# Concerns rise as right-wing candidates avoid local media hustings in Nottinghamshire



An exchange between Nottinghamshire Live and Ashfield MP Lee Anderson has spotlighted the accommodating but selective approach some right-wing figures take towards local media engagement, raising broader concerns about transparency and accountability in political discourse. The public spat on social media on Thursday 24 April 2024 has highlighted a worrying trend among some new political forces, who appear more inclined to avoid scrutiny than to engage constructively with the electorate through established local press platforms.

The controversy arose when a Nottinghamshire Live journalist factually noted that none of the new right-wing populist candidates had attended the county council election hustings hosted by the outlet. The journalist pointed out, "They didn't attend our Nottinghamshire Live county council hustings this week. Again missing BBC Radio Nottingham's hustings. Last year, five general election hustings were hosted and these candidates were absent from all. Politics aside, this isn't on." Such comments underscore the vital role that traditional media and collective hustings play in providing voters with transparent access to party policies and priorities.

In reply, Lee Anderson dismissed these observations as “Absolute rubbish,” claiming he had increased his vote share precisely because he prioritized door-to-door canvassing over attending hustings. "We are here to serve the people of Ashfield. Not you," he declared, framing direct voter contact as more valuable than engaging with the press. Anderson further boasted that his personal social media content had reached two million viewers recently, in an apparent attempt to undermine local journalists’ claims about their audience reach.

This interchange reflects a broader strategy among some newer political factions to sideline mainstream and local press, instead relying heavily on social media channels to communicate directly with voters. As Anderson admitted at a conference earlier this year, “We don't need mainstream media, we've got social media and GB News,” a stance that threatens to marginalize vital journalistic scrutiny and reduce transparency.

Yet the situation is riddled with contradictions. While avoiding participation in local hustings, these political figures still selectively engage with legacy media when convenient, such as Nigel Farage’s recent opinion piece published in Nottinghamshire Live. This reveals a troubling pattern of engagement only when it suits their narrative, rather than a genuine commitment to openness.

The Nottinghamshire Live journalist also recalled the outlet’s extensive record of challenging authorities on behalf of the community, including exposing attempts to muzzle Nottinghamshire Police and defending vital community services. The ongoing refusal by candidates from this political faction to attend brief, hour-long hustings, at the expense of public access to their policies, appears hard to justify. “Are we seriously to believe that not one of their 65 candidates in Nottinghamshire could spare an hour to face voters jointly on camera?” the journalist rightly questioned.

While canvassing remains important, declining media scrutiny signals a deeper aversion to transparency. This approach feeds into a dangerous narrative peddled by certain groups that portray journalists wholesale as “enemies of the people,” undermining the democratic principle of holding elected representatives accountable. The social media backlash and personal abuse targeted at Nottinghamshire Live staff for raising these legitimate points only underscore how toxic this attitude has become.

Importantly, the journalist made clear their critique was never about policies but about the fundamental democratic expectation that parties vying for power must subject themselves to thorough public examination. The reluctance to engage seriously with local press scrutiny should alarm all voters who value open, accountable government.

This incident is symptomatic of wider tensions in UK politics about the role of traditional media as a cornerstone of democracy. It exposes how some emergent parties, riding populist and nationalist waves, prefer echo chambers over engagement, risking a fractured political discourse and diminished public trust. As the new government landscape evolves post-election, it remains critical that all parties—whether established or new—embrace comprehensive and consistent interaction with the media to serve the electorate effectively and transparently.

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

## Bibliography

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