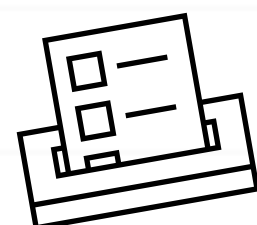


## **ELECTION SPECIAL**

**Welcome to Weber Shandwick's weekly election newsletter. Every Friday in the election run-up, our Public Affairs specialists across the UK will be taking a close look into the hottest political trends and upcoming announcements, shedding light on the latest gossip and demystifying policy jargon to help you understand what matters - and how to respond.**

This week saw sandcastles going up and inflation going down, another D-Day blunder (not from Sunak this time...) and more business and celebrity endorsements for Labour. Plus Stephen Noon, SNP Strategist-turned-Weber senior adviser, gives his perspective on what the General Election means for the future of Scottish politics.



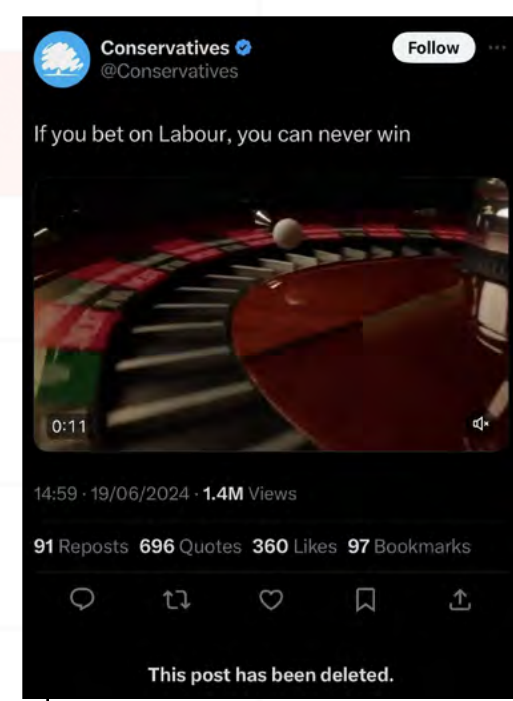
# THE POLITICAL FORECAST

## CUTTING THROUGH

### A DICEY SITUATION FOR SUNAK

Last week, it emerged that the PM's parliamentary aide, Craig Williams, was being investigated by the Gambling Commission for placing a £100 bet on a July election just days before it was called. Now, a Tory PPC for Bristol North West, Laura Saunders, is being investigated for similar reasons. The plot thickened further when it was revealed that Laura is married to Tory Campaign Chief, Tony Lee. And on Thursday, news broke that Lee had taken a "leave of absence", with the Gambling

Commission also placing him under investigation. All of this is not being helped by an interestingly timed official Tweet on the Conservatives' X page (since deleted)...



### CONTRACT WITH THE PEOPLE (T&CS APPLY)

Nigel Farage launched Reform's "contract with the people", with ambitious pledges that raised eyebrows among number-crunching experts. Aside from a commitment to slash corporation tax to 15% and raise the income tax entry threshold to £20,000, the party promised to increase public spending by £50 billion yearly. The IFS wasted no time in criticising the plans, stating Reform's numbers simply "do not add up". The extent of Farage's tax cuts may even make Liz Truss a tad uneasy...

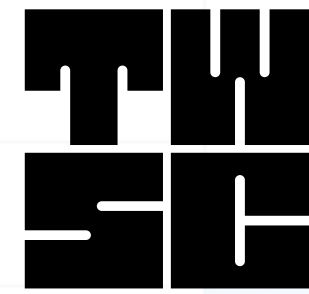


### SNP MANIFESTO: LEFT-OF-CENTRE OR LEFT-FIELD?

The First Minister John Swinney launched the SNP manifesto this week. Bucking the trend with previous manifestos, there was a huge focus on reserved matters and little build-up to the 2026 Holyrood election. Nothing on skills, nothing on apprenticeships and nothing on business rates, but the SNP has committed its windfall tax support to writing, as long as the power is devolved to Scotland. And on Independence, a majority of seats would trigger independence talks with the UK Government, but it's touch and go whether the SNP will hit that majority!







