# Reform UK launches election campaign with Arron Banks as mayoral candidate



At a significant local election launch held at the Utilita Arena in Birmingham on 28 March, the Reform UK party inaugurated its campaign by introducing millionaire Brexit supporter Arron Banks as its mayoral candidate for the West of England. Reform UK, under the leadership of Nigel Farage, aimed to galvanise support from potential voters as they approach the elections scheduled for 1 May.

The event was marked by a striking visual display: political activists from Led by Donkeys projected images of Russian President Vladimir Putin alongside Farage onto a large screen, accompanied by the caption “Vladimir and Nigel welcome you to Birmingham”. Additional messages included images of mini lettuces, which referenced Mr Farage's support for the controversial mini-budget proposed by former Prime Minister Liz Truss.

Banks, who previously co-founded the Leave EU campaign with Reform MP Richard Tice and has been a notable financial supporter of Ukip, sought to address his unpopularity within Bristol by contending that the local elections present a "five-way battle" that Reform could potentially win. Upon unveiling his candidacy, he encouraged voters with the phrase, "Vote Banksy for Bristol."

Nigel Farage made a memorable entrance for his speech, arriving on a JCB digger—a vehicle lent to him by Lord Bamford, the chairman of JCB and a known benefactor of the Conservative Party. Farage described the digger as a ‘pothole pro’ and used it as a metaphor to highlight what he termed the ‘broken Britain’ that needs urgent repair. He asserted the party's commitment to leaving the European Court of Human Rights and abolishing the Human Rights Act, claiming it unduly protects illegal migrants and foreign criminals.

Farage drew cheers from attendees when he stated, "Nobody that comes into our country on the back of a lorry or via a boat will ever be given refugee status, will ever be given leave to remain." He emphasised the importance of fairness in immigration, arguing that it is unjust to those who migrate legally. The applause persisted as he outlined plans for the deportation of illegal immigrants.

Richard Tice, serving as the deputy leader of Reform UK, invoked rhetoric reminiscent of Donald Trump’s presidential campaign by asking attendees if they wished to "make Britain great again." His remarks prompted enthusiastic responses from the crowd as he called for a revival of national pride and support for Farage’s leadership ambitions.

A further highlight of the rally was Tice’s suggestion for a British equivalent of the U.S. Department of Government Efficiency, which he implied could streamline governance and better serve citizens' needs. He expressed confidence in a robust showing during the elections and the ability to effectively manage councils.

Other notable mentions from the event included remarks from Reform MP Lee Anderson, who controversially stated that there is "no such thing as Islamophobia," which he referred to as a "made-up word."

Throughout the rally, Farage reiterated Reform UK's position of supporting working-class citizens, proposing significant tax cuts, specifically exempting those earning under £20,000 a year from income tax. He expressed concern over recent tax policy changes that he claimed led wealthy individuals to leave the country, underscoring the need for attracting high earners to support public services financially.

The event concluded with an energetic display where Farage, now wearing a light blue hi-vis vest, used a T-shirt cannon to launch similar vests into the crowd, further energising his supporters as the party gears up for the upcoming elections.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025_West_of_England_mayoral_election> - Corroborates the date of the West of England mayoral election, which is set for 1 May 2025. However, it does not mention Arron Banks or Reform UK as candidates.
* <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/council/voting-and-elections/combined-authority-mayor-election-for-the-west-of-england-weca-2025> - Provides additional details about the voting and election process for the West of England Combined Authority mayoral election, including deadlines for registration and postal voting.
* <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainer/mayor-west-england> - Gives background information on the role of the West of England mayor and the combined authority, which includes powers over transport, skills, economic development, and planning.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/may/07/dan-norris-wins-west-of-england-mayor-election> - Although not directly relevant to the current event, this article provides context on past elections and the position of the mayor, which includes Dan Norris as the incumbent mayor.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-64623624> - Not available due to lack of specific BBC coverage on the event mentioned in the article. However, this could be a potential source for news on political events and figures like Nigel Farage and Reform UK.
* <https://www.reformukparty.org> - Could potentially provide official information from Reform UK about their campaign, policies, and candidates, including Arron Banks and the West of England mayoral election.