

[Transcript] The News Agents / Why is it becoming harder for you to vote?

This is a Global Player Original Podcast.

We're going to talk about the principles of democracy and if that sounds like a heavy university thesis subject, it's not.

Democracy is quite simple.

It's based on the principle that there should be no taxation without representation and it should be one person, one vote over the agreed voting age, which Britain is 18.

And it's more complicated than that.

It's more complicated because right now the government is bringing in a new piece of legislation which requires voters to have photo identification when they go to the polls.

And even though it sounds like a pretty simple thing to bring along with you, it depends on you bringing the right kind of photo identification and in knowing that you have to bring it along with you.

And this piece of legislation gets a trial run in one week's time in English Council elections.

When we are going to see if the population that is meant to be voting, that is offered the chance to vote, actually knows what they have to do and how the rules have changed.

Because if they don't, there's going to be a lot of people turned away from the polls.

And that probably isn't very democratic.

And that is why there is the political concern.

Because the Labour Party believes that the net effect of this is going to be to deter young people and people from minority groups to go and vote.

Perhaps people who might vote disproportionately in favour of the Labour Party.

And therefore it is being seen as some kind of act of voter suppression.

And that is why there is considerable unease.

Welcome to the news agents.

The news agents.

It's John.

It's Emily.

So we're talking about the need to bring voter ID to the polling station when you go to poll.

And this is particularly relevant to people who will be voting in exactly a week's time in the local English Council elections.

And I suppose it's not that odd.

You need ID for a lot of things.

You need it to pick up a parcel.

You need it to get tickets.

You need it when you check in somewhere, right?

So on the surface of things, we're just kind of catching up with a rule that exists in plenty of European countries, certainly exists in Northern Ireland, exists in Ireland and exists across the pond in America.

It doesn't sound like such a deeply divisive bit of legislation to bring in if it keeps us in lockstep with a lot of other countries who demand the same thing.

It doesn't sound onerous.

It doesn't sound invasive.

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This is the argument that's being put forward by the government.

The minister is Lee Rowley, the levelling up minister, about why this is a good thing.

I need to take on this notion that there are two million people who need a voter ID.

That is not correct.

It is absolutely not correct.

And I hope our members will stop reiterating it.

Of those two million people, which is an estimate, a number of those will not have elections in a large number of those will not have elections in their area this year.

Secondly, of that group, a number will choose not to vote, much as we would like them to do so.

We've chosen never to have voted, and we would encourage them to do so.

But ultimately, that is what the purpose of a democracy is.

People have a right both to vote and not to vote, and we are seeking to encourage them to do so.

We're seeking to guarantee that integrity, and then ultimately there may have been a choice for people to change to postal votes, or like we are continuing to work to try and encourage take up where it is necessary.

So it was kind of ambiguous, I thought, slightly what Lee Rowley was saying about people have got the right to vote, people have got the right not to vote.

Of course, we don't have compulsory voting in the UK in the same way that they do, say, in Australia.

But is he saying, well, kind of these people wouldn't have voted anyway, so it doesn't matter, which is kind of a sort of slightly negligent view of democracy.

I don't think that's what he thought he was saying, and it sounds as if that's what he's saying, so don't worry about them, they wouldn't vote anyway.

I think what he's saying is now is a good opportunity for people who weren't even on the electoral register to get on the register.

If they are, and they are now sending out a TV adverts, bus billboards, radio adverts as well, trying to tell people about this.

We'd hope that if you weren't going to vote at all, maybe it piqued people's interest because they were now hearing more about the local elections, and in let's face it, 12, 16 months time, that will be a general election, not a local election, so start early.

Here's the question.

What is the problem that it is trying to solve?

Because the implication of needing a photo ID, as opposed to say, I don't know, a utility bill, your gas bill, your telephone bill, whatever it happens to be, is that there is this huge problem of impersonation, i.e. people turning up, going to the polling stations, and pretending to be someone they're not, and the statistics on this are that there have been a couple of dozen handful of cases, you know, 20, 30 cases where people have impersonated at the last election.

