

Election Hustings: Poll Result

This document records the result of the voting intention poll ex-ante and ex-post at the election hustings hosted at St John's Church, Hartford on the 30th April, 2010.

The candidates present were as follows:

Graham Evans (Conservative)

Peter Hampson (Liberal Democrat)

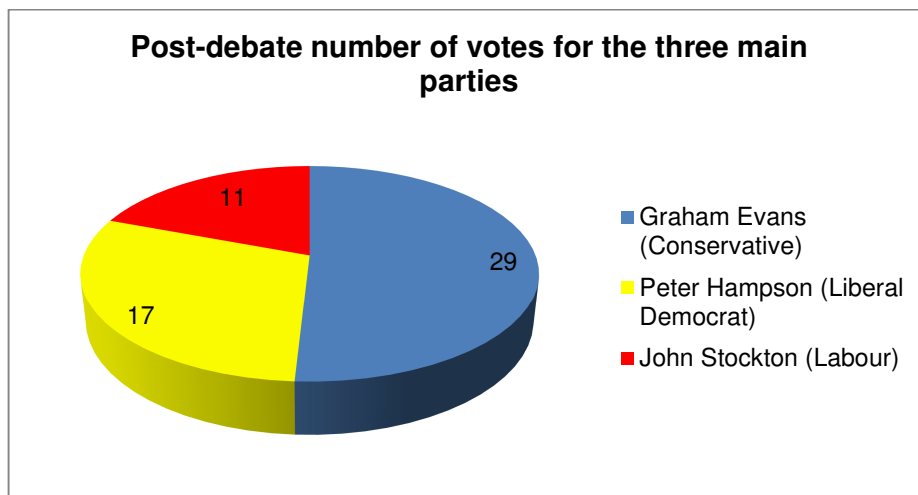
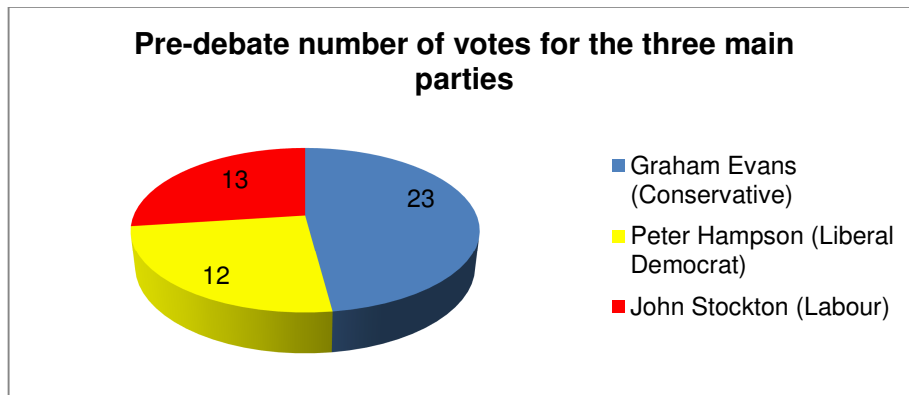
John Stockton (Labour)

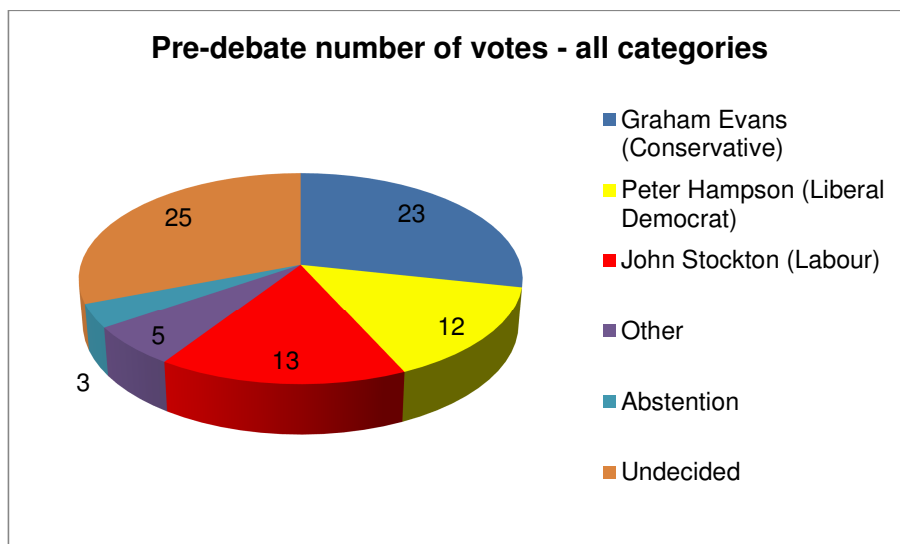
Chair: Mike Smith

An overview of the statistics

162 papers were returned, with an equal 81:81 pre and post-debate split. The table below shows the breakdown of the results.

Of the three main parties, herein defined as parties which received more than 5% of the vote, the Conservatives came in as favourite both before and after the vote – gaining votes throughout the debate. The Liberal Democrats came in second, also gaining votes. This leaves the Labour Party in third place, losing votes.





