

## Voters chance to quiz candidates in Stoke's Big Debate: Election 2015

Residents in Stoke-on-Trent are being invited to hear from the candidates looking to battle it out for their votes in the forthcoming General Election.

Stoke's Big Debate: Election 2015 is being held at Staffordshire University's Science Centre on Friday March 27 and will be attended by Stoke Central MP Tristram Hunt and political opponents from the Conservatives, Green Party, Liberal Democrats and UKIP.

The main party Prospective Parliamentary Candidates will make up the panel in the Question Time style debate to be chaired by Mick Temple, Professor of Journalism and Politics at Staffordshire University.

Professor Temple said: "This is squaring up to be an interesting General Election which is too close to call.

"The Stoke Central seat has been a safe Labour stronghold for as long as we can remember – and Tristram Hunt has certainly made his mark on national politics since he was first elected in 2010. But add in a decreasing majority, the potential for students to vote in their University constituency and the emergence of UKIP nationally, and it becomes very difficult to predict the outcome."

"This is why we have made the decision to engage our students and the wider community in Stoke's Big Debate and give people an opportunity to hear what the main party candidates have to say on the issues that matter to them."

Mel Ramsay, President of Staffordshire University Students Union, said: "We welcome this event on campus. We recently polled Staffordshire University students and found that there is interest out there. They are keen to be involved. More than 70% said they intend to vote and yet only 39% know which political Party they plan to vote for.

"The NUS has stated that students could swing almost 200 seats in May. A huge achievement for our Students' Union was securing a Polling Booth on campus for the sole use of our Stoke students. We just need to make sure they use it."

Panel members for Stoke's Big Debate are Liam Ascough (Conservative); Jan Zablocki (Green Party); Tristram Hunt MP (Labour) Dr Zulfiqar Ali (Liberal Democrats) and Mick Harold (UKIP).

Notes to editors:

1. To arrange interviews with Professor Mick Temple on Stoke's Big Debate, telephone Staffordshire University Press Office on 01782 294375.
2. You are invited to send a reporter to cover Stoke's Big Debate on Friday March 27. To make arrangements, call the Press Office on 01782 294375.
3. Stoke's Big Debate is taking place the same week as the National Youth Debate which is an event aimed at 16 – 24 year olds taking place on the evening of Thursday 26 March at Jubilee Hall in Stoke. For more details <http://www.uprising.org.uk/highlight/announcing-our-national-youth-debate-event-26-march-2015>

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