



Compass Coffee Morning

Winning as One in Sussex

Supporters of the newly formed Compass group in Lewes joined Brighton and Hove residents in a packed meeting at the Cornerstone Community Centre to discuss how to get rid of the Tories in those Sussex constituencies where the incumbent MPs were chosen in the last General Election by a minority of those voting.

Following a joint welcome from Colin Miller (Brighton and Hove) and Paul Wafer (Lewes) we watched a [brief film](#) from the Win as One campaign. Basing his presentation on his [recent article](#), James Joughin took then took us through the challenges and opportunities for securing a socially progressive government.

The next general election may be no more than a year away. Polls tell us Labour is likely to win. But there is a growing understanding that even a substantial Labour swing might not deliver the transforming government that many think the country now needs. The current first-past-the-post system is stacked against Labour – it needs a swing larger than 1997 to gain a majority of one; constituency boundary changes to be announced soon could give the Conservatives at least another five seats; the government's new [Voter ID](#) requirements will suppress the votes of groups less likely to vote Conservative, notably younger people; and there are a lot of Don't Knows in the current polls.

In the past year Brighton and Hove Compass has started on an action plan to tackle these challenges and exploit the opportunities in Sussex where thirteen of the MPs are Tory, two Labour and one Green (these last three in Brighton and Hove where all have solid majorities). Based on how people voted in the last General Election, there are progressive majorities in Lewes, Eastbourne, Hastings and Rye while small swings would elect a non-Tory in East Worthing, Mid-Sussex and Crawley. These constituencies are where B&H Compass aims to target its efforts through facilitating the creation of local Compass groups (as it already has in Lewes) to secure a Sussex swing away from the Tories.

Participants itemised additional challenges:

- When Labour thinks it will get a landslide, it becomes increasingly difficult to promote a progressive alliance.
- How sure are we of likely outcomes to advise voters who want to vote tactically;
- Labour supporters of Compass may put their party membership in jeopardy should they canvass for a non-Labour candidate;
- Doubts about the popularity of PR and our capacity to make the argument;
- Persuading young people to vote.

Observations on these points include encouraging progressive party members to canvass in Sussex constituencies where their party candidate has the best chance of winning, rather than divide the progressive vote in their own constituencies where only a minority are likely to vote for their candidate. Currently, in the run-up to the local elections, progressive parties are campaigning against each other and we should wait until June before encouraging cross-party informal cooperation during the run up to the General Election. As for PR, its importance was argued as one element in broader democratic reform that makes voting matter in a more decentralised state (as outline in Labour's Brown Report) while Compass groups elsewhere in the country are already running street stalls aimed at young people that explain about Voter ID requirements.