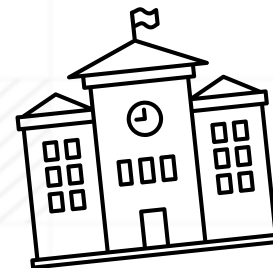
# COOLING DOWN

## FARAGE’S (NOT SUNAK’S) D-DAY BLUNDER

Farage found himself in hot water after claiming that Rishi Sunak does not understand “our culture” when commenting on the PM’s controversial early D-Day exit. Asked if he was referencing Sunak’s British-Asian background, Farage denied that he was referring to the PM’s ethnicity but claimed “40% of our contribution in World War One and World War Two came from the Commonwealth”. Conservative Mel Stride said the comments made him uncomfortable, while Shadow Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood slammed them as “dog whistle”.

## A THORN IN STARMER’S SIDE

Labour Shadow Attorney General, Emily Thornberry, found herself at odds with her frontbench colleagues when she claimed the party’s plan to charge VAT on private school fees would increase class sizes in public schools. Sir Keir Starmer called Thornberry’s comments “wrong”, while Shadow Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson publicly rebuked her colleague on Sky News, firmly stating “this is not our position”. The exchange gained little media traction, but shows how infighting is not an occurrence limited to one side of the political aisle...



## INFLATION CELEBRATION: BOE HITS TARGET

After a three-year struggle, inflation has finally hit the Bank of England’s 2% target. Is the return to target an arguably rare piece of good news for Rishi Sunak? Many Tories will view this as an unquestionable victory. However, the success also serves as a stark reminder of the issues that led to the early election in the first place...

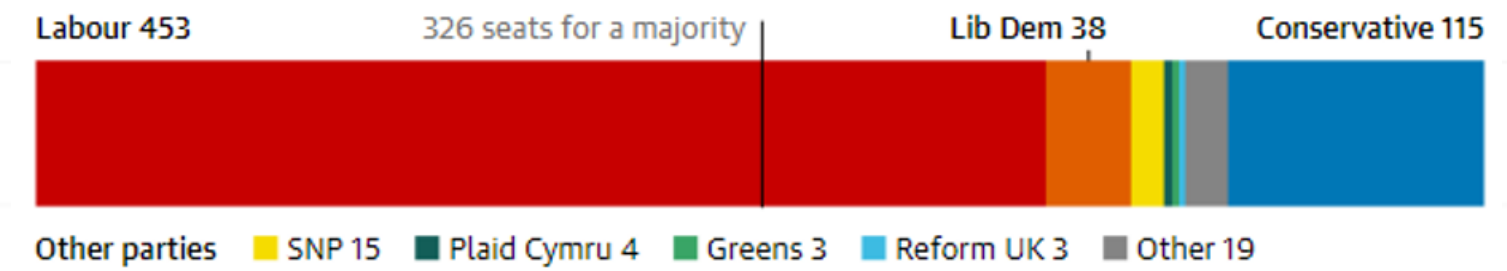


# POLL POSITIONS

In the first Ipsos MRP model of the 2024 election, the poll suggests a historic defeat for the Tories, plus over 100 seats still on a knife-edge with many voters undecided. Labour’s implied vote share is 43%, while the Tories lag at 25%. As polling day approaches, fears of a Conservative “extinction-level event” grow, though the Tories hope warnings of a Labour “supermajority” might jolt voters back towards the right.

