



## Indy-Green relationship boosted Sefton's left-wing election surge

### Description

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Sefton

The 2026 local election in the Merseyside borough of Sefton saw a left-wing surge against Labour. And the [positive relationship](#) between community independents and the Green Party made a meaningful difference, with both increasing their voice on the council as a result.

Community independents went from [one](#) councillor to [five](#), and the Greens from [one](#) to [three](#). And the *Canary* spoke to [Lydiate and Maghull Community Independents](#) to hear more about how they became the third biggest political grouping on Sefton Council.

## Common-sense relationships on the left can make a big difference

There are places in the UK where [local independents](#) are more likely to win than the Greens, and vice versa. But in some places, [vote splitting between them has allowed Labour to keep a hold](#)

Sefton, however, largely bucked that trend. Because while [some polls predicted](#) Reform would make big advances in Sefton, it didn't. And one reason for that was coordination between left-wing independents and Greens.

New Lydiate and Maghull Community Independents councillor Joanne McCall described how the local Greens "stepped aside for us". She said she has "a lot of respect" for Neil Doolin, previously Sefton's lone Green councillor and now its [group leader on the council](#). And she explained that, following conversations between the parties:

They stepped aside for community independents in three wards, which was ours [Maghull East], Lydiate and Maghull West, and Aintree and Maghull South.

Both McCall and [current group leader](#) David Leatherbarrow [won in Maghull East](#). In a close race, Labour won the other seat.

In Lydiate and Maghull West, meanwhile, [all three independents won fairly comfortably](#)

The [three candidates](#) for [Aintree and Maghull South Community Independents](#) didn't win, but were [serious challengers](#) to second-place Reform.

McCall said she felt "eternally grateful" for the Green decision to step aside, as it avoided any potential vote splitting between Lydiate and Maghull Community Independents and the Greens. This decision, she suggested, was a sensible acknowledgement that:

the two-party system is well and truly out the window now

She added:

I'm truly pleased that they recognised our potential

Leatherbarrow agreed, telling us:

For them to step aside was unbelievable – to see that they did run in every single area, and then when there was a community-independent group they stepped aside. It just showed that it was more important for grassroots activists to get into power, rather than to allow Reform to get in or to stick with the same old from Labour.

## With trust in Labour collapsing, accountable community power is a real alternative

McCall described how politics has changed locally in recent years, saying:

I've been involved for the last three years with the Lydiate and Maghull Community Independents, and this is the third election that I've run in. There has been a real shift in the support for independents, and I think that there's a few factors that contribute to that. The first one would be loss of faith in Labour nationally. Also, obviously, the surge of Reform. You've got that portion of the community who absolutely does not want Reform to get in, because they don't agree with their policies.

But also the fact that we've worked for the last three years, locally. Everybody knows us because we're visible. We're invested in the community, so we do a lot of

volunteering work. We've done a lot of initiatives to bring things to the area.

Leatherbarrow, meanwhile, captured the essence of the community independent message, explaining how local interactions work. He said:

We've tried to bring the residents with us to say "right, we live here. This is what we think. What do you think?"

We put on a few community meetings! We just asked people, "what do you think, and how would you solve the problem?" And the community came up with the solutions. It wasn't us. It was the community that came up with the solutions. It's then our job to go away and solve the problems.

McCall summed the message up as:

Local people know what local people want.

And these people have had enough of representatives of mainstream parties either ignoring them or just disappearing when they win:

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It just seems to be a recurring pattern right across the country that candidates go into these elections and then literally just disappear once they've got in. We will never do that. We're active and visible in the community.

It's important that people can see what you're doing.

People have actually realised that they prefer a local person to represent them rather than the line of a national party.

The pledges that seemed to resonate most with people locally were:

Visibility, transparency, protecting our green spaces, and accountability.

Leatherbarrow also mentioned the key issue of unfair planning, asserting that:

Overdevelopment in the area has outpaced the infrastructure. So the infrastructure's been the same for about 30-40 years, but the number of houses being built is just exponential.

## Not just in Sefton - We need to see more of this nationally

In the [Waterloo ward](#) of Sefton, meanwhile, the Green Party had a comfortable clean sweep (at least 500 votes ahead of Labour). That's where their [first councillor](#) Doolin, had won previously. And they

built on his record there. Upon winning, the new Green group promised to be "community-led", with Doolin [insisting](#)

We're determined to be visible, hardworking councillors who listen to residents

No community independents challenged the Greens in Waterloo.

Overall, Sefton's local election offered some hope. It showed that, where community independents, Greens, and other left-wingers can get along and coordinate, they can organise more efficiently to defeat national right-wing parties like Labour and Reform. And they can make real advances.

We need to see a lot more of this across the whole country.

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