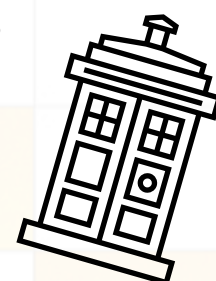


ELECTION SPECIAL

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 we discuss Keir at the Eras, more gambling gaffes, and a new MRP poll suggesting the Liberal Democrats are the official opposition.

We also hear from Weber's Analytics team on how voters are feeling about the campaign. It seems the Conservatives might not be the only ones wishing for a shot in the TARDIS...



THE POLITICAL FORECAST

CUTTING THROUGH

WELCOME TO THE BYE-ELECTION

Within the last week, a raft of candidates have had party support withdrawn or called into question. We've had Labour's Kevin Craig and the Conservatives' Philip Davies betting on their own defeat (the latter putting down £8k!), Russell George, Craig Williams and Laura Saunders facing betting probes, Scottish Secretary Alister Jack placing bets on election dates (but confident he didn't break any rules), and even Sunak's bodyguards getting caught in the scandal. As if that wasn't enough, Labour has also suspended a party member following an arrest in North London related to the Westminster honeytrap scandal... at this rate, will there be anyone left to form a new government?

TURMOIL IN THE TARDIS

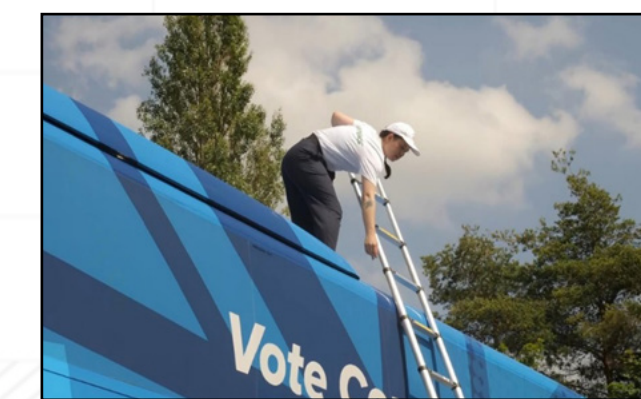
In the latest (and entirely unexpected) plot twist of the campaign, Rishi Sunak has stepped into a fiery feud between Kemi Badenoch and none other than former Doctor Who, David Tennant. The actor, known best for his time-travelling adventures, called for the equalities minister to "shut up" and expressed a wish for a world where she "doesn't exist anymore." Badenoch fired back, branding Tennant a "bigot" and a "rich, lefty, white male celebrity." Sunak jumped to her defence, saying "freedom of speech is the most powerful feature of our democracy. If you're calling for women to shut up and wishing they didn't exist, you are the problem."

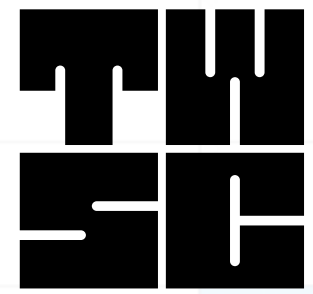
PLAYING IT SAFE

Sunak's last week of the campaign trail is focused on the remaining Conservative strongholds in the UK (a rather short list...). He's focusing on areas where the Conservatives have historically enjoyed comfortable victories, including Grantham and Bourne (with a whopping 22,393 majority) and Torrington and Tavistock (a 22,899 majority). This strategic shuffle suggests the Conservatives are shoring up what they have, rather than pushing into new territories at this late stage - a move we're seeing mirrored by Labour and the Liberal Democrats.

RISHI DOWN IN THE DUMPS

Four men were arrested at Rishi Sunak's constituency home in North Yorkshire after a protestor left a rather unsavoury "parting gift" in his lake. Arrested individuals hailed from the group Youth Demand, which released a video showing a young man defecating in Sunak's private lake to protest issues from school provisions to a struggling NHS. This isn't Sunak's first protest encounter; his homes have previously been targeted by Greenpeace and Just Stop Oil activists. Adding to the chaos, a climate protester recently climbed on top of the Tory battle bus in Nottinghamshire, proving that political unrest is scaling new heights this election season.



