1.11 Liberal Democrats, Greens and Reform UK: Minor and Emerging Parties

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 60 minutes · Write-in edition

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Short answer questions may be answered in note form. For levels-marked questions write a well-structured extended response in full sentences and support arguments with accurate political knowledge and named examples. Spend about 60 minutes on this paper.

1 This question tests basic knowledge of the Green Party's core ideological priority. State the Green Party's core ideological priority.

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

2 State four differences between the tactical use of referendums by minor parties and by major parties in the UK context since 2010, and give a brief example or consequence.

(Total for Question 2 is 5 marks)

3 State two features of the Liberal Democrats' role in the 2010 to 2015 coalition government that affected how minor parties can exert influence.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

4 This question is about the Green Party's decentralisation policy.

(a) Explain briefly what is meant by decentralisation in the Green Party context. **(2)**

(b) Give one possible advantage of decentralisation according to Greens. **(1)**

(Total for Question 4 is 3 marks)

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5 State one example, with date, of a Green Party pressure effect on major-party policy on climate commitments.

(Total for Question 5 is 2 marks)

6 Using the two sources below, evaluate the claim that minor parties have had a decisive influence on UK policy in the 2010s. Source A: an extract from a newspaper analysis, 2014: "UKIP's surge in European and local vote shares has forced the Conservative leadership to promise a referendum on EU membership, reshaping Conservative policy on Europe." Source B: a 2019 academic commentary: "Greens and environmental NGOs raised climate salience throughout the 2010s leading to mainstream parties adopting net zero targets and more detailed climate policy by 2019, but the final policy content was often substantially adapted by major-party strategists."

(Total for Question 6 is 12 marks)

7 Evaluate the view that minor parties have a significant impact on UK politics despite winning few seats.

(Total for Question 7 is 30 marks)

8 This question asks about the Liberal Democrats' electoral strategy after 2015. Explain how the Liberal Democrats' electoral strategy changed after 2015.

(Total for Question 8 is 5 marks)

Mark scheme · 1.11 Liberal Democrats, Greens and Reform UK: Minor and Emerging Parties

Question 1

one accurate identification of the Green Party's core priority, e.g. environmental protection and sustainability cao **B1**

Answer: Environmental protection and sustainable policies.

Question 2

one accurate difference, e.g. minor parties use referendums to force agenda on single issues whereas major parties may use referendums to resolve internal divisions **B1**

second accurate difference, e.g. minor parties often call for referendums as a mobilisation tool, major parties may call them for legitimacy or to settle policy **B1**

third accurate difference, e.g. impact differs as minor parties rarely have power to trigger national referendums and instead influence major parties to do so **B1**

fourth accurate difference, e.g. referendums can provide minor parties with publicity disproportionate to their seat totals, whereas major parties rely on referendums to secure formal authorisation **B1**

brief example or consequence, e.g. UKIP pressure contributed to the 2016 EU referendum, a major-party enacted referendum **B1**

Answer: Minor parties use referendums to force attention on single issues and mobilise supporters, often lacking direct power to trigger one and so pressuring major parties to act; major parties use referendums to resolve internal divisions or secure legitimacy for big decisions. UKIP's pressure contributed to the Conservative decision to call the 2016 EU referendum.

Question 3

one accurate feature, e.g. they held Cabinet minister positions and junior minister posts **B1**

a second accurate feature, e.g. they secured specific policy concessions via coalition agreements (e.g. tuition fees pledge and AV referendum) or acted as a moderating influence **B1**

Answer: They held Cabinet and junior minister posts, and they obtained policy concessions through the coalition agreement such as a referendum on AV and influence over some legislation.

Question 4

(a) identifies decentralisation as shifting powers from central government to local communities and local authorities **B1**

(a) development showing link to Green aims, e.g. localism to increase community control over resources and sustainable local economies **B1**

(a) Answer: Decentralisation means shifting powers from central government to local communities and councils to increase community control over resources and encourage sustainable local economies.

(b) one plausible advantage, e.g. decisions better reflect local environmental priorities and encourage democratic participation **B1**

(b) Answer: Decisions better reflect local environmental priorities and encourage greater democratic participation.

Question 5

identifies a verifiable example, e.g. increased mainstream party commitments to net zero targets around 2019-2020 **B1**

links it to the time period, e.g. Labour and Conservative adoption of net zero by 2050 or earlier commitments in 2019-2020 **B1**

Answer: By 2019-2020 Green pressure and public campaigning contributed to mainstream parties adopting net zero targets, for example the UK Government legislated a net zero by 2050 target in 2019 and major parties sharpened climate commitments around 2019-2020.

