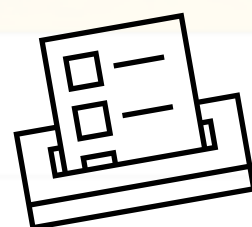


ELECTION SPECIAL

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 grim scenes in Grimsby as Sunak was booed, Ed Davey's storm in a teacup, and the major parties providing just under 400 pages of manifesto for this (caffeine-fuelled) Public Affairs team to analyse. This edition's deep dive comes from our Scotland Director of Strategy, Rachel Hughes, on how the first TikTok election is shaping up.



THE POLITICAL FORECAST

CUTTING THROUGH

MANIFESTO MANIA

Party manifesto launches are in full swing, and their promises are in no short supply! First off the bat was the Lib Dems, with a slew of proposals including a move to 90% renewable energy in the UK by 2030 and an intention to rejoin the EU single market. Meanwhile, the PM (with little opportunity left to alter the course of the campaign for the Conservatives) launched a manifesto focusing on tax cuts and building 1.6 million new homes. Labour launched their manifesto on Thursday focusing on 'wealth creation'. While it has been criticised as being too cautious, why would Starmer take any risks when he's so far ahead in the polls?



HOLDEN PLAYS MUSICAL CHAIRS

Conservative Chairman Richard Holden found himself in the hot seat (or as many would argue, the wrong seat) after he was selected as the candidate for Basildon and Billericay in Essex – 300 miles from his previous seat of North West Durham. During a TV interview, Holden refused to answer questions on his being "parachuted" into a safe seat, which led to an awkward tit-for-tat between Sky's Jon Craig and one of Holden's advisers, who threatened to leave should the grilling continue. Not great optics for Holden, who once proclaimed that he was "bloody loyal to the North East".



BEWARE THE SUPERMAJORITY!

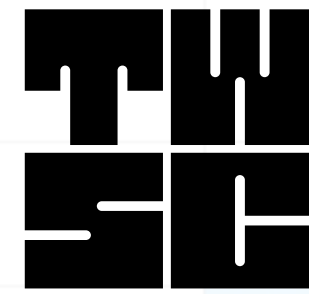
Defence Secretary Grant Shapps warned against giving Keir Starmer a "supermajority", claiming it would give Labour "unchecked power". Have the Conservatives already resigned themselves to losing? Shapps is urging the public to vote Conservative *not* for their shiny manifesto promises, but to ensure Labour will be held accountable from the opposition benches. With three weeks still to go, it's looking like it could be a long campaign slog for many Conservative candidates.



SKY'S THE LIMIT

Gaffe of the week goes to Rishi, who talked about how he "went without" as a child because his parents wouldn't let him have Sky TV. Considering his education at Winchester College (fees currently set parents back a cool £52,000 annually) and the £650-million combined net worth of him and his wife, the PM was immediately accused of being out of touch... and booed as he arrived in Grimsby for a grilling from Sky's (!!!) Beth Rigby.





COOLING DOWN

DOUGLAS ROSS CAUGHT OFFSIDE?

The UK parliamentary watchdog confirmed it is reviewing reports that Scottish Conservative Leader Douglas Ross used Westminster expenses to travel in his role as a football linesman. Ross later announced he would stand down as leader of the Scottish Conservatives after the election, but would only resign as MSP for Highlands and Islands if elected as MP for Aberdeenshire North and Moray East. He then had to spend the week denying giving himself "job insurance" by keeping the door open to Holyrood. Clearly, it's a week Douglas Ross would love to give the red card to.



APRIL PRECIPITATION = ECONOMIC STAGNATION

The UK economy failed to grow in April, apparently largely thanks to weather that seemed determined to keep shoppers at home and construction workers indoors. Despite a sunny start to the year with the fastest growth in two years from January to March, April's performance put a damper on things, quite literally. The Conservatives maintain that the economy has "turned a corner," but with April's flatline, perhaps that corner just turned into a straight - and soggy - road to nowhere.