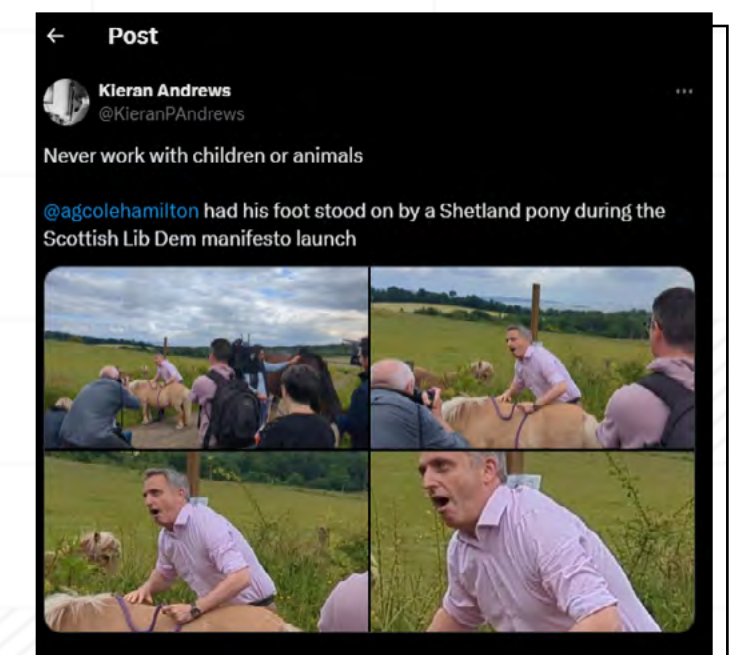
## Ipsos projection predicts huge majority for Labour

Estimated seat share of political parties in 4 July election

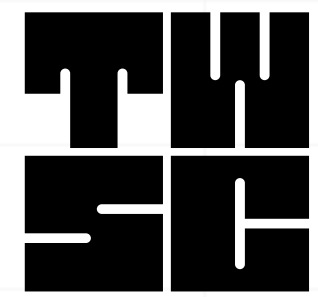


# CAMPAIGN MOMENT: HOLY SHET-LAND

Attempting to “foal”-low in the footsteps of UK Leader Ed Davey’s “horsing” around campaign antics, Scottish Liberal Democrat Leader, Alex Cole Hamilton, ended up having a “mare”, when the Shetland Pony he was posing with at his manifesto launch could take “neigh” more photos and instead, crushed his foot. In the words of Scottish Political Editor of The Times, Kieran Andrews “never work with children or animals.”

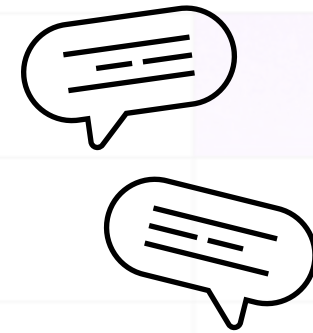






## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

**“I would say those turrets aren’t that pronounced.”**



BBC News coverage of Ed Davey building a sandcastle

## BUSINESS BULLETIN

Labour’s love affair with business continues, with the party having raised £1 million in the first week of the election campaign, outpacing the Conservatives’ £597,000. The party received a notable boost from the producer of ‘Love Actually’, Duncan Kenworthy, helping them double down on their campaign budget. In total, all UK political parties have raised about £2.4mn in the period.

Starmer’s also getting some good reception (...) from Phones 4U founder John Caudwell, who donated £500,000 to the Conservatives in 2019 but announced he will vote Labour for the first time. Caudwell called Rishi Sunak an “absolute dud” whilst admitting Starmer “just really hits the spot”.



## PPC PATTER\*

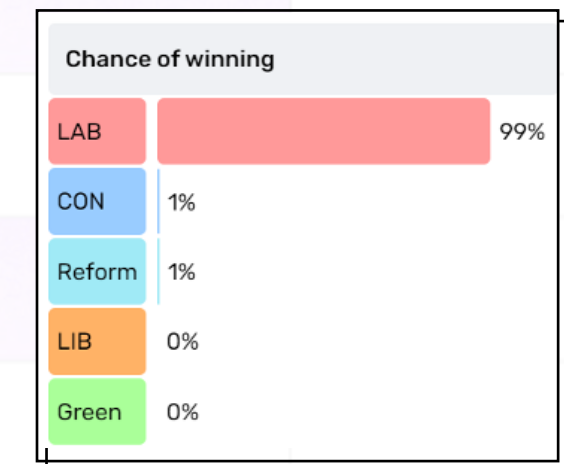
**\*A title from our Scottish Public Affairs colleagues.  
Patter = a word used to describe someone’s general conversation, wit, and mannerisms.**

This week’s star of the show is Kate Dearden, the Labour candidate for Halifax. Kate was selected for her seat just 3 weeks ago, following the (surprise) late retirement of Holly Lynch, former Deputy Chief Whip.