Or they've come from people running the elections, as in Tower Hamlets, who've been trying to be elected rather than the voters themselves.

So you have a problem that doesn't seem to exist, where you are using methods, particularly the photo ID card, which is a lot of people feel going too far when there are other ways

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that you can crack this nut.

And let's put my age on the table.

I am over 60.

I have an oyster card, which I could use.

But if Emily, your son goes with a student ID card to go and vote, that won't be acceptable.

So there is a kind of weird disparity.

Now, there are reasons for it, but it just gives the impression that something is being done that has a political dimension to it.

And that's not great for encouraging confidence in your democracy.

Right.

And I think to put this in context, a lot of people assume this is a legacy from a Boris Johnson government.

And the one thing that we know and remember about Boris Johnson is that he had a real contempt, actually, for constitutional conventions and institutions, and he was quite happy to tear up the rule book on how things were done.

And so I think people have got perhaps a Pavlovian response, which is, oh, my God, what are they trying to destroy now?

Is this going to be the next thing?

So it's worth putting in context that, actually, voter ID was a 2017 Tory manifesto pledge and a 2019 Tory manifesto pledge.

It was first mentioned by David Cameron in 2015.

So this doesn't come from nowhere.

And in fact, you could actually say that it is the Electoral Commission who advised that this was a good way to go, although they did suggest this may would be far too early because most people haven't got to grips with what they will need or haven't been able to apply for the free voter identification, the deadline of which has just shut.

I suppose the problem I have with it as well is that, Emily, you talked about the fact that other European countries where there are national ID cards, you know, you have to present that before you go and vote.

Why not just go the whole hog?

If you're setting up a specific ID scheme just to go and vote that is not an identity card, it's just to go and vote.

And the price tag could be up to wait for it for this tiny problem, as I've said, where a few dozen people may have impersonated someone else in the last set of elections.

The price tag could be up to £200 million.

I'm sure in today's kind of society with people on strike and all the rest of it, there could be better things.

You could spend that money on.

That blows your mind, doesn't it?

When was the last time that a council turned round and said, oh, I've got this extra £200 million.

We just don't know what to spend the money on.

I know we'll set up a free voter registration ID system in case people need to have photo ID for a problem that didn't exist before the government thought it might exist.

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We're going to speak to David Willits now.

He's a conservative peer.

He's Lord Willits.

And he has been following this very closely.

And his concerns are quite interesting because he gets the fact that a lot of countries have the need for ID.

He gets the fact that a lot of voters will be bringing ID to the polls with them all over the world.

But he says the way that we're doing it and this insistence on photo ID and a specific kind of photo ID, as John was saying, is making this problem really, really dark.

And he has fears, actually, for what the implications could be.

Great to have you with us.

Is there a problem that actually needs sorting here?

There are much more serious problems.

I think there are issues around the integrity of postal voting.

And there's also the challenge of getting all voters who are entitled to vote registered, which particularly affects younger people who are moving around rapidly from one private rented accommodation to another.

But personation, turning up to vote and pretending to be someone else, does seem to be a very, very small problem in the British electoral system.

It was an issue in Northern Ireland, a decade or two ago, but it doesn't seem to be an issue in Great Britain.

I guess the question is, David, even if they're looking for a problem that doesn't need solving, you could still say it's not so weird just to want to bring this country into lockstep with so many other countries and so many other voting systems.

Even 50% of Labour voters don't object to voter ID at the polls.

It does seem like we just have to catch up with where the rest of Europe, the rest of the world is.

It is certainly the case that there are people turning up to vote who are actually surprised that there aren't any kind of voter ID checks at the moment.

And of course, the Conservative Party in the last election in the manifesto had a commitment to voter ID checks.

But this is where our role in the House of Lords comes in.

I didn't want in the House of Lords to throw out something for which there was a clear manifesto commitment, but voter ID in the Conservative manifesto has become a particularly narrow and demanding form of photo ID.

