# Britain’s first Reform UK pub transforms Blackpool’s political landscape



In the vibrant seaside town of Blackpool, a striking transformation has taken place with the unveiling of what is claimed to be Britain's first Reform UK pub, aptly named The Talbot. Its bold light blue facade commands attention amidst the often-dull backdrop of the surrounding streets, a visual metaphor for the political shift it represents. Longtime patron Phil Bennett, 66, was taken aback by the new colour scheme, likening it to the charming pastel homes of Tenby, South Wales. However, upon learning of its association with Reform UK, he expressed a sense of optimism, stating, “I think the country does need a change.”

Originally founded as a Conservative Club in 1927, The Talbot’s transformation to a Reform UK hub signifies a broader strategy by the party to cement its presence in traditional strongholds that have historically supported the Conservatives. This is not just a local phenomenon; the recent local elections showcased a significant shift in voter allegiances, with Reform UK securing an impressive 35% of the vote in Lancashire, effectively challenging established political structures. The Labour Party, meanwhile, seems to be benefitting from this fracture in the Conservative vote, raising concerns over seats lost to Reform.

Co-owners Pete Flynn and Nick Lowe, both of whom once identified as Conservatives, articulated their rationale for the pivot. Flynn remarked on the party’s recent turmoil, particularly highlighting Liz Truss’s controversial mini-budget and the fallout from Boris Johnson's leadership. He believes that Labour has also failed to meet the public's needs, particularly with regard to support for vulnerable populations, such as senior citizens. Lowe echoed similar sentiments, revealing his financial struggles due to soaring operational costs at the pub, including an eye-watering £24,000 yearly electricity bill. “Everything has gone up,” he lamented, underscoring the broader economic hardship affecting many businesses nationwide.

Despite their new political affiliation, both owners insist that their stance is not against immigration per se but against illegal routes, advocating for a system similar to what they would encounter should they move abroad. Their sentiments reflect a growing concern among citizens about immigration policies, echoing sentiments expressed by many Reform UK supporters.

Additionally, recent reports have indicated that Reform UK is capturing the attention of disillusioned former Conservative members, with significant local figures like Tony Williams and Emma Ellison defecting to the party. Williams, a former Conservative leader in Blackpool, has expressed his discontent with both main parties, advocating for a practical approach to improving local sustainability without aligning with extremist ideologies. This trend highlights a pivotal moment for the political landscape in Blackpool, as the new Reform UK pub becomes a focal point for those seeking a change.

As The Talbot continues to draw in visitors from afar—some reportedly traveling from as far as Glasgow—its atmosphere thrives on community and political dialogue. While formal gatherings at the pub may sometimes retract due to concerns surrounding its political alignment, a surge in new bookings indicates a burgeoning interest in its offerings. Reflecting on his diverse background, Lowe noted the increasingly global nature of today’s community, affirming his welcome to legal immigrants while maintaining a strong stance against illegal entry.

In this evolving political theatre, The Talbot stands as not merely a pub but as a beacon of Reform UK's aspirational desire to reshape political conversations in established Conservative territories. As the party seeks to expand further, tapping into the dissatisfaction of traditional voters, the success or failure of such initiatives may hinge on their ability to resonate with constituents facing daily economic pressures. The role of venues like The Talbot may prove critical in this endeavour, as they foster local engagement and a retelling of political narratives in a modern context.

## 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2062776/i-visited-britains-first-ever-reform), [[2]](https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/reform-take-over-its-first-conservative-club/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2062776/i-visited-britains-first-ever-reform), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/a3ca6ba3-960a-4dd5-a030-6747a1a487ad), [[4]](https://www.blackpoolgazette.co.uk/news/farage-roared-on-by-refom-candidates-in-fleetwood-as-party-faces-up-to-big-county-election-test-5086282)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/reform-take-over-its-first-conservative-club/), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/a3ca6ba3-960a-4dd5-a030-6747a1a487ad), [[6]](https://www.blackpoolgazette.co.uk/news/former-leading-blackpool-tory-joins-reform-uk-but-warns-he-wont-support-extremists-4988116)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2062776/i-visited-britains-first-ever-reform), [[6]](https://www.blackpoolgazette.co.uk/news/former-leading-blackpool-tory-joins-reform-uk-but-warns-he-wont-support-extremists-4988116), [[7]](https://www.coastalradiodab.co.uk/news/news/local-news/conservative-councillor-defects-to-reform-uk/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2062776/i-visited-britains-first-ever-reform> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/reform-take-over-its-first-conservative-club/> - Reform UK has taken over its first Conservative club, the Talbot pub in Blackpool, marking a significant expansion of the party's presence. The pub, formerly a Conservative Club, now displays a sign reading 'The Talbot: Reform UK Club.' This move signifies Reform UK's strategy to establish a foothold in traditional Conservative strongholds, with plans to replicate this model in other areas. The takeover reflects the party's ambition to broaden its influence and challenge established political structures.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/a3ca6ba3-960a-4dd5-a030-6747a1a487ad> - In recent local elections in England, Reform UK has bolstered Labour's prospects by reducing Conservative votes, despite not winning many seats themselves. The party, led by Richard Tice, gained higher vote shares, notably in Sunderland and came close in the Blackpool South by-election. Early analysis indicates Labour benefitted slightly in wards where Reform ran candidates, while the Conservative Party lost support. This has caused concern among some Tory MPs, with calls for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to move further right.
4. <https://www.blackpoolgazette.co.uk/news/farage-roared-on-by-refom-candidates-in-fleetwood-as-party-faces-up-to-big-county-election-test-5086282> - Nigel Farage received a warm welcome at Fleetwood's Strawberry Gardens pub during a nationwide campaign tour ahead of the local elections. The visit aimed to support Reform UK candidates in Fleetwood, highlighting the party's growing presence in Lancashire. Farage's engagement with local supporters underscores Reform UK's commitment to challenging traditional political structures and promoting its agenda in the region.
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cg3jwee035lo> - Restoration work has begun to bring one of Blackpool's most historic pubs, The Lifeboat Inn, back to life. The building, dating back to the mid-19th Century, is being sympathetically repaired to preserve its heritage. The refurbishment aims to enhance the pub's exterior while maintaining its historical features, contributing to the preservation and enhancement of the heritage asset in Blackpool's tourism district.
6. <https://www.blackpoolgazette.co.uk/news/former-leading-blackpool-tory-joins-reform-uk-but-warns-he-wont-support-extremists-4988116> - Tony Williams, a former Conservative leader in Blackpool, has joined Reform UK, marking a significant defection. Williams expressed disillusionment with the main parties and emphasized his commitment to improving Blackpool's long-term sustainability. He cautioned against supporting radicals or extremists, highlighting his focus on practical solutions for the community. This move reflects Reform UK's growing appeal among former Conservative members seeking change.
7. <https://www.coastalradiodab.co.uk/news/news/local-news/conservative-councillor-defects-to-reform-uk/> - Councillor Emma Ellison, previously a member of the Conservative Party since 2017, has defected to Reform UK, becoming the second Reform UK councillor on Blackpool Council. Ellison cited feeling 'let down' by the Conservatives and expressed a desire for real change, aligning with Reform UK's vision. This defection underscores the party's expanding influence and the shifting political landscape in Blackpool.