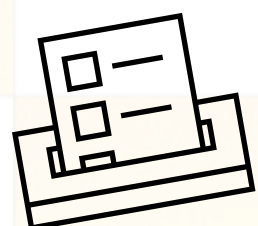


ELECTION SPECIAL

Welcome to Weber Shandwick's first political newsletter. Throughout the general election campaign, 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 Davey's dive into Windermere, Rayner's reprieve, and the Prime Minister's glimmer of hope with a new poll showing the Conservatives are just twelve points (!) behind Labour. We also have some thoughts from James Clothier, our Head of UK Media, on how businesses can navigate the intersection of politics and media following our client Webinar this week.



THE POLITICAL FORECAST

CUTTING THROUGH

ABBOTT'S STAND-OFF

The ongoing row persists over Diane Abbott's claim she was banned by the Labour Party from standing in her constituency of Hackney North and Stoke Newington, where she was first elected in 1987. Labour denied the ban, and Abbott will now be permitted to run after all. It seems Sir Keir calculated that it was worth restoring the whip to avoid disunity within the party.



CULTURE WARS: TRANS RIGHTS

Kemi Badenoch announced that, if elected, the Conservatives would legislate to exclude trans people from single-sex spaces by rewriting the Equality Act. "The safety of women and girls is too important to allow the current confusion around definitions," said Sunak. "Changing your clothes does not change who you are", said Badenoch. Labour is refusing to back the pledge, calling it a "distraction" from the election.



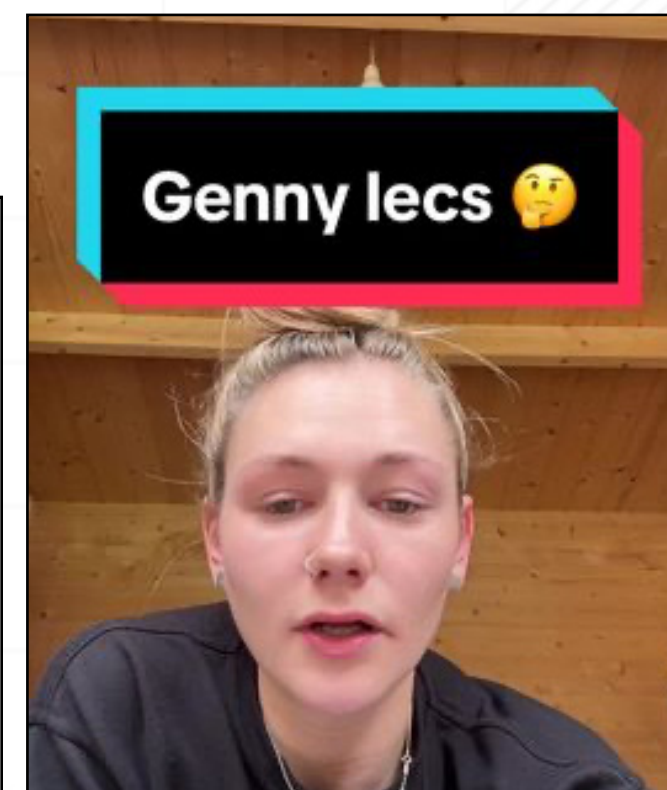
JUNIOR DOCTORS' REVOLT

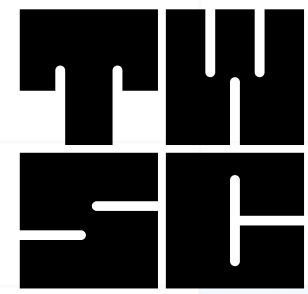
The British Medical Association (BMA) has announced junior doctors in England are to stage a five-day strike in the lead-up to the election in their long-running pay dispute with the Government. Prime Minister Sunak has said the timing of the strike "makes it look incredibly political", while Shadow Health Secretary Wes Streeting said: "The next Labour government will negotiate with junior doctors to bring these strikes to an end."



THE SHORT CAMPAIGN

Politics is far from exempt from the UK public's fixation on abbreviations. From Genny Lex (General Election) to Natty Serves (National Service), Lecky Bs (electric buses) and Cozzie Livs (Cost of Living), Weber Shandwick is starting to consider publishing Webby Shand's dictionary of Poli Ts (political terms) for clients.

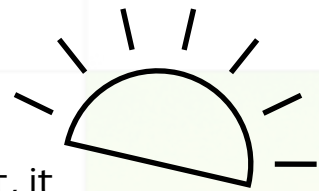




COOLING DOWN

A SUNNIER SPELL FOR SUNAK?

