from May to June. The timetable for the European Parliament elections is governed by several treaties and the parliament's rules.

In April 2009, the number of English county councils was reduced from 34 to 27, owing to local government reorganisation in seven county areas. Of these nine new unitary authorities, four held 'shadow' elections in May 2008, with the remaining five held this June. Elections were also held in three pre-existing English unitary councils on June 4.

In the elections to the county councils, the Conservative Party were able to achieve a clear sweep, winning all but one (Cumbria, which remains no overall control), including four from Labour and two from the Liberal Democrats.

In the three pre-April 2009 unitary councils up for election, the Liberal Democrats took control of Bristol City Council (which held elections for one third of the council), while in the Isle of Wight the Conservatives remained in control, as did the independents on the Isles of Scilly Council. Both of these held all-out elections.

Of the five new unitary authorities, the Conservatives won power in three, while Bedford Borough Council and Cornwall are under no overall control.

Three elected mayors were also returned on June 4, the independent Stuart Drummond in Hartlepool becoming the first to achieve a third term of office since the posts were introduced in 2002. In North Tyneside, former Conservative mayor (2003-2005) Linda Arkley was elected, while in Doncaster, the right-wing English Democrats' candidate Peter Davies was elected for the first time.

¹ The Local Elections (Ordinary Day of Elections in 2009) Order 2008

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Republic of Ireland

The Republic of Ireland also held its local elections on the same day it voted for the European Parliament, on June 5. Under the 20th amendment of the Irish constitution (1999), local government elections were set at every five years.

Elections were held for 29 county councils, five city councils and 80 town councils. The five city councils enjoy the same status as the county councils and exercise all local authority powers in their jurisdiction. Of the 80 lower tier councils, five have the historic right to call themselves 'borough' councils, though this term can be misleading as it confers no extra powers or duties on them. All elections in Ireland (including the North, except for the Westminster Parliament) are held using the Single Transferable Vote system.

The elections were widely interpreted as a humiliating defeat for the Fianna Fáil-led coalition government of Brian Cowen as they failed to win a single county council and polled badly in the city councils, which in particular saw modest gains for left-wing candidates such as the Labour and Sinn Féin parties. The overall winners were the opposition Fine Gael, which performed particularly well in the counties. Fianna Fáil's Green Party coalition partners (who hold the Environment and Communications ministries in the cabinet) were also punished at the polls, with only three councillors elected at county and city level.

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