# Reform UK surge disrupts Labour’s stronghold in Scottish by-elections



The recent local by-election in Clydebank Waterfront, West Dunbartonshire, provided a clarion call that reverberates throughout Scottish politics. The SNP may have claimed victory with their candidate, Kevin Crawford, receiving 1,331 votes, but the surprising surge of alternatives has positioned them uncomfortably as new contenders rise. Reform UK's impressive second-place finish with 919 votes starkly exposes the underbelly of Scottish Labour, which limped into third with only 770 votes. This outcome is not just troubling; it's a warning sign of a party in disarray, illuminating a troubling trend amidst a fiercely competitive political landscape.

Elections expert Allan Faulds sounded the alarm, emphasizing that Labour's weakened position reflects a seismic shift in voter loyalty. The fact that Reform UK has overtaken Labour in this instance marks a stark departure from traditional voting patterns and indicates a rising tide of dissatisfaction among voters who have historically aligned with Labour. With an eye on future elections, particularly in Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse, signals suggest a continuation of this momentum that could dismantle Labour's influence in Scotland. Opinion polls hint that Reform UK is set to outpace Labour in the forthcoming Holyrood elections, painting a bleak picture for Labour's aspirations.

Diving deeper into the polling data, it becomes evident that Labour's vote share is slipping in areas long considered their stronghold. Despite narrowly securing victories in recent by-elections across Glasgow, their vote percentages have significantly dropped—around 10% in the North East ward and 3.8% in Drumchapel and Anniesland compared to their position in May 2022. Analysts like Professor John Curtice have pinpointed these troubling trends, highlighting the waning support for Labour as alternative parties, particularly Reform UK, continue to capture the electorate's imagination.

While Labour did manage a notable win in North Lanarkshire with Kaye Harmon securing Motherwell South East and Ravenscraig ward with a commendable 44% of the vote, this temporary success hardly masks the growing threat posed by Reform UK. With attention diverting from Labour, their ability to maintain relevance is increasingly compromised, as the allure of a fresh political narrative becomes more pronounced.

Moreover, Labour's victory in the Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election, where Michael Shanks achieved a 58.6% vote share with a striking 20.4-point swing from the SNP, does not offer the solace it might have once provided. Labour's leadership unmistakably views this as a pivotal moment, yet the reality is that Scottish support for Labour now faces serious challenges. The rise of alternatives makes it evident that the status quo is under siege.

As both Labour and the SNP struggle to regain their footing, the looming influence of Reform UK serves as a stark reminder of the evolving political dynamics. The upcoming elections are set to be unpredictable, suffering under the weight of emerging alternatives that seem to resonate more deeply with the electorate. As Faulds astutely observes, Labour's current trajectory may well derail Anas Sarwar's aspirations for First Minister, given the shifting currents that appear to favor the rise of these new challengers.

The recent by-elections have sent clear messages that cannot be ignored. With voters making their preferences known, both Labour and the SNP are left with an urgent imperative: they must overhaul their strategies and messages to better reflect the electorate's growing desire for change. As new voices gain traction, the time for complacency is over; the political landscape in Scotland is in a state of flux, and only those willing to adapt may find themselves on safe ground moving forward.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/reform-uk-push-scottish-labour-35235024> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.thenational.scot/news/24744391.leading-pollsters-give-verdict-labours-glasgow-by-election-wins/> - Leading pollsters have analyzed recent Glasgow by-election results, indicating a decline in support for Scottish Labour. Despite winning seats, the party's vote share fell by approximately 10% in the North East ward and 3.8% in Drumchapel and Anniesland compared to May 2022. Professor John Curtice noted that while Labour won, the reduced vote share suggests a loss of support since the General Election. Pollster Mark Diffley emphasized that these by-elections confirm Reform UK's rising influence in Scotland, with the party polling between 13% and 18% in each, finishing third overall.
3. <https://www.thenational.scot/news/23929823.labour-win-seat-snp-scottish-council-by-election/> - Scottish Labour secured a seat from the SNP in a council by-election in North Lanarkshire. Kaye Harmon won the Motherwell South East and Ravenscraig ward with 1,368 first-preference votes, surpassing SNP candidate Rosa Zambonini, who received 934 votes. This victory followed the resignation of former SNP representative Agnes Magowan. The election results indicate a shift in voter preferences, with Labour gaining 44% of the vote share and the SNP losing 12.7% compared to previous elections.
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2023/10/06/rutherglen-hamilton-west-by-election-results-labour-snp/> - In the Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election, Labour's Michael Shanks achieved a significant victory over the SNP's Katy Loudon, securing 58.6% of the vote compared to Loudon's 27.6%. The 20.4-point swing from the SNP to Labour was nearly double the expected margin, indicating a substantial shift in voter sentiment. Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer described the result as a 'big step in the right direction' towards becoming prime minister, highlighting the importance of Scottish support for the party's national ambitions.
5. <https://www.irishtimes.com/world/uk/2023/10/06/resounding-byelection-win-for-labour-over-snp-in-scotland/> - Labour's overwhelming victory in the Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election, with nearly 59% of the vote, suggests a potential shift in Scottish politics. The 20-point swing from the SNP to Labour indicates growing support for the party in Scotland. Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer hailed the result as proof that the party is heading for Downing Street, emphasizing the significance of Scottish support in the party's national strategy.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/oct/06/keir-starmer-labour-blew-the-doors-off-with-scottish-byelection-win> - Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer praised the party's overwhelming victory in the Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election, stating that they 'blew the doors off.' The 20-point swing from the SNP to Labour was nearly double the expected margin, indicating a significant shift in voter sentiment. Starmer attributed the success to the party's transformation and its appeal as the 'party of change' in Scotland and the UK.
7. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2023/10/06/rutherglen-hamilton-west-by-election-results-labour-snp/> - In the Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election, Labour's Michael Shanks achieved a significant victory over the SNP's Katy Loudon, securing 58.6% of the vote compared to Loudon's 27.6%. The 20.4-point swing from the SNP to Labour was nearly double the expected margin, indicating a substantial shift in voter sentiment. Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer described the result as a 'big step in the right direction' towards becoming prime minister, highlighting the importance of Scottish support for the party's national ambitions.