While the PM's campaign undeniably got off to a rocky (and damp) start, it seems things are becoming more slick. And with the first TV debate scheduled for 4th June, Sunak has an opportunity to "out-charisma" Starmer and show that, while he's regarded as a safe pair of hands, he may not make for an inspirational PM...



RAYNER'S TAX TROUBLES

Greater Manchester Police announced Labour Deputy Leader Angela Rayner will face no police action after an investigation into her previous living arrangements. In a statement, Rayner criticised the Conservatives for referring her to the police, calling it a tactic to "distract from their dire record". There are suggestions in political media that the Conservatives owe her an apology (which is not yet forthcoming).

WHY DO YOU HATE YOUNG PEOPLE?

Amidst fallout from Sunak's National Service announcement, the PM was approached by a young voter on the campaign trail who asked him directly why he "hated" young people. The Party's focus is currently on shoring up its core support, which may explain why a recent YouGov poll showed that just 8% of those aged 18 to 24 say they will vote Conservative at the general election, compared to 57% who support Labour.



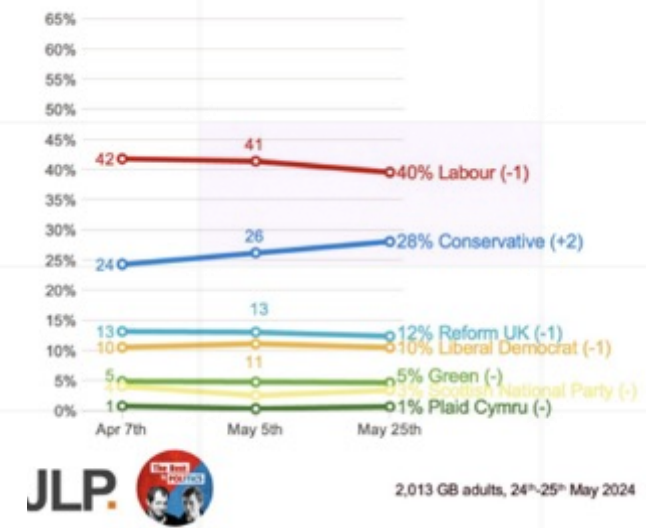
WHY DO YOU LOVE YOUNG PEOPLE?

In direct contrast to the Conservatives' approach, Sir Keir said that 16 and 17 year-olds may be given the right to vote if Labour win the election. Will Sir Keir put this historically controversial pledge into his manifesto?

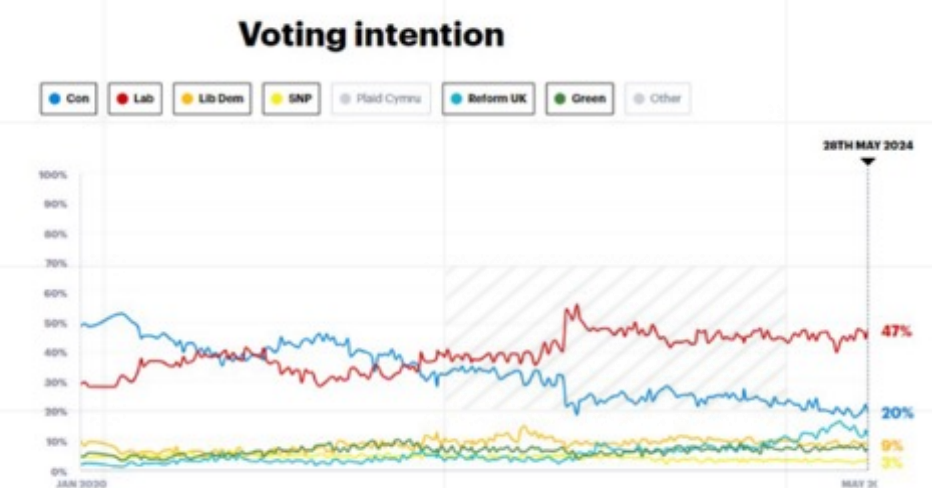


POLL POSITIONS

Labour maintains a solid lead of around 20 points. One outlier poll by JL Partners narrowed that to just 12 points (thanks to over-65s leaning unusually towards Labour).



JLP partners finding Labour lead at 12% point this week.



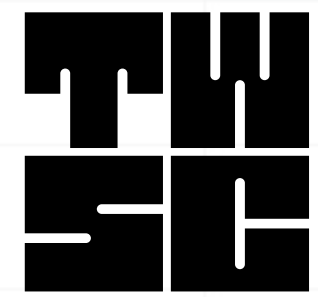
YouGov voting intention tracker shows 27%-point lead for Labour!

