



Japan Local Government Centre, London

Monthly Report for May 2011 – Devolved and local elections

In addition to the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland devolved elections and English and Northern Irish local elections, a UK-wide referendum on the voting system used to elect Members of Parliament was also held on May 5, with voters rejecting the Alternative Vote 67.9% to 32.1%. Turnout stood at 41%, higher than anticipated however.

In Great Yarmouth, a local referendum on introducing an elected mayor voted against the proposal. There were 15,595 'no' votes cast against 10,051 'yes', with a turnout of 36%

English local elections

Elections were held in all 36 metropolitan districts, 194 non-metropolitan district authorities, 49 unitary authorities and five directly elected mayors, with local elections taking place in most parts of England (with the exception of six unitary authorities, seven districts, and the 32 London boroughs) and almost half of all council seats up for election.

Of the 9,404 seats contested, before May 5 the Conservatives held 5,038, Liberal Democrats 1,836 and Labour 1,598, with the remainder held by Independents and smaller parties. The last elections for most of these seats were in 2007, a particularly poor result for the Labour Party then in national government.

Labour made an impressive showing in urban England, taking control of several key councils from the Liberal Democrats, while the Conservatives defended most of their heartland town halls and even made some modest gains. In Hull, Newcastle and Sheffield, Labour took control of city councils from the Liberal Democrats, who registered heavy defeats, also losing control of Bristol and receiving further extensive losses in Liverpool. In Manchester Labour obtained a clean sweep across the city council and in its suburbs of Bolton, Bury, Oldham and Rochdale the party regained control, also taking Leeds city council from no overall control and Blackpool from the Conservatives. Although now the largest party in Birmingham, Labour did not gain a majority on the city council. In Brighton the Greens emerged as the largest party on the city council, which remains under no overall control, following a Conservative administration.

There were five elections to elected mayoral posts in England, including Leicester following the decision by the city council to introduce the post, where local Labour MP and former council leader Sir Peter Soulsby was elected. In Torbay, the

Conservative candidate Gordon Oliver replaced mayor Nick Bye, who stood as an independent after being deselected by the Conservatives last year. Independent mayor of Middlesbrough Ray Mallon was re-elected to a third term and the independent mayor of Mansfield district council Tony Egginton also received a third term, while in Bedford Liberal Democrat mayor Dave Hodgson was re-elected to a second term.

Under current proposals contained in the coalition's Localism Bill, Labour would now hold 10 of the 'shadow' elected mayors to be created next year following its performance in the 12 cities covered by the provisions. Labour claims that in Birmingham and Bristol, where Lib Dem and Conservative council leaders do not have majorities, to impose them as mayors could now lack legitimacy.

Party	Councils	+/-	Councillors	+/-
<i>Conservative</i>	157	+4	5,109	+86
<i>Greens</i>	0	0	78	+13
<i>Labour</i>	57	+26	2,459	+857
<i>Lib Dems</i>	10	-9	1,098	-748

Scottish Parliament elections

All 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) were up for election following the end of the four year term, using the Additional Member System of 73 MSPs elected on a constituency basis and a further 56 elected from eight regional 'top-up' lists to ensure broad proportionality between parties elected. Turnout stood at 50%

The Scottish National Party of First Minister Alex Salmond ran the Scottish Government as a minority administration following the 2007 elections, gaining an unprecedented overall majority in this election, enabling it to legislate to hold a referendum on independence having failed to do so in the last parliament. Seats elected to by party in the Scottish Parliament were as follows:

Party	2011	2007	2003	1999
<i>Conservative</i>	14	17	18	18
<i>Greens</i>	2	2	7	1
<i>Labour</i>	37	46	50	56
<i>Lib Dems</i>	5	16	17	17
<i>SNP</i>	69	47	27	35
<i>SSP</i>	0	0	6	1
<i>Independents</i>	1	1	5	1

Welsh Assembly elections

All 60 Assembly Members (AMs) were up for election following the end of the four year term, using the Additional Member System of 40 AMs elected on a constituency basis and a further 20 elected from five regional 'top-up' lists to ensure broad proportionality between parties elected. Turnout stood at 42.2%

The Labour Party of First Minister Rhodri Morgan (later Carwyn Jones) ran the Welsh Assembly Government in coalition with Plaid Cymru following the 2007 elections, with the party narrowly missing an overall majority in this election and opting to govern as a minority administration. The new assembly will be the first to hold full law-making powers following the March referendum vote to increase its legislative competence. Seats elected to by party in the National Assembly for Wales were as follows:

Party	2011	2007	2003	1999
<i>Conservative</i>	14	12	11	9
<i>Labour</i>	30	26	30	28
<i>Lib Dems</i>	5	6	6	6
<i>Plaid Cymru</i>	11	15	12	17
<i>Independents</i>	0	1	1	0

Northern Ireland Assembly and local elections

All 108 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) were up for election following the end of the four year term, using the Single Transferable Vote system of six MLAs elected from each of the province's 18 UK parliamentary constituencies. Turnout stood at 54.5%

The Democratic Unionist Party of First Minister Peter Robinson shared leadership of the Northern Ireland Executive with deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin following the 2007 elections, with no change here in 2011. Seats elected to by party in the Northern Ireland Assembly were as follows:

Party	2011	2007	2003	1998
<i>Alliance</i>	8	7	6	6
<i>DUP</i>	38	36	30	20
<i>Greens</i>	1	1	0	0
<i>Independent Unionist</i>	n/a	n/a	n/a	3
<i>Independents</i>	1	1	1	0
<i>NIWC</i>	n/a	n/a	0	2
<i>PUP</i>	0	1	1	2
<i>SDLP</i>	14	16	18	24
<i>Sinn Féin</i>	29	28	24	18
<i>TUV</i>	1	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>UK Unionist</i>	n/a	0	1	5
<i>UUP</i>	16	18	27	28

Elections were also held for the 26 district councils of Northern Ireland, also using the Single Transferable Vote system, with results broadly reflecting party support in the assembly. The elections were originally scheduled to take place in 2009. In 2008

the Northern Ireland Executive requested that they be postponed until 2011 to allow the implementation of a proposed reform of local councils under the Review of Public Administration, which would have reduced their number from 26 to 11. In February 2009, a parliamentary order was passed, postponing the election, and councillors' terms of office were extended until the fourth day after the election day in 2011. In June 2010, the proposed reforms were abandoned, and it was confirmed that the 2011 elections would be to the existing 26 councils.

Any opinions expressed in this report are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of JLGC or CLAIR.