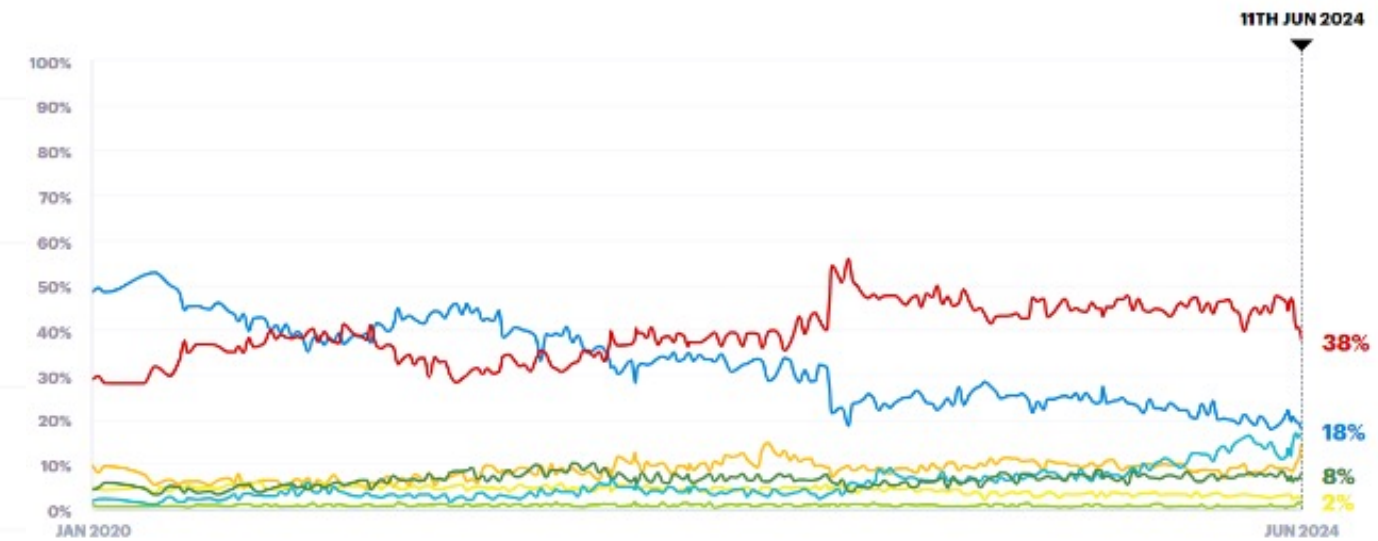
WOULD THEY LIE TO YOU?

Recent polls suggest that both Rishi and Sir Keir face an uphill struggle to win voters' trust. A Sky News survey gives Starmer the edge on matters concerning the economy and healthcare, but there's a glaring lack of confidence in both leaders regarding immigration policies, with nearly half of respondents expressing scepticism. In a week of parties pushing manifesto pledges, it seems what the electorate really want is a person they can rely on.



POLL POSITIONS

This week's **YouGov voting intention poll** placed Nigel Farage's Reform Party just one point behind the Conservatives. Sunak will be fearing a "crossover moment", which would relegate his party to third place. The survey puts Labour on 38 per cent, with the Conservatives on 18, Reform on 17, Lib Dems on 15 and the Greens on 8.



To add insult to injury, a newly released Redfield Wilton **poll** looking at who is best placed to hold a possible future Labour Prime Minister to account showed Nigel Farage a percentage point ahead of the current Prime Minister...

CAMPAIGN MOMENT: POLITICS IS A ROLLERCOASTER

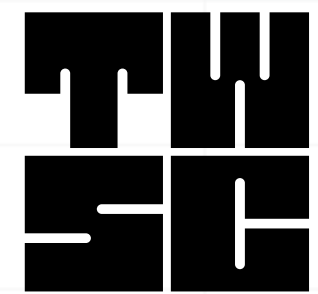
Liberal Democrat Leader Sir Ed Davey launched his Party's *For A Fair Deal* manifesto in the unconventional location of Thorpe Park.

The aim: to show the Liberal Democrats are on a rollercoaster ride and gaining seats, with a big swing to the party from the Conservatives.

The result: Looking rather frightened.

There are still 20 days left for more stunts and photo-ops before polling day Ed...

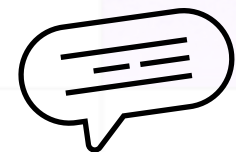




QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“There’ll be all sorts of things that I would’ve wanted as a kid that I couldn’t have. Famously, Sky TV, so that was something that we never had growing up actually.”

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak



BUSINESS BULLETIN

A Labour victory in the upcoming election seems to have financial markets feeling positively buoyant. Signalling a departure from its concerns around the party in recent years, the City now welcomes Starmer’s centrist approach, with JP Morgan analysts predicting benefits for banks, builders, and supermarkets.

Meanwhile, other analysts (including at MUF^G) suggest that a Labour landslide could be just what the pound needs, signalling an end to political instability and strengthening UK-EU relations post-Brexit. Starmer’s careful navigation of potential nationalisations and tax increases seems to be paying off.



PPC PATTER*

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

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

Our spotlight is on Labour royalty, Georgia Gould, the candidate for Queen’s Park and Maida Vale. Daughter of Philip Gould, renowned pollster for Blair’s administration, and Baroness Gail Rebusk, a Labour peer, Georgia also shares close ties with influential figures like Neil Kinnock and Alastair Campbell.

But she’s no nepo baby resting on her laurels: Georgia’s political journey includes stints as Leader of Camden Council, Chair of London Councils, Co-Chair of the London Partnership Board, and member of the London Economic Action Partnership (LEAP) Board.

Positioned as a trailblazer, Georgia stands out as one of the prominent women primed to enter Starmer’s inner circle, with many already envisioning her as a future cabinet minister – watch this space!



TIKTOK TIME

You’ve heard of TikTok rabbit holes, but what about TikTok potholes?

We find ourselves returning once again to official Labour Party channels this week, with a **TikTok** about the state of Britain’s roads - a topic close to the hearts of many Conservative voters. It features pictures of Rishi staring into potholes, with our favourite caption: *“This is why I take the helicopter”*. Another example of Labour’s plan to use the platform to drive engagement with younger voters, using humour to amplify issues that resonate with the electorate.

