

**Welcome to Weber Shandwick's monthly political newsletter. Our team is battling through conference flu to bring you a postmortem of the major party gatherings, from Ed Davey's jet ski antics to Starmer's worst gaffe to date. We also look into a new workplace health campaign starring Brian Cox (the Succession one, not the science one), and explore the Scottish Government's priorities ahead of the Autumn Budget.**

As Conference season comes to a close, all eyes turn to Starmer's Government to see if they can really hit their stride. With detail on many major policies due in the coming months, and a range of new industry councils, advisory boards and expert roundtables in the works from Number 10, now is the time for organisations to consolidate relationships with decision-makers and ensure a seat at the table. If you're looking for support to navigate this opportunity, get in touch with us [here](#).

# THE POLITICAL FORECAST

## PARLIAMENTARY PULSE: CONFERENCE CONCLUSIONS

### STARMER GETS SERIOUS

The general consensus was that the mood music in Liverpool was surprisingly subdued. Rather than celebrating, Starmer had evidently briefed his team to project a corporate, professional image – though judging from anecdotal reviews of Business Day, the industry charm offensive fell short in certain areas. There was also a palpable frustration at the endless “wait and see” responses to requests on policy detail (AI Minister Feryal Clark *did* mention progress on the use of copyrighted models in training AI, but swiftly rowed back on that post-conference). Nevertheless, the fringes were buzzing and the (many, *many*) new MPs were keenly seeking out causes and meetings. Also, sausages.

### CONSERVATIVES IN COMPETITION

Buoyed by a denialism of the past and optimism for the future, this year's gathering in Birmingham was a surprisingly positive affair. All four leadership contenders were followed by lobby hacks, snappers and hordes of members alike. Robert Jenrick and James Cleverley both seized the opportunity drawing in big crowds, while Kemi Badenoch's provocations did not necessarily consolidate her support. Tom Tugendhat, although he won the merch competition, has found himself at the back of the pack. When MPs return to Westminster next week, they will whittle the field down to two candidates to put to members. As it stands, the result will be announced on November 2nd.

### LD STUNTS ON THE SEAFRONT

Sir Ed Davey arrived in Brighton on a jet ski, paying homage to his (very successful) stunt-filled election campaign. His party's two-day conference focused on health and social care, with Davey urging the Government to “invest now to make the NHS winterproof”. He also advocated for closer ties with the EU and criticised the Conservative leadership contest, saying they were “scraping the bottom of the barrel.” A buoyant conference by all accounts with plenty of enthusiasm for Davey's attempts to place the Lib Dems as the ‘real opposition’.

### EVERYONE'S LIKE THE TORIES, EXCEPT THE SCOTTISH CONSERVATIVES

Scotland heads to the polls in 2026; the Scottish parties had their eyes firmly on the prize this conference season and it seems no one's pulling punches. The SNP called for an investigation into Labour donations and challenged Labour to match the Scottish child payment, accusing the party of “copying the Tories”. Meanwhile, Scottish leader Anas Sarwar lumped the SNP Government in with the previous Conservative UK Government, describing them both as “incompetent.” Freshly elected Scottish Conservatives Leader Russell Findlay tried to position himself as a beacon of optimism amidst the drama, promising voters change ahead of Conservative conference.



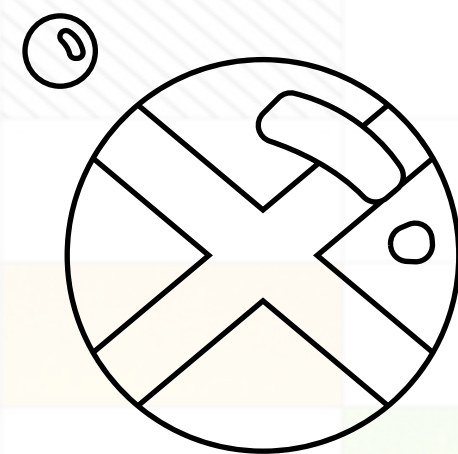
## MAKING A SPLASH

All aboard the Cadbury Express! Ruth Cadbury, the freshly elected Chair of the Transport Committee, was the *driving force* at many transport fringe events. Somewhat mitigating concerns that a London-based MP might not have been the most natural fit for this Committee's Chair, she charmed industry leaders at every juncture. While she outlined that committees won't officially meet until mid-November (and therefore priorities have not yet been set), she's made it clear that she's encouraging input and dialogue from a range of organisations. With Cadbury at the wheel, the Transport Committee is in for quite a ride...



