



Find out here about the NLA's latest campaigns to encourage the Government to achieve a healthy private-rented sector

# Election 2015 – where the parties stand and does it matter?

By Chris Norris, NLA Head of Policy, Public Affairs and Research

With the General Election only a matter of weeks away many will have decided how they intend to vote. However, the polls show us that more so than any previous election it is the wavering or undecided voter, who may tip the balance in favour of one particular party.

Currently, the polls are evenly split with both Labour and the Conservative party holding 31% of the vote. UKIP have 15% support, the Green Party 9% and the Liberal Democrats continue to haemorrhage voters at 8% (according to Lord Ashcroft Polls, 2 February 2015). The net result of this split is that neither main party looks likely to carry sufficient seats in the House of Commons to provide an overall majority and therefore a single party government.

Coalition awaits, but what flavour?

As a politically neutral trade body the NLA has no interest in telling its members how they should vote, but as the actions of the Government have such a significant bearing on how we are able to operate as landlords we have a duty to make sure that they are as aware as possible of the various party's positions on relevant issues.

As things currently stand none of the main UK-wide parties have published their manifestos, so we are unable to provide a complete rundown of their private-rented sector (PRS) policies. However, through our contact with their policy makers and

analysis of their public statements we can discuss general principles. Fortunately, the main political parties responded in some detail to questions sent to them by *UK Landlord's* editorial team in February, which provide some flesh on the bones of what is outlined in this article. See the article on pages 10-14 which sets out their responses in full.

 **Conservative**  
Traditionally a lower interventionist party, pro-austerity and investment the Conservatives are likely to pursue fewer direct policies of intervention. However, the party is committed to decentralising control to local authorities, which in recent years has seen the burden on many landlords' businesses increase significantly.

On core matters such as tenure, rent controls, registration and licensing the Conservative Party has indicated no support for action.

 **Labour**  
The Labour Party has been the most vocal about its desire to intervene in the PRS – although crucially very little

detail has been made public. Although no manifesto has yet been published, the Party has committed to:

- Replacement of the Assured Shorthold Tenancy with a 3-year tenancy, without a no-fault possession option.
- Greater regulation of letting agents, potentially banning all fees to tenants.
- Limits on 'in tenancy' rent increases – most likely set against an index figure of some kind.
- Registration of all landlords (although this has not been mentioned recently).
- Further regulation of 'consumer' Buy-to-Let mortgages.

 **Liberal Democrats**  
The Liberal Democrats have long been advocates of landlord registration, and within coalition are behind current efforts to introduce a defence against Section 21 possession claims. All other public statements concerning

housing policy have related to increasing supply of new property.

 **UKIP**  
At the time of writing, there are no references to the PRS on the UKIP website and no public statements have come to the NLA's attention. In respect of other related matters, the party pledges to restrict access to social housing to those with a strong local connection and block those without a 5-year residence history from receiving welfare support.

 **Green Party**  
The Green Party has traditionally favoured intervention in the PRS and pledges to introduce rent controls and greater legal protection for tenants. In 2014 election materials, the Party also strongly advocated the licensing of all private landlords, with a view to using fees collected to pay for tenancy relations activity.



For more information, see: [www.landlords.org.uk/quidproquo](http://www.landlords.org.uk/quidproquo)