

Stewart HARPER



I'm standing for election as one of three Vice Presidents of the National Convention – and I am doing so because I think that my skills and experience give me the opportunity to shape the rebuilding of our Party.

What I want to achieve

The 2024 General Election will stand as one of the hardest days in our Party's history. We lost so many good MPs, and candidates who had worked so hard to represent their communities. But I honestly believe there to be an opportunity to rebuild – if we learn the lessons, and take steps to address them properly.

This includes six areas to address our underlying weaknesses which I will pursue if elected:

- 1. A fundamental, and comprehensive, review** of the reasons for our defeat. The review should take its time lead to a clear action plan setting out what we will do as a result of its findings. It should be led by someone who can get underneath the skin of **what went wrong – at every level.**
- 2.** The Party Board then needs to **hold to account** those responsible for delivery of the action plan, with **clear targets** and milestones against which to **test progress.** In the past, we've had reviews that have identified the issues but have not led to meaningful change – this has to be different.
- 3.** As part of that, a whole-scale **constitutional and governance review:** the bedrock on which the Party is built. My background is in governance – so I know that getting governance right can pay dividends. It determines who has power to take what decisions, and where reference back is required.
- 4. Redraw the balance** between the three wings of our Party (voluntary, professional, parliamentary). None exist effectively without the others - volunteers need to be supported, for example, in fulfilling legal obligations that we cannot avoid, but without volunteers the party is nothing.
- 5.** We need to **value our members,** grow their number, significantly increase the proportion who are active in the Party – and focus their efforts effectively against what should be our only purpose: to **elect as many Conservatives as possible to every level of government.**
- 6.** We need to **embrace all the potential digital tools** that are available to reach voters, identify our audience and bring them back to us. It should be 'digital first' not as a secondary consideration.



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Why I think I can do it

1. I believe I'm ideally suited to meet this challenge, because I've done so many of the jobs that have shown me where the issues are and what solutions we can employ. **I've been a volunteer at nearly every level of the party** – an association officer and chairman, and area officer, and a regional chairman. I've been a parliamentary candidate, led very successful local election and parliamentary campaigns, been an agent, and **campaigned across the country** - so I have first-hand experience.
2. In my professional life, I work daily with complex organisations – in education, health and the private sector. **Advising on change, structure, and process – and turning round organisations** where they are failing for one of these. The Conservative Party is one such organisation where change is needed to our fundamental building blocks.
3. And, whilst hailing from the south originally, I've done all of this in the North of England – so **I have first-hand experience of fighting seats where we aren't naturally successful**, and in the campaign techniques that make it work.

“Stewart’s professional expertise in strong governance and fair process, underpinned by years of campaign experience and his extensive network of contacts, is exactly what the Party needs as we evaluate recent events and determine a positive way forward. I can’t think of a better representative to serve on the Party Board.”

Cllr Jane MacBean, Parliamentary Candidate in Bishop Auckland 2024

“In 2018, Stewart led the campaign which saw the first Conservative councillors elected in our ward for more than 30 years. He knows how to campaign, to lead and to be part of a team. He knows what needs to happen to get the Party ready for the next General Election and he’ll roll his sleeves up to do it”

Cllr Simon Seary, Pudsey (Leeds City Council)

“Stewart is a campaigner through-and-through and knows how hard it is to win and win-back seats, from his experience campaigning and organising associations, areas and regions across the North of England and across the UK. He’s also a strong advocate for encouraging more women to run for elected office, and of the work of the CWO having encouraged many parliamentary / council candidates and knows how critical it is to bring women to the heart of policies and associations.”

Pamela Hall OBE, National Chairman of the CWO

“Stewart is a fantastic advocate for the voluntary Party. He’s a hugely popular organiser and campaigner; he is an excellent communicator and is a must for a slot on the Party Board.”

James Clark, Executive Director Conservative Friends of the Armed Forces (Former Area Chairman Hertfordshire)

“Stewart has always fought for members of the Party to be front and centre of decision-making. If elected to the Party Board he would ensure their voice was central to the rebuilding we need to undertake.”

Tom Spiller OBE, Former President and Vice President of the National Convention

Key Priorities

1. A fundamental review of the reasons for our defeat.
2. A comprehensive action plan that allows us to track progress of change.
3. A governance review to increase transparency of decision-making.
4. A redrawing of the balance between voluntary, paid and elected members of our Party.
5. Greater valuing of members' contributions and views - so they have a meaningful say in direction.
6. Embracing digital tools throughout, not just a 'nice to have' at the end.