## BEYOND THE BUBBLE

Ahead of the Autumn Budget, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Shona Robison outlined the Scottish Government's priorities to the Scottish Parliament. While Robison noted a distinct improvement in the relationship with the Treasury since the election and welcomed the move to multi-year budgets, she described the Chancellor's restrictive fiscal rules as a "political choice". The Cabinet Secretary made several asks ahead of a meeting with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury this month, including changing the rules around borrowing, abolishing the two-child limit, and delivering an Essentials Guarantee. Robison used her final remarks to question the UK Government's claim that it would respect devolution, citing reports the Scotland Office was to receive a £150m 'war chest' to use on devolved policies. She called for Labour's manifesto commitment to end the practice of bypassing devolved nations to be delivered in full. Punchy stuff all round.

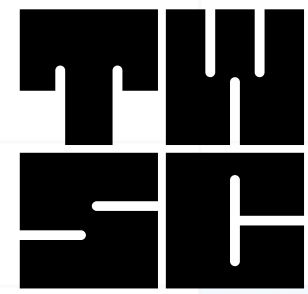


## BUSINESS BULLETIN

Shoe brand Asics enlisted TV's bad boss Brian Cox for their latest campaign, urging employees to incorporate movement into the workday to improve their mental health. Alongside the ad, Asics nodded to politics with "The Desk Break Clause", an employment contract clause giving workers the legal right to 15-minute movement breaks in their day, on top of standard breaks. The new campaign encourages people to ask their own employers to add the clause to their contracts too. A timely campaign as we await the Employment Rights Bill due later this month...