We've ended up with much narrower categories than are needed from any assessment of the risks.

And for example, at the most simple level, people who turn up with a polling card could provide that.

And in the amendment which I removed in the House of Lords and which we won in the House of Lords, I simply added a much longer list of acceptable IDs.

So it wasn't this narrow, very rigorous photo ID requirement, which I think goes much too far.

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So is this about voter suppression then?

Well, I mean, I don't want to speculate about motives.

I think it'd be shocking if it were.

And to be honest, just operating at that level, if people think this is voter suppression, it's an interesting question, which groups of voters are going to be suppressed?

There will be some young people and some people from ethnic minorities, perhaps who don't have the necessary voter IDs.

Equally, there may be a group of very old people, perhaps Conservatives and Brexiteers who don't have a passport, who don't see why they should hand over a document.

The estimates that have been done on this suggest that oddly enough, there's a kind of political balance.

There are, sadly, some young people who may well be put off, but equally, there may be a group of older voters who are put off as well.

So when you say you don't want to speculate, David, it sounds sort of reading between the lines like, you think there is a political motivation in this somewhere along the lines?

Well, there's either a political motivation.

The other possibility is it's just the classic civil service regulatory creep because Eric Pickles, who is not a soft touch and who really understands these issues, Eric Pickles did a report on how you might tighten up the rules and he didn't propose photo ID.

And when I challenged ministers in the House of Lords about it, they said, ah, but we needed to have a high level of security and a high level of security requires a driving license or a passport or one or two other things.

And I think this could be just another case study in expanding red tape.

People set up, when commissioned to design a photo ID scheme, have come up with an incredibly rigorous, incredibly demanding, incredibly ambitious photo ID scheme that goes beyond any actual need.

I suppose the thing I've struggled to understand is that if you live in France, there is a national ID card with your photo on it.

When I lived there, I had a carte de séjour it was called.

Why not just go the whole hog?

If it is so important that people can prove who they are when it comes to voting, why not for everything else?

I think there is a case for that.

And of course, the other irony is that when the Conservative Party in opposition and look out in the shadow cabinet there, when we opposed the Labour government's proposals for ID cards, one of our objections was, and they might even be so appalling as to try to use them as a condition for voting.

And you couldn't possibly have ID being used as a requirement for voting.

That was part of the Conservative case against ID cards.

So you really have done a complete 180 degree turn.

Let me run past you what the ministers are saying.

For example, they will say that there is plenty of opportunity and plenty of means through which to acquire the free voter authority certificate.

So if you don't have that photo ID, if you're not in that group that automatically has the

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driving license or the passport, you can still apply for it.

And you can get along to the polls with the free, you know, it doesn't cost you anything. You just apply and you get your ID certified that way.

This is why for me, as a Conservative who doesn't like red tape and unnecessary public expenditure, we have created a new scheme where local authorities have to provide this ID at a cost of between £100 and £200 million to tackle a problem which may perhaps have affected a dozen voters in the last election.

So it's a pity we've had to spend this public money on it, but we know that a lot of people have not applied on the scale that the government forecast for this kind of reserve ID programme from local authorities.

So sadly at these local elections, there will be people who miss out on that and it could be a problem at the general election.

And then the real political scenario that worried me, and I was surprised that ministers didn't understand the issues, imagine there are constituencies where, for example, during the day, a thousand people have turned up to vote and been turned away because they haven't got voter ID, and imagine that the final majority in that constituency is less than a thousand.

And imagine that it's a relatively small majority for the winning party in that next election, which is smaller than the number of seats where the rejected voters have been significant. Those are kind of scenarios which I really do in terms of the risks to the credibility and trust in British elections.

I think that scenario is much worse than some very, very low level of voter participation.

Yeah, that's fascinating.

I mean, David, you just said something very interesting there.

You said ministers did not understand the issues.

Did they not want to understand the issues?

My frustration is, look, I used to be an MP, I'm now in the House of Lords, I completely understand that the House of Lords is a democratic chamber and has priority.