SPOTLIGHT ON: THE FIRST TIKTOK ELECTION

We hear from our Director of Strategy, Rachel Hughes, on how TikTok is shaping this election campaign.

With Labour, the Conservatives and Lib Dems all joining TikTok as soon as the election was announced, we've grabbed our popcorn to watch how it plays out. So far, it's giving more house party than political party.

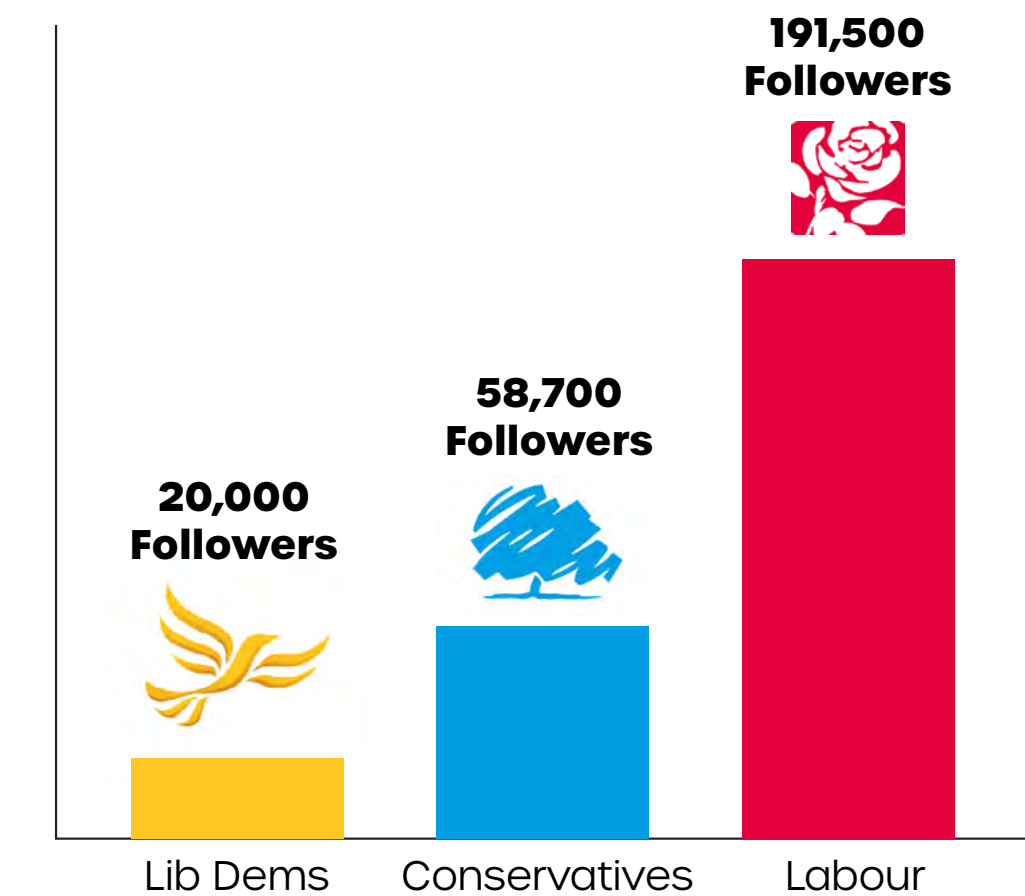
Labour is the popular kid dancing on the table with the biggest following at 191.5k followers. 718.8k people have liked their Cilla Black Surprise Surprise meme (of this newsletter's inaugural TikTok of the week fame) critiquing Rishi's national service plans. They might be bringing the lols but will this unserious tone bring votes?

The Lib Dems seem just happy to be there and Ed's definitely here for a good time. He's bringing golden retriever energy to the campaign trail and while they're using TikTok to get his personality and policies across in a playful way, they are lagging with 20k followers.

The Conservatives look very sober by comparison, mostly featuring Rishi's talking head explaining his policies. They have 58.7k followers and 236.3k people have watched his explainer video on his national service policy. However, a post in recent days featuring Keir Starmer as a Ken doll could signal they are only just warming up.

So, is this adoption of TikTok a panic move or a strategic one? It's certainly feeling like a bit of a free-for-all, but it is an acknowledgement by the parties that TikTok is now a mainstream channel and needs to be taken seriously... or un-seriously as the case may be!

TIKTOK FOLLOWING OF MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES



GET IN TOUCH

This week's Political Forecast Podcast guest is **Jo Coburn, one of the BBC's most experienced political correspondents**. Now the face of Politics Live, Jo's 25-year broadcast career has seen her cover political milestones including the London Mayoral contest in 2000, and the French Presidential Election in 2007. Jo joins Weber's very own Head of UK Media Relations, James Clothier

(himself with 25 years of journalistic experience, including as News Editor of The Sun and the Daily Mail). As ever, our chair is Ella Fallows, our Head of UK Public Affairs.

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](#).