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Ben Habib

Benyamin Naeem Habib (born 7 June 1965) is a British-Pakistani politician and businessman who serves as the leader of Advance UK. He is also the chief executive officer of First Property Group, a commercial property investment and fund-management company.^[1]

Previously, Habib served as a co-deputy leader of Reform UK from October 2023 to July 2024, alongside David Bull.^[2] Habib and Bull were removed from their positions and replaced by Richard Tice following the 2024 general election.^[3] Habib was a member of the European Parliament (MEP) for London from July 2019 until the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union (EU) in January 2020. Prior to his involvement with Reform UK, Habib was a donor to the Conservative Party.^{[4][5]}

Early life and education

Benyamin Naeem Habib was born on 7 June 1965 in Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.^[6] His father is a Pakistani Punjabi from a Muslim family and his mother is English and was born in Isleworth.^{[7][8]} He moved to Britain with his parents in 1979 and attended Rugby School, a private school in Warwickshire.^{[4][9]} Habib is a former president of its alumni association, the Rugbeian Society.^{[10][11]} He then attended Robinson College, Cambridge, in 1984, where he studied natural sciences.^[12]

Early career

After graduating, Habib became an analyst in the corporate finance department at the now-defunct financial services firm Lehman Brothers in 1987.^{[13][14]} In 1989, he was appointed the finance director at the insurance broker PWS Holdings.^{[15][14]}

Ben Habib



Official portrait, 2019

Leader of Advance UK

Incumbent

Assumed office

30 June 2025

Preceded by *Office established*

Co-Deputy Leader of Reform UK

In office

7 October 2023 – 11 July 2024

Serving with David Bull

Leader Richard Tice

Nigel Farage

Preceded by David Bull

Succeeded by Richard Tice

Member of the European Parliament for London

In office

2 July 2019 – 31 January 2020

Preceded by Gerard Batten

Succeeded by *Constituency abolished*

Personal details

In 1994 Habib entered the properties business as the managing director of the private property development company JKL Property, before starting his own property fund company, First Property Group plc, six years later.^[15] The company, for which he is the chief executive operates in Britain, Poland, and Romania.^{[16][17]}

Born	7 June 1965 Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan
Political party	Advance UK (Since April 2025)
Other political affiliations	Conservative (until 2019) Reform UK (2019–2024) Independent (2024–2025)
Education	Rugby School
Alma mater	Robinson College, Cambridge
Profession	Politician · businessman

Political career

Habib was a Conservative Party voter and donor.^{[4][5]}

He supported Brexit in the 2016 membership referendum and argued the UK's trade opportunities would be better outside the European Union (EU), that being part of the EU meant that the UK had ceded sovereignty, and that there needed to be greater control of immigration.^{[13][18]} He had also discussed in interviews how uncertainty around Brexit could be an opportunity for profit for his business.^{[19][20]}

In the 2019 European parliamentary election, Habib stood as a candidate for the Brexit Party in the London constituency. He was first on his party's list, and was elected as one of its two MEPs in the constituency.^{[21][22]} He was a member of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, and part of the delegation for relations with the countries of South Asia.^[6] According to Transparency International, Habib was the wealthiest MEP elected in the Ninth European Parliament based on annual earnings from his second job. He declared €960,000 annual earnings from his company, First Property Group.^[23]

In January 2020 Habib voted in favour of the Brexit withdrawal agreement, which included the Northern Ireland Protocol, being ratified by the EU Parliament.^[24]

In February 2020 Habib published multiple articles where he described the Protocol as being a unique advantage to Northern Ireland business that would help the province grow into a tiger economy. He also recommended Unionists should not resist its implementation and instead "make it work for its own great benefit and that of the United Kingdom".^{[25][26]}

In March 2023 he was made a co-deputy leader of Reform UK (previously the Brexit Party) party with David Bull, who had been deputy since 2021.^{[27][28]} At the same time he became the party's Brexit and the Union spokesman. He was the party's candidate for the Wellingborough by-election in February 2024. Habib finished third of eleven candidates, with 13% of the vote, the party's best result at a by-election.^{[29][30]} He was again candidate for Reform in the new Wellingborough and Rushden constituency at the 2024 general election where he came third with 21.5% of the vote.^[31]