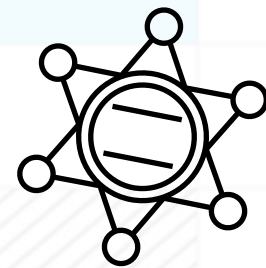


COOLING DOWN

A NEW SHERIFF IN TOWN

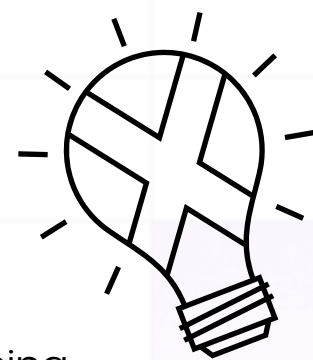
Over at Labour HQ, the anticipation is palpable as the team shifts focus to life after polling day. The buzz is growing about Sue Gray's upcoming big reveal on the new government structure and the key players who will staff it. Expect some major departmental shake-ups and a central 'accountability structure' to ensure Labour's five missions are achieved through seamless cross-departmental collaboration.

But right now, the campaign is doubling down on Labour's core message of change and the urgent need to get out and vote. With a Labour government looking almost certain a week from now, the conservatives and other parties are ramping up their 'don't give Labour a landslide' and 'cost of Labour' messages, aiming to lower turnout and sway marginal seats.



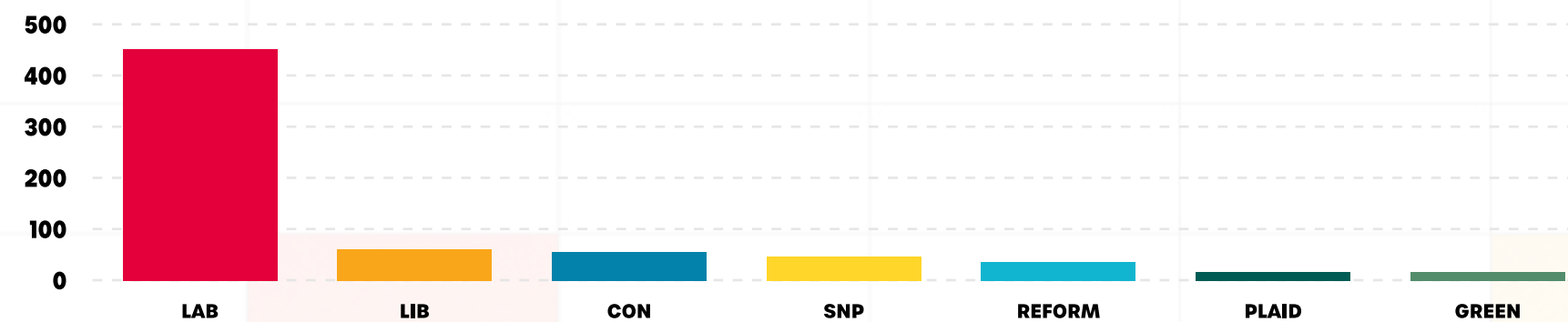
INDEPENDENT THINKING

Alba leader Alex Salmond announced that "real action on independence" is his top priority for the upcoming election, as outlined in the party's newly launched manifesto. The party is fielding candidates in 19 of Scotland's 57 seats and supports Angus MacNeil, formerly of the SNP, in Na h-Eileanan an Iar. Despite not winning any seats since its establishment in 2021, Alba has been represented by 3 defectors from the SNP. Salmond emphasised the importance of using every national election to seek a mandate for independence, with the 2026 Scottish Parliament election his longer-term strategic focus.