The first MRP Election poll has also been released. Traditionally a very accurate type of modelling, it suggests the Conservatives could win just 66 seats, with Labour at 476 and Lib Dems at 59. This would be a bigger landslide for Labour than 1997.

CAMPAIGN MOMENT: DEEP DIVE INTO LAKE WINDERMERE

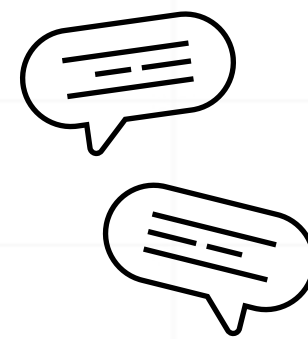
Sir Ed Davey, Liberal Democrat Leader, "intentionally" falls into Lake Windermere to raise awareness of sewage issues... but will it help the Lib Dems' campaign messages sink in with the electorate?





QUOTE OF THE WEEK

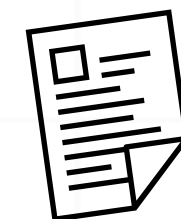
'We force people to do things all the time'



Rt Hon James Cleverly, Home Secretary, defends National Service Plan

BUSINESS BULLETIN

More than 120 business leaders have signed a letter supporting Labour's call for "change".



Although Jeremy Hunt was quick to point out that a relatively small number of Labour signatories came from FTSE 100 companies, the volume of support for Labour caused quite a flap in CCHQ; it's been reported that no effort has been made to organise an equivalent Conservative endorsement letter. Back in 2015, Conservatives *did* receive a letter with 100 business endorsements, which they called "unprecedented". How times change...

PPC PATTER*

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

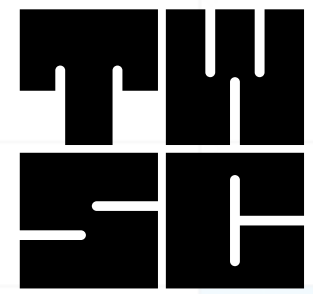
This week the spotlight is on Tom Rutland, Labour PPC for East Worthing and Shoreham, who introduced Sir Keir for his election campaign kick-off speech. Currently at Prospect Union, Tom's CV includes time at the Financial Conduct Authority and Imperial College London. His former political roles include Councillor for the Borough of Lambeth in London, working for Lord Adonis, and being President of the Oxford University Student Union (former presidents include Labour MP John Grogan and Will Straw CBE). Well-connected, tapped up by Sir Keir, clued up on business and workforce issues [*editor's note: also a very nice man!*] – he's certainly one to watch.



TIKTOK TIME

If you cast your mind back to the 2019 Election, you'll remember that TikTok had only operated in the UK for around a year, and was largely the domain of teenage dance routines.

This time round, it's a major political campaigning tool, and has already caused quite the stir. Run by savvy Gen Z and Millennials (who must be cackling into their work phones), UK Labour's official TikTok account has unleashed an abundance of memes and videos mocking the Prime Minister and his Party. So our first TikTok of the week is Labour's video of Cilla Black singing her late 80s track "Surprise Surprise", captioned "POV: Rishi Sunak turning up on your 18th birthday to send you to war". Watch it for yourself **here** (currently on over 4.5 million views).



SPOTLIGHT ON: UK MEDIA

We hear from our Head of UK Media, James Clothier, as he shares advice on navigating the media and politics during the election campaign period.

As we dive into the summer of sport, the “Genny Lex” is shaping up to be more unpredictable than anyone anticipated. Labour’s cautious campaigning approach contrasts sharply with the Conservatives’ frequent gaffes, much to the media’s delight. From rain-soaked announcements to ill-timed visits, the missteps are numerous and create fertile ground for creative PR strategies.

A curious secondary narrative is unfolding as well. Publications like the Daily Mail are already looking past the election, focusing instead on lighter stories that will entertain their audience until voting concludes. Mail Online relegated election coverage below trivial tales, while The Sun and Star have found readers to be more engaged with celebrity gossip than political discourse.

This shift highlights a significant change in media consumption patterns. Political news no longer drives clicks, particularly after Meta’s strategic move to downplay divisive content. This is a prime time for brands to launch positive campaigns that capture public interest.



GET IN TOUCH

Weber Shandwick’s UK-wide public affairs team has deep expertise in the political process. We can help you to understand what matters for your business – and help you respond accordingly. Our political specialists work hand-in-hand with our consumer insight and strategy teams. We blend deep policy expertise with cutting-edge communications capabilities to deliver campaigns that change legislation and society.

For more information about our election events and services, get in touch.

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