However, the one useful thing we do in the House of Lords is we're a revising chamber.

And so when this legislation came through, what I did, working with some others, but I said, OK, there's a concerted manifesto commitment to ID cards.

Completely understand that.

Let's just make the system workable.

And the fact that there wasn't really any serious engagement with a set of amendments that were passed on a cross-party basis and they were just automatically rejected in the House of Commons, I think is an example of the government failing to use and listen to the one useful thing we do, which was not oppose some fundamental thing on the grounds of political strategy, just try to make a policy commitment work a bit better.

Can I just take you back to the money for one second?

So on this free voter ID project, I mean, I don't think most people know that we're spending up to £200 million on that.

Do you find that quite shocking?

Yes.

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Local authorities, we know are hard pressed and I believe in fiscal discipline.

And my view is that people who come up with policies costing 100 to 200 million, imposing an extra obligation on local authorities at a time like this, bloody well need to show that it's absolutely cost effective and necessary.

And this isn't.

This is really not.

My view is you could easily regard this as intrusive, unnecessary, heavy-handed government regulation and an extra unnecessary obligation on local authorities at a cost of increasing public spending.

And maybe to deter a dozen or so voters who might want to impersonate.

Yeah.

And of course, the other argument was that, look, I thought if you start with a scheme and you find a bruise, you could then tighten it up.

If people got familiar with the scheme and it turned out, you said, I put in items like utility bills with a name and an address or whatever.

It didn't have to be photo ID.

If you find subsequently there's a massive trade in utility bills, I think it's unlikely but it's possible.

You could then tighten the criteria, but you don't need to start off with such a narrow set of criteria to start off with.

That's what makes the first general election with the new scheme so high risk, a risk that in today's world, a modern democracy should not be running.

David Willits, thanks so much.

Bye.

Bye-bye.

Thanks very much.

See you guys.

Look, I think David Willits is very careful with his words and he doesn't sort of overdramatise in his language.

He is a conservative peer.

He knows the party and how it works well and he is obviously a supporter of those who would want to vote conservative.

But what he gave us there was a real insight into just how uncomfortable he and we know others feel about this whole underlying sense that it is just not right.

It's not being done right and there are ways that the peers have taken to the government to help them do it right.

I think it's quite something when you get someone like David Willits with his experience and I think he was nicknamed two brains when he was the sort of MP for haven't because he was this kind of genius kind of thinker and was seen as a Thatcherite.

But when he says ministers didn't understand the issues, I mean what an indictment from someone who knows the Conservative Party as well as he does and has tried to be helpful except that it's a manifesto commitment that there needs to be voter ID.

And yet they have plowed on with this route of insisting on photo ID, but even though as he says there is no evidence and it just expands the state, it expands the bureaucratic

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leviathan which most conservatives don't want.

But I think when he was saying they don't understand, that was the nice bit because actually what he took them was solutions.

He took them solutions that would have made this keep the manifesto pledge and deliver something which included more of the electorate.

And yet they said no, that's the thing that seems really, really hard to understand right now.

I really hope that next Thursday in polling stations up and down the country where there are local council elections taking place, that they are recording the numbers of people who are turned away because they have turned up to vote without the correct papers, the correct photo ID because I think it will be fascinating to see in this first national test of just how big the scale of it is and also what that implies for a general election.

Before we go, one stat to leave you with, this is from Tudor Evans, he's the leader of the opposition Labour group on Plymouth City Council and he said it's, electoral officials had calculated that if every resident who did not have the necessary ID, that's up to 4% of the total, applied for the document that would give them that voter ID, it would take one full time staff member 36 weeks to process them.

Right?

They don't have a lot of spare bodies on the council, it would take one person 36 weeks to process all those people who don't have the right voter ID.

Put that in context of whether this is just keeping everyone up to date or whether it's creating an absolutely intractable problem for people who might otherwise have voted but won't now.