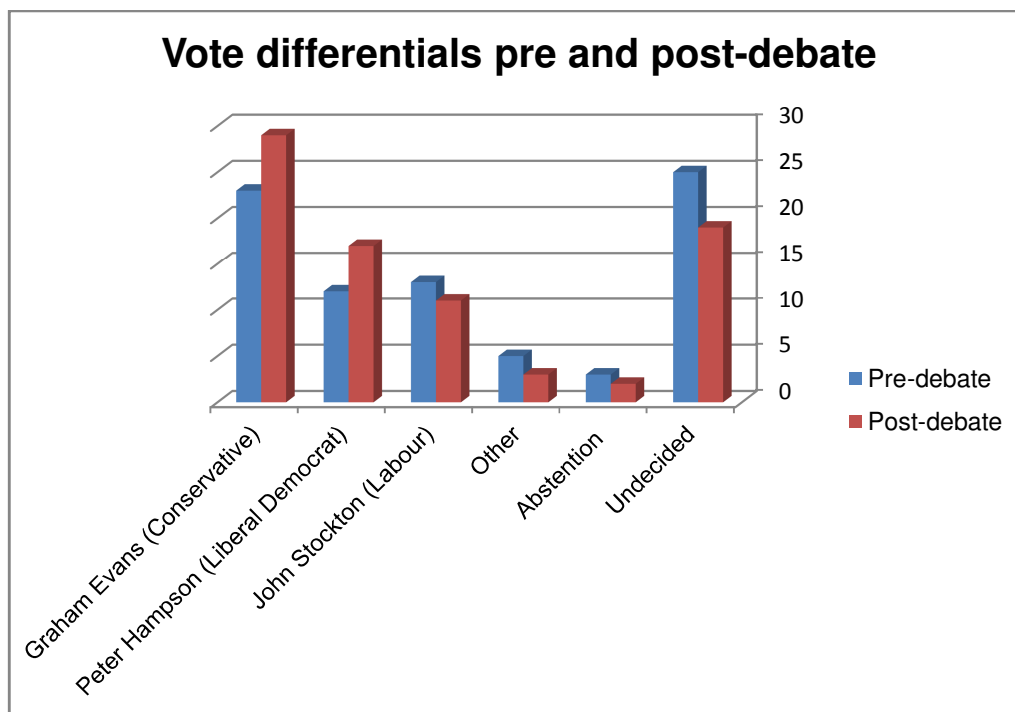
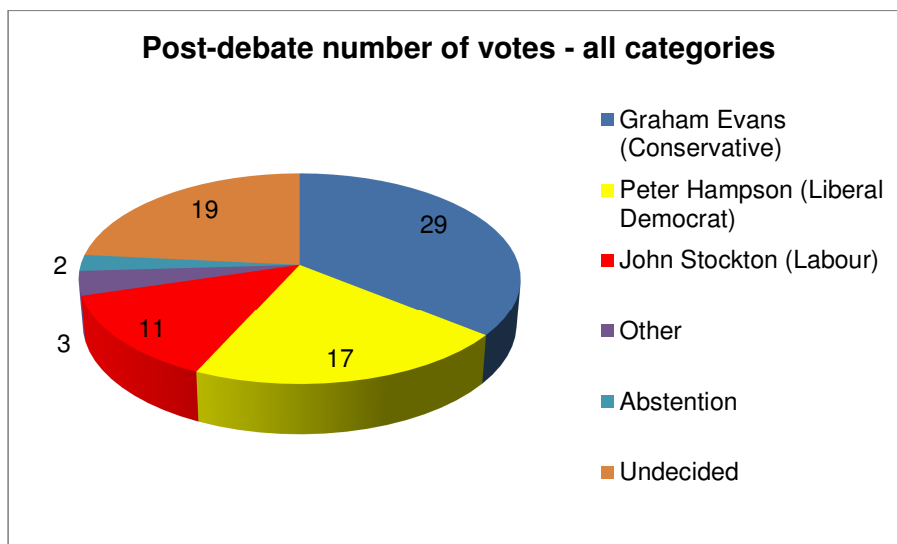
The greatest share of the vote at the beginning goes to the undecided category. This confirms the prediction that this seat will be hard to call after the retirement of the incumbent MP Mike Hall.

	Pre-debate	Post-debate
Graham Evans (Conservative)	23	29
Peter Hampson (Liberal Democrat)	12	17
John Stockton (Labour)	13	11
Other	5	3
Abstention	3	2
Undecided	25	19
Totals	81	81

The figures highlighted in green show the candidate(s) or category that saw an increase in votes after the debate. Those highlighted in red indicate the candidate(s) or categories that showed a decrease in votes.

It is pleasing to note that highlighted in red is the “undecided” category. As well as stimulating real, and live, debate between the candidates, the purpose of such debates is to go some way to helping the undecided voter make their decision with the best information available to them and to reduce political apathy – certainly a worthy cause.

In the post-debate result, there is a swing towards both the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties, with votes being taken from Independent candidates (marked as “*other*” on the ballot paper), the Labour party, and the biggest swing was away from undecided. It is impossible to analyse individual voting changes, it was felt important to maintain anonymity, and therefore encourage more form returns.



St John's Church supports no political parties and the event was organised purely as a community event in the village of Hartford. Whilst this poll does show a clear winner based on this unscientific sample of 81 people, the intention of this poll was not to prove a partisan point; more it was an opportunity to take the political temperature of the electorate in a contestable seat, but also as an experiment in assessing the effectiveness of such a hustings event in influencing those who have yet to make up their minds on where to put their cross next Thursday. It leaves me now to add final thanks to all three candidates for their willingness to participate, also to Mike Smith for organising the event and finally to all those who helped with ensuring the smooth running of the event on the night.

Alex Hunns (member of St John's congregation)