POLL POSITIONS

An MRP **poll** released by Electoral Calculus and Find Out Now on Wednesday showed that Labour's predicted majority stands at 250 seats. Notably, the Lib Dems have leapfrogged the Conservatives to become the official opposition at 71 and 60 seats respectively. Meanwhile, Reform stood to secure 18 seats, with the Greens on 4. The last week of the campaign looks like yet another difficult one for Sunak; the Conservatives are reportedly encouraging candidates with majorities of less than 4,000 to pool their resources into constituencies where majorities of 20,000 are under threat, a logical move based on these poll findings...

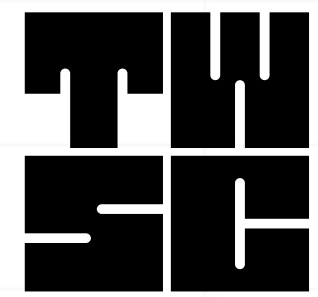


CAMPAIGN MOMENT

POLITICAL SPICE

Music has gripped the nation, with Taylor Swift taking over the UK for her Eras Tour, and Glastonbury kicking off this weekend. Reform UK PPC Paul Thomas tapped into the zeitgeist to *spice up* his campaign with a unique rendition of the Spice Girls' on a campaign stop earlier this week. Thomas introduced *WannaBe* PM Nigel Farage on top of the campaign bus by singing "I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want, I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want... I want a Reform win". Voters will be hoping that whoever becomes the MP for the constituency won't be wasting their precious time, and if they get their act together, they will be just fine.

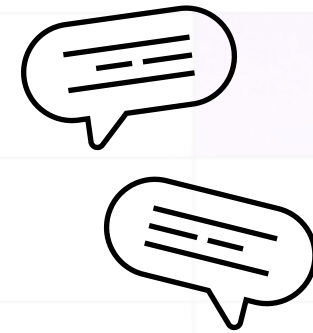




QUOTE OF THE WEEK

'We're taxing non-doms, not condoms!'

- The Labour Party



BUSINESS BULLETIN

Analysis of the party manifestos shows that "Buy British" has been a cross-party focus. Labour has pledged to reward clean energy developers with a British Jobs Bonus, to incentivise firms who offer jobs and build supply chains in UK industrial heartlands. The Conservatives did similar but with a focus on the UK car industry, pledging extra support "if there is evidence other countries are breaking global trade rules."

However, the sector-specific approach has been welcomed cautiously, with concerns raised that it isn't going far enough to protect every industry. The steel industry in particular has been vocal on the need for dedicated support, estimating that around 40% of UK steel demand is being fulfilled by overseas suppliers.



PPC PATTERN*

**A title from our Scottish Public Affairs colleagues.*

Patter = a word used to describe someone's general conversation, wit, and mannerisms.

This week's spotlight is on Douglas Alexander. The Labour PPC in East Lothian is the former international development secretary and is tipped for a possible return to the frontbench in government. Before becoming a Cabinet Minister, Alexander was an aide to Gordon Brown in the Tony Blair-led Labour government and was once a heavy hitter in Scottish politics. Focusing on the international stage, the economy and Brexit as part of his campaign, Alexander has said a Labour Government would "have a responsibility...to rebuild trust and... rebuild our reputation with many of our closest friends and neighbours". Given Sir Keir's commentary on the importance of Scotland in this campaign and Alexander's experience in government, he is definitely one to watch.



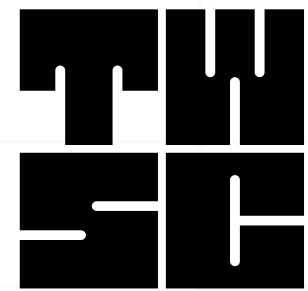
TIKTOK TIME

I KNEW KEIR WAS TROUBLE WHEN HE WALKED IN...

