

The Times, 7th April, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ukip-provides-75-fewer-candidates-for-councils-sw67zjfx7>

Ukip provides 75% fewer candidates for councils

Lucy Fisher

Ukip has been judged "virtually dead" after the party registered 75 per cent fewer candidates for next month's local elections than stood in 2014.

The anti-EU party is on course to have only about 550 candidates, or 12 per cent of those possible, on May 3, according to its spokesman. This is down from 2,193 candidates, or 52 per cent of all seats, that Ukip fielded four years ago in the last comparable poll.

Nominations for candidates closed at 4pm yesterday and analysis by Lord Hayward, a Conservative pollster, showed that Ukip's tally of candidates had declined even in former strongholds. In Sunderland, Hyndburn in Lancashire, Nuneaton, and Fareham, Hampshire, Ukip is fielding either no candidates or one or two, compared with strong slates in 2014. Ukip fielded candidates in all 20 seats in Maidenhead and Wolverhampton last time but next month is fielding none there. The party is still expected to field a strong slate in Dudley, Sheffield and Peterborough but is not standing in Liverpool or Colchester.

Lord Hayward said that Ukip appeared "virtually dead" as an election fighting organisation. "It confirms the disastrous fall of Ukip from public attention," he said.

A Ukip spokesman said: "In light of the last year and the haemorrhaging of support, the turnaround that [party leader Gerard] Batten has achieved is remarkable. Fielding candidates in the mid-550s is far more than many would think. Of course we're sad we couldn't have got more, but we're quite bullish."

The party raised £300,000 from its 25,000 subscribers, the spokesman said.

Mr Batten had said that the party needed to raise £100,000 by the end of last month or risk going bust.