

Wakefield is the Supervote Project's Dodgy Democracy of the Week.

Most Wakefield voters were cheated by crazy voting system on May 7.

The outdated and undemocratic First-past-the-post voting system used in Wakefield's Council elections on May 7 denied a majority of those who voted representation of their choice, while gifting Reform UK over 9 out of 10 of the seats and absolute power on the Council, even though they polled under 4 out of 10 votes. These were the voting percentages based on the results listed on the Council's website:

	Con	Green	Labour	LibDem	Reform	Others
Vote s %	10%	12%	24%	6%	38%	10%
Seat s	1	1	1	2	58	0
Seat s %	1.5 %	1.5%	1.5%	3%	92%	0%

Reform UK did well, but nowhere near well enough to warrant walking off with over 9 out of 10 of the Council seats at the expense of the Conservative, Green, Labour and other candidates, who were all cheated out of their fair share of the seats by the voting system.

Moreover, drilling down to ward level reveals very poor levels of representation: Wakefield has 21 three-member wards so one might have expected to see a variety of parties represented in the wards but, the way First-past-the-post works, 17 of the 21 wards were monopolised by Reform UK, with a minority of the vote in most cases. Accordingly, we have the ridiculous situation in the Wakefield West ward, for example,

where 37% of those who voted enjoy 3 councillors of their political persuasion, while 63% of ward voters have none. This explains why, of the 276,873 votes cast (voters had 3 votes each), only 123,311 (45%) succeeded in electing a councillor while 153,562 (55%) were ineffective.

Given that nearly two thirds of Wakefield's voters did not participate (63%), it can rightly be claimed that a majority in Wakefield did not vote and, of the minority who did, a majority failed to elect anybody. What sort of democracy is that?

These crazy results are a disgrace. This was not what the residents of Wakefield had voted for on May 7th.

The fault lies with continued use of the Victorian First-past-the-post voting system, an outdated steam age device which wastes many, if not most, of the votes shovelled into it, while producing a distorted result with the remainder. Moreover, outcomes are neither consistent nor certain. First-past-the-post is past it. Continued use of this museum piece makes about as much sense as having Stephenson's Rocket haul trains on HS2.

We need to replace First-past-the-post with a system of proportional representation which awards seats to parties in proportion to the votes cast for them so that, say, if Labour won 4 out of 10 votes, they would be awarded 4 out of 10 seats. First-past-the-post is not designed to achieve this. Not only would voting reform deliver more accurate representation, there would be no need for tactical voting and there would be no more safe seats as every vote would be keenly contested. More choice would revitalise interest and participation in local politics, with everything for everyone everywhere to play for.

Only Westminster can reform the local election voting system but all is not lost: Reform UK are staunch supporters of voting reform, so should use what has happened in Wakefield to highlight the fact that they have won far more seats than their support warranted and demand that the Government takes action to reform our outdated voting system. They could even offer up Wakefield as the location for a pilot exercise for a fairer voting system before it is rolled out for use in the rest of England.

David Green
The Supervote Project

This press statement is published by David Green, a Merseyside resident who runs the Supervote Project, a small campaign which, in the company of others, seeks to

reform the voting system in the UK. While colleagues tend to concentrate on elections to Westminster, the Supervote Project focuses on council elections in the belief that far more damage is being done to the fabric of our democracy at the grassroots by the continued use of the First-past-the-post voting system in local government elections. Please note that, while best endeavours have been used to ensure that the above information is accurate, this is an amateur publication.

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