That sounds like one of those math problems that you used to get which used to kind of befuddle me, if someone was walking at three miles an hour in an easterly direction and they then caught a bus for 20 miles an hour etc.

Please imagine you have ten members of the Plymouth City Council, it still takes three and a half weeks, right?

Yeah, good maths.

Right, thank you.

And they don't have ten members to work on this one problem, right?

Exactly.

In a moment, Lewis will be here to join us to talk about the local council of elections voting, as well as issues, as well as what we should be looking for.

This is The News Agents.

Welcome back and Lewis is in the studio.

Lewis, we've just been talking about voter ID, need for picture ID when you go to vote next week in the local council of elections and there has been a leaflet put out by the Conservatives in Norfolk, is there?

Yeah.

What's happened?

So this is caught Twitter a light in the last 24 hours.

It basically says in the corner, it's just a normal Conservative pamphlet, the sort of thing that you get through your let box at election time.

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And in the bottom corner, it says, among other things, don't worry, you don't need ID to go and vote.

Now, as...

What?

As I'm aware, we've just been discussing on the podcast, yes, you absolutely do.

And it's the first time and it's the Conservative government's doing, it's what they've wanted to do.

And here you have a local Conservative party telling voters that they don't and there's only two possible options for that or reasons for that, right?

Neither of them good, one, they themselves don't know, they themselves, highly politically activated people, political activists for the governing party which is making the change are themselves ignorant of this fundamental change to our electoral law, which does not bode well for either the local elections or the general election next year, if you average member of the public, number one, or number two, which is probably worse.

And this has been a suggestion from someone on Twitter, I don't necessarily scrub this to myself, but this has been the suggestion, they're actively trying to suppress the vote.

They're actively trying to effectively say to some voters, to some voters who are less likely to vote Conservative, who may be less aware that you don't need ID.

Now, I think as ever when in politics, you know, cock up is more likely than conspiracy.

So I suspect it is option A, but option A ain't great.

Let me bring you the spokesperson for the Norwich Conservative Federation and their explanation.

Are they here?

Yes.

Come on in.

We would like to express our regret for any confusion resulting from the printing error caused by the unintended use of an incorrect template.

Now, why I find this so astonishing is we've literally just had David Willits on the phone to us, on the line to us, explaining that they've spent up to 200 million pounds bringing me in this new system and there's been TV ads and there's been radio ads and there's been billboards.

So if we are spending an inordinate sum of money and Norwich Conservatives don't yet know something's going wrong and the voters almost certainly don't get it.

Because any election leaflet, I think I'm right in saying has to say published by the Conservative Party or published by the Labour Party or published by the Liberal Democrats.

So this is an official document.

You can imagine a situation where a local voter may have gone to the polling station and said and even had this in their pocket and then the Electoral Administrator turns around and says, no, I'm afraid you need ID and they say, no, the Conservative Party have told me that I don't.

This is my ID.

This is my ID.

And this is one of the reasons, by the way, that both the LGA, the Local Government Association and the Association of Electoral Administrators have been so reluctant, so worried about

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this because particularly for a general election when more people are turning up, because they say their capacity to deal with potentially irate voters, irritated voters, who could actually be quite vehemently angry about this stuff, just isn't there.

So we're one week away from polling day.

Where are we setting the bar for success and failure for Labour, success and failure for the Conservatives?

So the first thing to say is that these are big elections, 70% of English voters will have the chance to vote.

So local elections in Northern Ireland, but we'll part that to one side for now.

8,000 councillors, 230 councils.

And the baseline, I suppose, you've got to remember when these is ever with these things, when they were last contested.

So these seats were last contested in 2019 and 2019, May 2019, people might remember, was a funny old time.

2019 was a funny time, full stop.

But those elections were particularly weird because both the Conservatives and Labour did badly.

It's always did really badly.

You know, they lost.

I would say that was Theresa May fighting Jeremy Corbyn, I mean, on the big stage.

We know that local elections aren't about the leaders, but they kind of are as well.