In April 2024, during an interview with Julia Hartley-Brewer, Habib suggested that some migrants travelling to the UK by boat should be left to drown.^[32] Habib later said that his comments came in the context of an interview in which he was asked what should happen if migrants repeatedly slashed their boats, causing them to sink. Habib stated: "If people are going to repeatedly throw themselves in the channel and refuse the help of our specialised force in order to get back in the boats and go on to France – of course their lives are going to be in danger."^[33]

In July 2024 Habib and Bull were removed as the deputy leaders of Reform UK and replaced by Richard Tice.

Criticism of Reform UK

Habib quit Reform UK on 28 November 2024, citing concerns over the party's structure as well as "fundamental differences" with the party's leader, Nigel Farage, over Brexit, and disagreements over immigration, with Habib in favour of "mass deportations".^[34]

In March 2025, Habib called Reform MP Rupert Lowe's suspension "an injustice". Habib accused Farage and Reform UK chairman Zia Yusuf of "trumping up complaints against" Lowe to oust him after Elon Musk suggested Lowe should become Leader of Reform UK instead of Farage. Habib called for both men's resignations.^{[35][36]}

Advance UK

In April 2025, Ben Habib announced he would be taking over the Integrity Party, which had been created by Christian Russell and Richard J. Shaw in 2024.^[37] Habib stated that he intended to make sure the party was properly set up and organised before applying to the Electoral Commission for registration.^[38]

On 30 June 2025, Habib announced that he had launched a political party, Advance UK. He aims to reach 30,000 members.^[39] The party has the same legal identity as the Integrity Party, with the limited company previously named as the Integrity Party having been renamed as the Advance UK Party Limited.^[40]

Legal challenge against the Northern Ireland Protocol

Previously Habib as an MEP, voted for the Withdrawal Agreement ^[41] and also wrote various articles supporting it^{[42][43]}

In February 2021, Habib, together with Jim Allister, leader of the Traditional Unionist Voice, and Baroness Hoey, applied for a judicial review of the Northern Ireland Protocol, which is part of the Brexit withdrawal agreement. They were later joined in their litigation by Arlene Foster, First Minister of Northern Ireland, David Trimble, the inaugural First Minister of Northern Ireland; and Steve Aiken, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party.^[44] The main cause of the legal action was to examine the lawfulness and constitutionality of the Northern Ireland Protocol, with regard to their claim that the Protocol and related regulations were incompatible with the Acts of Union 1800.^[45]

In June 2021, the High Court of Northern Ireland (HCNI) in Belfast dismissed the legal challenge on several grounds, including that it is in conflict with the Acts of Union 1800 and thus unconstitutional.^{[45][46]} The HCNI ruled that although the Protocol conflicted with the Acts of Union the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 also has constitutional effect and had implicitly repealed aspects of the Acts.^[47] The court also rejected arguments based on the Northern

Ireland Act, the European Convention on Human Rights and European Union law. Likewise, the court rejected a challenge to the Regulations, which provided that the consent mechanism in the Protocol was not to be subject to the cross-community voting rules in the Assembly.^[48] On 14 March 2022, that decision was affirmed by the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal, with the judgment making reference to the "obvious inconsistency" of Habib first voting in favour of the Withdrawal Agreement and Northern Ireland Protocol, as stated in paragraph 11 of his sworn affidavit, but then subsequently calling for a repudiation.^{[49][50]}

On 30 November 2022, they appealed to the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom.^[51] On 8 February 2023, the Supreme Court agreed with the previous courts and dismissed the challenge.^{[52][53][54]} On 21 March 2023, it was confirmed by Northern Ireland Office minister Lord Caine (in a written reply to a question submitted by Kate Hoey) that the UK Government had spent a total of £196,567 on legal fees associated with defending the court challenges against the Northern Ireland Protocol.^{[55][56]}

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