# Nigel Farage reshapes Scottish politics with Reform Party surge a decade after chaotic Edinburgh protest



On May 16, 2013, a press conference planned by then UKIP leader Nigel Farage at the Canon’s Gait pub in Edinburgh turned into a chaotic scene marked by protests. As demonstrators gathered outside, the pub manager abruptly ended the conference, forcing Farage to leave. Attempts to secure transport were thwarted as two taxi drivers refused to take him. The situation escalated, leading police to intervene and escort him back into the pub, where he eventually enjoyed a drink before being taken away in a riot van.

This incident occurred as Farage attempted to launch UKIP's campaign for the Holyrood parliamentary constituency of Aberdeen Donside. While he faced considerable opposition during this visit, the fallout served to enhance his narrative regarding the perceived dangers of left-wing politics. Conversely, footage of him being ousted by Scottish nationalists bolstered support for the SNP, which was gearing up for the independence referendum the following year.

Fast forward a decade, the dynamic has shifted dramatically. Recent local election results reveal that Farage's new party, the Reform Party, is gaining traction, breaking previous assumptions that he would struggle in Scotland. The Daily Mail reported that recent polling placed Reform in third place for the upcoming Holyrood elections, trailing only behind the SNP and Scottish Labour.

The historical context shows us that similar tactics utilised by Farage find echoes in the approaches of Scotland’s First Minister, John Swinney. Both leaders have cultivated a political environment where they position themselves as defenders against perceived threats—in Farage's case, leftist populism, and for the SNP, the right-wing populism of Reform.

During a recent meeting convened by Swinney, political figures expressed unanimous concerns about the populism represented by Farage. Reports indicate the meeting was largely seen as ineffective, focused more on rhetoric of kindness and inclusivity rather than actionable policies. Unsurprisingly, Farage has become a readily invoked figure in political discourse, serving as a 'bogeyman' for both Labour and the SNP. Despite this, both parties face the reality that Farage's brand of politics holds considerable appeal, particularly among younger voters, who exhibit less loyalty to traditional party lines.

A rising trend among this demographic is their receptiveness to non-traditional political options. According to a survey conducted by the John Smith Centre at Glasgow University, two-thirds of those aged 16-29 would consider voting for an independent candidate. This generational shift reflects a growing disinterest in established political structures, with younger voters more inclined to cherry-pick policies from a variety of sources rather than aligning with a single party's manifesto.

Eddie Barnes, Director of the Centre, noted that while the Labour Party still captures the largest share of young voters, non-traditional parties, including the Green Party and Reform, are drawing significant interest. This transition signals a changing political landscape, and it presents both a challenge and an opportunity for traditional parties, including the SNP and Labour.

Despite the SNP's efforts to delineate themselves from Farage, party strategies must evolve to consider the perspectives of voters who may align with some of his views, particularly on immigration. Some within the SNP worry that distancing themselves too aggressively from Farage could alienate potential supporters who hold conservative views on related issues.

As the political clock ticks down to the next Holyrood election, Farage’s influence remains palpable. While he will not stand for a seat, his ability to galvanise support for the Reform Party positions him as a significant player in the Scottish political arena. Observers speculate that he could feasibly send multiple members to Holyrood, further complicating the existing political calculus for traditional parties.

Farage’s role as a disruptor in British politics, akin to figures like Donald Trump and Boris Johnson, remains evident. His knack for connecting with a broad spectrum of voters challenges the established norms, compelling traditional parties to reconsider their strategies. While Farage may have initially appeared to be a fading figure in Scotland, recent developments suggest otherwise; he is perhaps poised to leave a lasting imprint on the evolving political landscape as Scots prepare for the upcoming elections.

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

## References

* <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/may/16/nigel-farage-edinburgh-protesters-van> - This article details the May 16, 2013, incident where Nigel Farage was forced to flee a press conference at the Canon's Gait pub in Edinburgh due to protests, corroborating the chaotic scene described in the article.
* <https://www.itv.com/news/2013-05-16/police-evacuate-nigel-farage-after-pub-protest> - This report describes how police escorted Nigel Farage into a riot van after the pub protest, supporting the account of police intervention during the incident.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/may/17/nigel-farage-fascist-scum-protesters> - This article covers Nigel Farage's response to the protesters, where he referred to them as 'fascist scum,' aligning with the description of the protesters' behavior in the article.
* <https://www.itv.com/news/story/2013-05-16/ukip-leader-nigel-farage-locked-in-pub-for-own-safety-after-edinburgh-protests/> - This piece discusses how Nigel Farage was locked inside a pub for his safety after the Edinburgh protests, corroborating the account of his confinement during the incident.
* <https://www.scotsman.com/news/nigel-farage-forced-to-flee-edinburghs-royal-mile-1574977> - This article provides details on how Nigel Farage was forced to flee Edinburgh's Royal Mile due to protests, supporting the narrative of the incident described in the article.
* <https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/05/16/nigel-farage-edinburgh-ukip-protests-_n_3286646.html> - This report covers the protests against Nigel Farage in Edinburgh, including his being locked inside a pub for safety, aligning with the description of the protests in the article.
* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14673229/EUAN-MCCOLM-Hounded-2013-shadow-Farage-loom-large-Holyrood.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data