In a departure from usual TikTok programming, we delve into the political showing at Taylor Swift's Eras tour. Starmer for one was spotted at Wembley, describing the visit as a "Swift campaign stop." *Editor's note: It's got us thinking, the Labour manifesto, titled Change, shares its name with a song from Swift's 2008 album Fearless. Coincidence? We think not.*

Former Prime Minister David Cameron was also spotted enjoying the show. A concert-goer posted a TikTok revealing his favourite song was Love Story, which has left many wondering if Cameron is still dreaming of his happy-ever-after at Number 10...

Rishi Sunak wasn't spotted at Wembley, but he has Swiftie form too, having attended her US tour in LA last year. However, Sunak admitted he does not meet the threshold to be considered a Swiftie in the eyes of his two daughters. Can he Shake it Off and salvage his Reputation?



SPOTLIGHT ON:

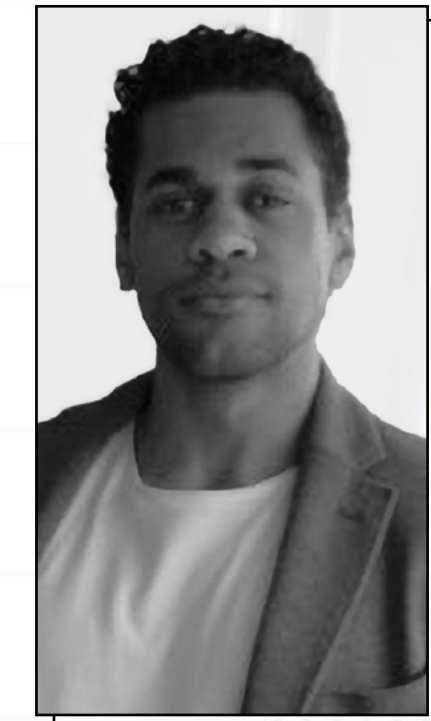
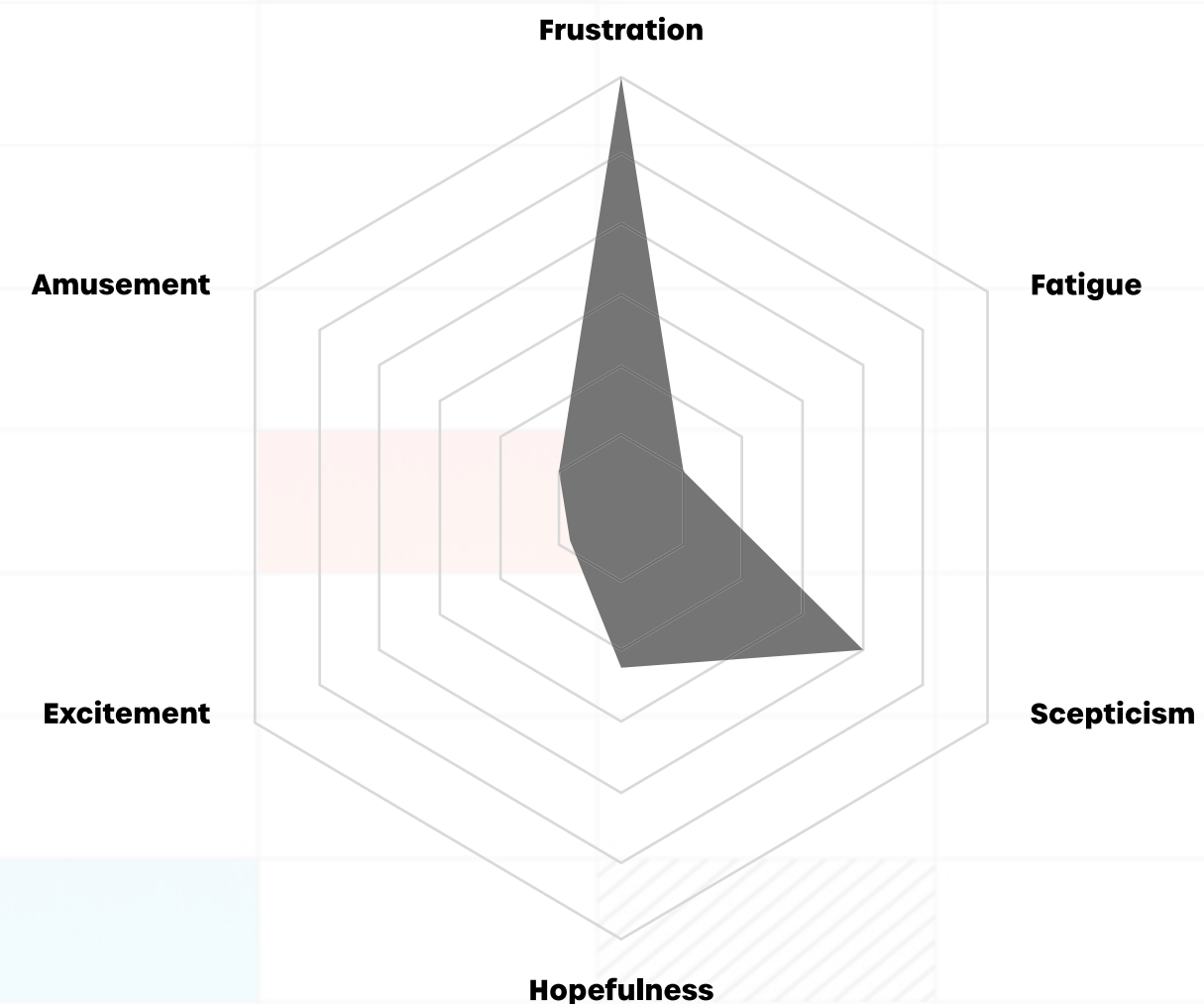
This week we hear from our Analytics Manager, Yves Vanenburg, on how generative AI is helping us gain a deeper understanding of the political landscape and voter sentiment. Our Public Affairs team works closely with our in-house Analytics & Insights Team to better understand our audiences and predict upcoming political trends.