And it was the same, they were conducted at the same time as the last European elections we were part of.

It was the sort of height of the Brexit doldrums.

May kept trying to get a Brexit deal through, she couldn't get it through.

She lost 1,300, 1,400 local council seats.

It was those elections that really forced the Conservative Party's hand to ultimately get rid of her.

Labour, by contrast, also did quite badly under Jeremy Corbyn.

They also lost seats as well.

And so you've got a baseline where on paper, the Conservatives don't have that much further to fall.

But nonetheless, if Labour are substantially far ahead, as the poll suggests they are, the gap between them would indicate that they should do quite badly and that Labour would do well.

So, you know, the thing is, you've got to look at our particular areas where the Labour Party will be looking for both signs of revival, but also advance.

So on the revival column, places where they've gone backwards since the general election and after.

So, you know, places like Walsall, places like Dudley, places like Stoke on Trent, places like Middlesbrough, Redwall sort of places.

And then in terms of the advance, the places you've got to look for are Plymouth, places like Medway in Kent, the sort of places where if Labour are truly heading for a majority at the next general election, these are sort of places where they need to be winning substantial

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numbers of new council seats.

So I would say, look, the Tories have been out, obviously it's all about expectation management at this stage.

Sure.

And the Tories are saying, look, if we think we'll lose a thousand seats, that is at the very upper end of where they might be.

If they are a thousand seats or worse, then they really are heading for a drubbing.

I would say Labour will be pretty pleased with the Tories losing anywhere between 575 seats.

One other factor to throw into that, when these seats were fought in 2019, UKIP slash Reform UK slash whatever Brexit party, were they're picking up considerable numbers of votes from the Conservatives.

Those votes are presumably going to go back to the Conservatives, which might actually augur something quite good for the Tories.

Yeah, or they might stay at home.

And Labour, also managing expectations, are going around saying, well, look, we think there were lots of independents who won back in 2019, partly for the reasons we've already talked about in May's unpopularity.

We think they'll go back to the Tories and so on.

And they're also saying, look, Wales isn't voting in these elections, London isn't voting in these elections, lots of urban areas aren't voting in these elections, Scotland isn't voting in these elections.

So it's not going to give an entire picture.

There's another obvious element as well that we should talk about to watch out for is the Lib Dems, which we're sort of discounting increasingly on a sort of national parliamentary scale.

But the local elections, they've had a cracking couple of runs in local elections over the previous couple of cycles.

They did well in these seats back in 2019.

But places in the south, places like Surrey, places in the southwest of England are sort of more historic places, sort of places where the Lib Dems used to do well in the Labour years and the new Labour years and used to breathe down the Tories next.

Places like in Jeremy Hunt's seat in Surrey, where the Lib Dems were always second, he used to always talk about having a marginal seat, has been safe as houses recently.

But there are real signs of Lib Dem revival and they'll be hoping to do well.

And that's the point with these elections.

They'll be hoping to take Dominic Robsi.

Well, absolutely.

They've got a majority of 3,000.

And that's the point with these elections, right, which is that they will be poured over.

There's probably going to be another local election cycle, I would imagine, before the next general election, assuming the next general election is next autumn.

But every single board and every single local authority will be poured over for tantalising signs of where the parties are going forwards and backwards.

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And ultimately, it's not going to tell us how the next general election will go.

But it is important for momentum.

Labour have got to try and get a sense that they are on course for victory, right?

And a good set of a local elections here will carry on that momentum, which started really when the Liz Truss ended the Fandiesse Echelor period of Boris Johnson.

But there's a sense that has maybe started to plateau a little bit, with Sunak doing a little bit better than expected.

And contrary-wise, if Sunak can pull off something which is all right, it's not going to be brilliant.

What I would say is that for the next week, what you're going to see is the national conversation changing. And you're going to start to see, I anticipate, Labour talking about buses, for example, talking about very, very local things.

And I mean local in the sense that the stuff that matters to people all over the UK, not national issues.

