# Olympians, media figures and ex-MPs make UK local elections a battle of star power



Local elections across the UK, set to take place this Thursday, feature a notable array of candidates with distinguished backgrounds, including Olympians, ex-MPs, and media personalities, standing for various parties. These elections are shaping up to be among the most unpredictable in recent British history, with star power playing a key role in the strategies of political parties.

Among the candidates is Stiliyan Petrov, son of the former Aston Villa and Bulgaria football captain bearing the same name. Petrov is standing for Reform UK in Lapworth & West Kenilworth, Warwickshire. He expressed a desire to provide a voice for working-class people and the youth, stating, "I decided to stand for election because I think it’s time the working-class people and the youth of this country have a voice that’ll actually represent them.”

James Cracknell, the double Olympic gold medal-winning rower, is contesting a seat on Oxfordshire County Council as a Conservative for Henley. Having previously sought to become the area's Member of Parliament, Cracknell brings a sporting legacy and an OBE earned for his services to sport in 2005. His campaign focuses on addressing local issues including holding water companies accountable for river cleanliness, a cause inspired by his rowing background. The local Conservative Party highlighted his commitment to "help Henley get its buzz back."

Reform UK’s candidate for the newly established Hull and East Yorkshire mayoral election is another Olympic gold medallist, Luke Campbell. The former boxer, who won gold at the London 2012 Olympics, is aiming to become the first head of the combined authority for the region. Campbell is considered a favourite in what is predicted to be a very close race, with Reform, Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, and Labour all having competitive chances. He remarked, "Hull and East Yorkshire has given me everything," adding his motivation is to "fight for the region in return."

In Cornwall, media personality Ollie Williams seeks election to Cornwall Council under the Reform UK banner in the Lostwithiel and Lanreath ward. Williams, known for his brief stint on the ITV dating show Love Island in 2020, has sparked controversy due to past images showing him alongside dead animals, which led to accusations of "trophy hunting." Despite the backlash, Williams has returned to public life to pursue a political role, stating, “Our freedom of speech and society has been eroded for far too long and it’s time to act.”

Another prominent candidate is Arron Banks, a co-founder of the Leave.EU campaign and key figure alongside Reform UK deputy leader Richard Tice. Banks is contesting the West of England mayoralty for Reform UK. At the party’s local election launch in Birmingham, he urged voters to “vote Banksy for Bristol.” Banks has had a history of alliances with Nigel Farage and was photographed with former US President Donald Trump after the 2016 election. He has cited Trump's success as stemming from his emotional connection with voters. Banks and Farage were subjects of interest during Robert Mueller's investigation into Russia’s interference in the 2016 US election, which Banks described as a “witch hunt.” Banks also garnered attention following the murder of Labour MP Jo Cox in 2016, commissioning a controversial poll regarding the incident's impact on voting behaviour.

The Independent is reporting on these developments as local elections across the UK bring an unusual mix of celebrity, political veterans, and activists into the spotlight, making this a closely watched electoral event with diverse candidates seeking to influence local governance.

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

## References

* <https://www.henleystandard.co.uk/news/council/193409/rower-up-for-election.html> - This article reports that James Cracknell, a two-time Olympic gold medallist, is running as a Conservative candidate for Henley in the Oxfordshire County Council elections.
* <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2023/04/29/james-cracknell-enters-race-henley-mp/> - This article discusses James Cracknell's entry into the race to become the Conservative Party's candidate for Henley in the next general election, highlighting his connection to the area and his intentions to address local issues.
* <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/23491155.olympic-rower-james-cracknell-running-henley-mp/> - This article covers James Cracknell's decision to run as the Conservative candidate for Henley in the next general election, emphasizing his long-standing ties to the community and his commitment to local concerns.
* <https://www.henleystandard.co.uk/news/community-news--all-districts-/183913/cracknell-chosen-for-another-tory-seat.html> - This article reports that James Cracknell has been selected as the Conservative candidate for Colchester in the next general election, following the abandonment of the Henley selection process due to rule breaches.
* <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/about-your-council/voting-and-elections/election-2025> - This official notice provides details about the Oxfordshire County Council elections scheduled for May 2025, including key dates and information for prospective candidates.
* <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/elections-voting/statement-persons-nominated-oxfordshire-county-council-elections-1-may-2025> - This document lists the candidates nominated for the Oxfordshire County Council elections on May 1, 2025, including James Cracknell's candidacy for Henley.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/uk-local-elections-2025-candidates-campbell-petrov-cracknell-b2742444.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data