The vast amounts of data generated during an election cycle, coupled with the ever-increasing influence of social media platforms on voters and media, have transformed the way we understand political sentiment. These platforms represent vital battlegrounds and hold the potential to unlock a unique perspective on the current state of affairs – for both policymakers and businesses keen to build their reputation.

One of Weber’s proprietary AI-driven approaches focuses on emotion detection, a powerful application of Generative AI to gauge public sentiment beyond the classic metrics. A recent topline social media analysis we conducted reveals that approximately **60% of conversations among the public about the general election express frustration**, while **scepticism features in 40%**.

The decline of public services seems to be at the root of a lot of this frustration. It’s also exacerbated by mistrust and a belief amongst those on social media that neither the Conservative or the Labour Party have the ambition or long-term vision to solve the big problems facing today’s society. This lack of clarity, coupled with the long-term economic instability the country has faced, means people are increasingly seeking positive stories, comfort and reassurance.

Positive emotions like **hope and excitement are significantly rarer in conversations about the election, being featured only in 22% and 9% of posts respectively** While this hope is mostly confined to party supporters, rather than reflecting public mood, it seems it is at least being felt across the political spectrum. Labour members look forward to a sweeping victory and substantial change, while Reform are also celebrating their growing momentum, confident in their potential to break conventional political cycles.



GET IN TOUCH

This week’s Political Forecast Podcast, we sit down with the world-renowned polling expert Prof Sir John Curtis. Currently Professor of Politics at the University of Strathclyde, his analysis of electoral public opinion and polling data is hugely respected across the UK.

We’re also delighted to announce that we’re hosting an **Election Night Watch Party at our offices in Liverpool Street, running from 8pm - 2am** with food, drinks and big screens! Please respond to this email for more details.

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](#).