



EAT OUT FOR LESS
▶ Save money at more than
1,200 restaurants around Britain

THE SUNDAY TIMES

HS2 row hands Tory heartlands to UKIP

Hannah Summers Published: 5 May 2013



Five of the six Buckinghamshire council seats won by Nigel Farage's party lie in wards the HS2 line will follow

THE row over the HS2 high speed rail link has caused a collapse of the Tory vote in one of the party's main heartlands.

UKIP took its first seats in Buckinghamshire during last week's local elections amid an apparent protest vote against the controversial £32bn project.

Five of the six Buckinghamshire council seats won by Nigel Farage's party lie in wards the line will follow, leaving a ribbon of purple running along a stretch of the route between London and the West Midlands.

The seats which fell included Great Missenden, home to the prime minister's Chequers retreat, where Alan Stevens was elected for UKIP with 41% of the vote. The Tories won a share of just 38%, down from 65% in 2009.

Stevens said: "The HS2 project would squander £1,000 per household in the UK but the three traditional parties support it.

"We have convinced voters that the only thing the government will react to is switching to UKIP. In the process previous Tory voting shares of 55% to 65% have halved in places."

Chris Adams who took Wendover for UKIP also claimed the planned rail link was a deciding factor in the election, prompting some Tory voters to switch allegiance.

"You have a Conservative-controlled county council spending taxpayers money fighting this disaster, this vanity project HS2, and they were against their own leader David Cameron," he said.

Although the Conservatives retained control of the county council it also lost out to UKIP in Aylesbury South West, Aylesbury North West and Stone and Waddesdon.

Previously UKIP held no county council seats although it has started to make inroads at the district council votes in 2011.

Tory success in retaining wards along the tunnelled section of the route past Amersham, Chalfont St Peter and Chalfont St Giles suggests HS2 was a critical issue for many voters where the railway line will cut through open countryside.

Seb Berry, the Independent district councillor for Great Missenden ward, said: "Where the route is in a tunnel the HS2 effect has been much less pronounced."

Elsewhere along the route UKIP won a seat in Staffordshire and one in Northamptonshire.

But despite ground lost by the Conservatives there is no indication the results have dented the government's enthusiasm for the project.

This week's Queen's speech will include a bill to allow construction of HS2.

Nigel Farage, the UKIP leader, said yesterday that his party's councillors now represented "40,000 HS2 blighted voters and their families" in Buckinghamshire.

He said: "The Tory party needs to get the message that people have had enough of being treated with contempt by Conservative ministers on this issue.

"It's time to stop throwing good money after bad and for Mr Cameron to scrap this white elephant scheme that is destroying so many lives and businesses."

0 comments

livefyre 



Michael Daventry

1 person listening

+ Follow

Post comment

[Newest](#) | [Oldest](#) | [Most Recommended](#)

[Livefyre](#)