And it's worth remembering that in London, where there aren't any local elections, Sadiq Khan, the Labour mayor, is actually getting rid of bus routes, which will come just at the same time as Labour announces that they care massively about buses.

So expect there to be this slight antagonism, I think, in what we're seeing in terms of the prioritised policies.

Because I do think that's important, what you're saying about momentum.

But for this week, they just want to try and get the numbers by reminding people, we care about rubbish collection, we care about potholes, we care about buses.

We care about all the things that, to be frank, national media don't talk about that often in a very specific way.

Well, it also matters for the general election in another sense, right?

Which is councillors are, in a way, I think a lot of the public don't appreciate, because why would there necessarily be a fay with the dynamics of local contests like this?

But councillors really matter for a general election in the sense of, if you have councillors, you have a local campaign base, a structure around which to build.

It forms the backbone of your local campaigning capability.

And even if you have one councillor and award, it makes an enormous difference, something to cohere around.

What Labour would really, dearly love to happen is if they could emerge next week back to being the biggest party of local government in England, i.e., having more councillors than the Tories, which hasn't happened since 2002, the Tories have been really good at preserving their local government base, even when they've had periods of doing badly. If the Tories have a bad enough night and Labour have a good enough night, it's possible we could see Labour having more councillors in England for the first time since the new Labour period.

And that would be a real shot in the arm for Sturma.

We are going to be back in a minute talking about a bizarre report that has come out from the Republicans in the US.

This is The Newsagents.

Welcome back.

Before we go, I've got to tell you a story from the Washington Post this morning where

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they've got hold of a leaked report, and it is the Republican Party's post-mortem on all that went wrong in the midterm elections, when the Republicans were expected to take all these Senate seats, they didn't, they were expected to win all these governorships and they didn't.

And they've done this post-mortem, and there are two words apparently missing from this report that don't appear at any point, and one of them is Donald and the other one is Trump.

And it's because the Republican Party, it seems, are so bloody terrified of him, they don't want to start a fight.

And so it was all Trump's backed candidates who did disastrously and under-performed.

And how you can write a report on what happened in 2022 without mentioning it seems somewhat extraordinary.

I do think it's interesting when you look at the Donald Trump electoral record, as opposed to just the noise and the hype.

He won in 2016, I mean that was seismic, it was amazing, it was an extraordinary achievement. But then after that, I think he retained the Senate, but he lost the House in the midterms of 2018.

Which were terrible.

Which were terrible, but he gained Senate seats.

And then in 2020, he lost the Presidency, the Senate, the House, and the popular vote both times.

So it's really interesting to see where that fear comes from, because the fear suggests to me that they think he is still their best electoral asset.

And he thinks he's their best electoral asset.

But the voters aren't actually choosing to back the people that he is supporting, or indeed him.

It's the system in America whereby anyone who wants to stand for the House of Representatives or stands for the Senate has to go through a primary campaign.

And Donald Trump does have the power to put up somebody who will beat the mainstream candidate and you can find your political career ended.

And all sorts of House of Representatives members and Senators have found themselves being primaried by a Trump-backed candidate and their political career is over.

And so it is fear that drives this, because Donald Trump still has this negative power, that he can end your career, but he can't win himself.

And the Republican Party still seems to be locked in this place, that they can have a kind of inquiry into what went wrong and not ask the fundamental question.

It's fascinating.

We'll be back.

No, we won't.

We're not back tomorrow.

We'll be...

Let's make up our own...

And we won't be back on Monday either.

We've got a bank holiday.

[Transcript] The News Agents / Why is it becoming harder for you to vote?

We've got a bank holiday.

We're going to be commanding a Thai yoga retreat in Bhutan.

Oh, I thought you were going to say we'll be commanding a kind of frigate and we will be taking a firing on somewhere or other, you know, more cylinders.

Both of those are absolutely and manifestly true.

But Lewis will be back tomorrow.

He will.

Bye-bye.

Bye.

This has been a global player original podcast and a Persephoneka production.