Question 6

Level 1 Basic use of the sources with limited analysis. Response may summarise the extracts with little evaluation of their claim or reliability. **1-3**

Level 2 Clear use of the sources to support an argument, with some analysis of how the sources support or challenge the claim, but limited contextual knowledge or evaluation of source provenance. **4-6**

Level 3 Detailed use of both sources with well developed analysis of their content and relevance to the claim, and some evaluation of limitations or alternative explanations using contextual knowledge. **7-9**

Level 4 Comprehensive, well balanced evaluation that uses both sources critically, assesses provenance and reliability, integrates strong contextual knowledge about UKIP, the Conservatives, the Greens and major-party policy change, and reaches a reasoned judgement on whether minor parties were decisive in shaping policy in the 2010s. **10-12**

Indicative content:

- Source A supports the claim by linking UKIP's electoral surge to Conservative leadership decisions, notably David Cameron's commitment to an in/out EU referendum, showing a pathway from minor-party pressure to major-party policy change.
- Source B supports a similar pathway for the Greens, showing sustained pressure raising climate salience that led major parties to adopt net zero targets by 2019, but it qualifies that final policies were adapted by major parties, suggesting influence rather than full control.
- Evaluate provenance: Source A is a newspaper analysis from 2014 and may emphasise causality because of contemporaneous political narrative; it is useful for showing perceived pressure at the time but may overstate direct causation without legislative evidence.
- Evaluate provenance: Source B is an academic commentary from 2019, likely to provide a measured assessment and to distinguish between agenda setting and policy detail, thus its claim that parties adopted targets but adapted policy content is plausible and evidence based.
- Contextual knowledge: UKIP achieved significant vote shares in European elections and local contests in the early 2010s and attracted Conservative voter defections, contributing to the political calculus that led to the 2013 Conservative pledge for a referendum, and to the 2016 referendum being called.
- Contextual knowledge: The Green Party increased the salience of climate issues through campaigns and local successes, and the government legislated net zero by 2050 in 2019; mainstream party policy detail, however, was influenced by broader environmental NGOs, public opinion and international commitments.
- Alternative explanations and limitations: Major parties may adopt policies for electoral advantage or because of broader public opinion shifts rather than solely because of minor-party pressure. Institutional constraints, intra-party politics and international factors also shaped outcomes.
- Conclusion: A reasoned judgement could argue minor parties were often decisive in agenda setting and in forcing major parties to respond on particular issues in the 2010s, but they rarely wrote final policy content; their influence was significant in prompting action rather than in determining detailed policy outcomes.

Question 7

Level 0 No relevant content. **0**

Level 1 Basic, limited knowledge of minor-party examples with little analysis or evaluation. Responses may be descriptive and lack a clear judgement. **1-7**

Level 2 Clear knowledge of minor-party cases (e.g. Lib Dems in 2010-2015 coalition, UKIP/Brexit Party pressure, Green influence on climate) with some developed analysis of mechanisms of influence and some evaluation, but argument may be one sided. **8-15**

Level 3 Detailed, accurate knowledge used to construct a sustained analysis of the extent and limits of minor-party impact, considering multiple mechanisms, examples and counterarguments, and developing a balanced evaluation. **16-23**

Level 4 Sophisticated, wide ranging knowledge, including precise examples and timing, used to produce a tightly argued evaluation that weighs evidence for and against the claim across domains (electoral, policy, agenda setting), addresses alternative explanations and reaches a well substantiated judgement. **24-30**

Indicative content:

- Points supporting significant impact: UKIP/Reform UK influenced Conservative policy on Europe culminating in the 2016 EU referendum; the Brexit Party's performance in 2019 further pushed Conservative strategy. The Liberal Democrats held ministerial office in 2010-2015 and secured policy concessions, showing formal power can be exercised even by smaller parties.
- Points supporting significant impact: The Green Party and NGOs increased climate salience leading to net zero commitments by 2019 and influenced local governance and planning policy through council seats and local activism.
- Mechanisms of influence: agenda setting through media visibility, electoral threat causing major-party policy shifts, coalition bargaining providing ministerial influence, local government presence enabling policy experimentation, and pressure through referendums or public campaigns.
- Limits and counterarguments: First Past the Post limits parliamentary representation so seat totals remain low and legislative power is rare; major parties often absorb popular policies, adapting them to their own platforms, which can dilute the minor party's core proposals.
- Limits and counterarguments: Influence may be episodic and issue specific; where the major party finds it electorally costly to adopt a minor-party stance the minor party may have little effect. Institutional factors and international obligations shape policy independently of minor-party pressure.
- Evaluation of relative importance: media visibility and vote share in non-Parliamentary contests can matter more than Commons seats, but formal power in government or a decisive Commons presence is more likely to produce direct policy change.
- Conclusion: A nuanced judgement could argue minor parties have had significant and demonstrable impacts on UK politics in the 2010s, particularly in agenda setting and in shaping major-party choices on issues like Europe and climate, but their ability to determine detailed policy outcomes is constrained by institutional factors and the capacity of major parties to co-opt or adapt proposals.

Question 8

identifies a strategic change such as focusing on target constituencies and local campaigning	**B1**
identifies rebuilding trust after coalition decisions, for example emphasis on local service delivery and clear policy positions	**B1**
identifies use of coalition record selectively, e.g. defending some coalition achievements while apologising for unpopular decisions	**B1**
identifies a tactical use of by-election and local election gains to rebuild parliamentary presence	**B1**
gives a brief consequence, e.g. modest recovery in seat totals by 2019 in some areas	**B1**

Answer: After 2015 they concentrated on target constituencies and strong local campaigning, sought to rebuild trust after coalition decisions by emphasising local service delivery and clearer policy positions, used the coalition record selectively, and targeted by-elections and local elections to rebuild parliamentary presence, producing modest seat recoveries in some areas by 2019.