Kate knows everyone – and we mean everyone. She’s been in the business of politics all her life: from National Chair of the Labour Students network, to positions in Better Together, Labour HQ, Scottish Parliament and most recently as Head of Research, Policy & External Comms for Community Trade Union.

Her hundreds of allies were praying that this local(ish) lass would find a neighbouring seat as part of the wave to turn Yorkshire red (following success in the mayoral elections, with Brabin and Burnham emphatically re-elected, and David Skaith becoming the first elected Yorkshire mayor).

Is Kate a future PM, Home Sec or similar? We certainly wouldn’t bet against her.

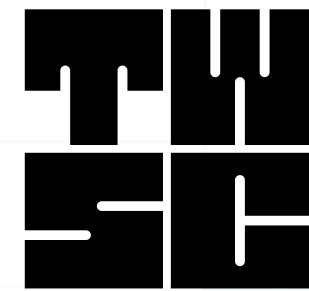


## TIKTOK TIME

Suella Braverman’s latest **TikTok video** has left viewers questioning whether it’s meant to be a parody – a nightmare for any politician aiming to swing voters in 2024. In her video, the former Home Secretary performs a dance/swaggers around to Fedde Le Grand and Ida Corr’s 2006 hit ‘Let Me Think About It’. She launched her new TikTok account last week as part of her general election campaign, and it has already garnered tens of thousands of views with just a handful of videos. We’ll let you think about whether they’re the type of views and comments Suella was after...







## SPOTLIGHT ON: SCOTLAND

*We hear from our Senior Public Affairs Counsel, and former SNP Strategist, Stephen Noon, on what the election means for Scotland.*

This Westminster election in Scotland is certainly important for both Labour and the SNP, but it is also, in many respects, just a warm-up for the main event – the Holyrood election in May 2026.

While this result will tell us something about that vote, there is no direct read over between the two. It is very possible for Labour to win by a landslide in Scotland on July 4th but for the SNP to come out on top again in 2026. Westminster elections are an ‘away game’ for the SNP, and in the years before the 2014 referendum shook things up, it was the norm for the party to secure significantly lower support in a Westminster context.

The SNP faces a difficult night, with some polls suggesting the loss of upwards of 30 seats. However, an early election has given John Swinney a political get out of jail free card – there will be no threat to his leadership on the basis that he has had so little time to turn things round. Getting the UK election out of the way early means also that the SNP Scottish Government will have closer to 2 years to sharpen up for the ‘home game’ that is the 2026 election. That means a laser-focus on sorting out problems in the public services. Money is central to this, thus the SNP’s relentless campaign pressure on Labour over future public spending.

This election may see the political ground shifting for Scotland at Westminster, but it is important to remember that the world has already changed at Holyrood. Minority government means devolved policies announced in Labour’s Scottish manifesto this week can potentially be delivered, in part, between now and 2026. Will Labour be willing to make those deals? Watch this space.



## GET IN TOUCH

We have two brilliant guests on this week’s Political Forecast Podcast. The first is **Caroline Wheeler, Political Editor of the Sunday Times**. Caroline formerly served as political editor with the Sunday Express before making her way over to the Times, firstly as deputy political editor and now in her current role. Many of you know will know Caroline from her history of campaigning for victims of the infected blood scandal and the crucial role she played in securing the public

enquiry. We also welcome **Scarlett Maguire, renowned political pollster and director at J.L Partners**. Now frequently appearing on BBC, ITV and Channel 4 among others, Scarlett is a former producer for both BBC Newsnight and Times Radio, as well as a reporter for Channel 4 news.

*Weber Shandwick’s UK-wide public affairs team are experts in the political process. For more information about our election events, podcasts and services, [click here](#).*