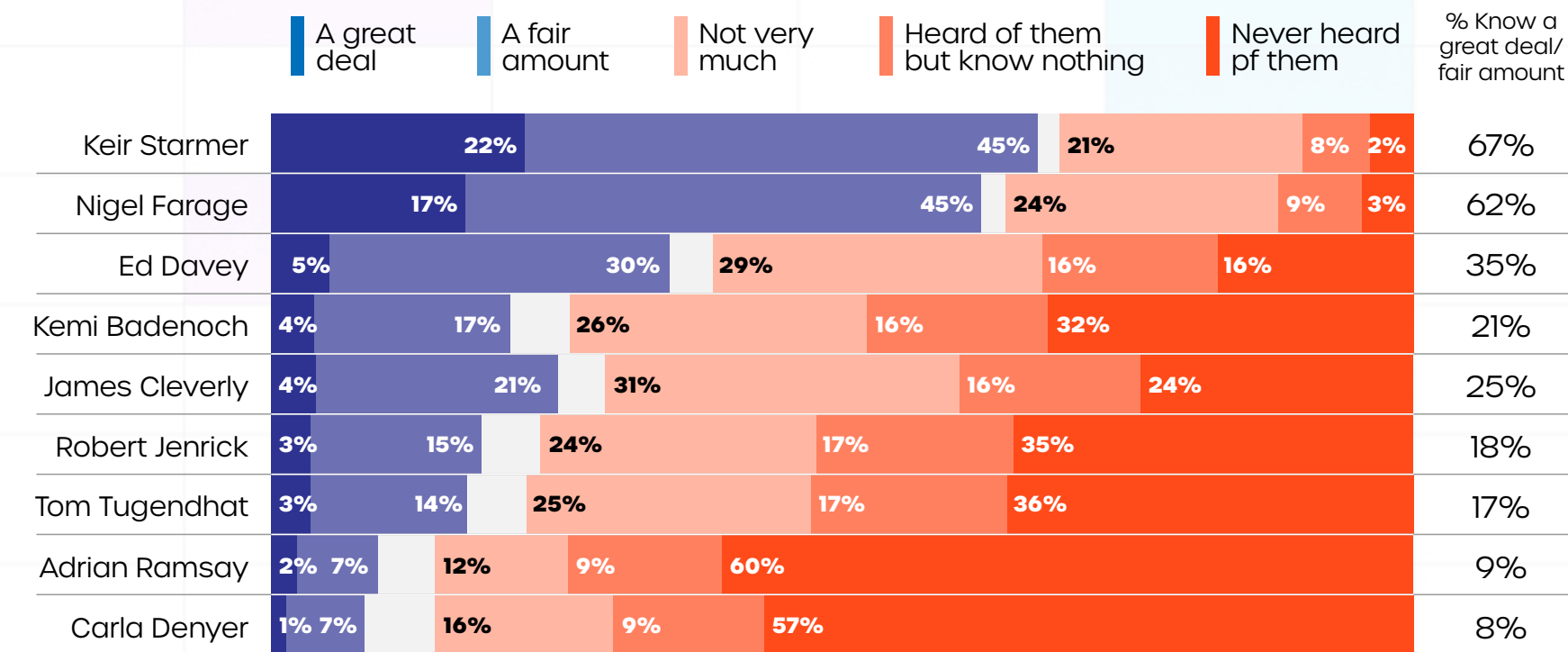


# POLITICS IN NUMBERS

Conservative leadership candidates face an uphill struggle for recognition as a new Ipsos poll shows the UK public's familiarity with the 4 contenders is pretty low. James Cleverly is the best known with 25% of the public knowing something about him. Not great news for Lib Dem leader Ed Davey either...

### Familiarity with Politicians

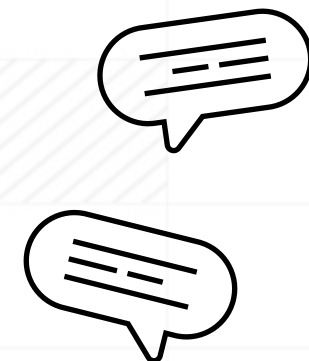
How much, if anything, do you know about each of the following politicians



Base: 1,100 Online British adults aged 18+, 20-23 September 2024

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

**"I don't believe Reform are real conservatives. They like the Liberal Democrats are not serious people."**



**- Kemi Badenoch MP**

Shadow Housing Secretary & Conservative leadership hopeful

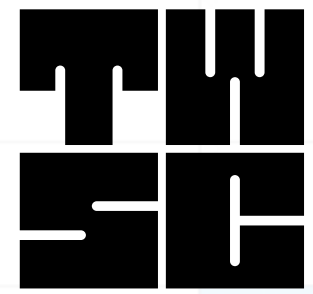
## VIRAL VIEW

### A mistake at the wurst time

In his keynote speech at Labour Party Conference, our (hungry?) Prime Minister Keir Starmer, made an unfortunate slip-up, calling for the return of "sausages" from Gaza. Starmer had been discussing the situation in the Middle East when he made the mix-up, making his speech memorable for all the wrong reasons. It wasn't long before his mistake triggered a viral wave of jokes, memes and comments on social media.





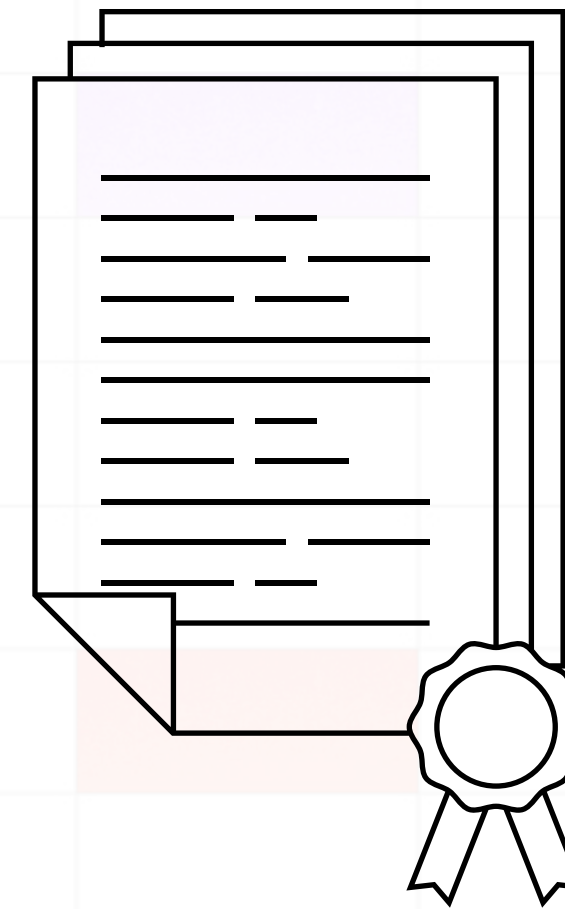


# RIGHT(S) ON THE MONEY: THE EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS BILL

Remember when the previous Conservative Government rolled out an Employment Bill in 2019? Well, that never saw the light of day, with reforms trickling in through various Private Members' bills instead. Fast forward to today, and the new Government is all set to introduce its Employment Rights Bill within the first 100 days of their term, which by our maths means we'll see it before October 12th.

This fresh Bill aims to modernise and balance employment laws, boosting job security, rights, and pay for workers in different sectors. The Bill will guarantee employee rights from day 1 alongside tackling issues like exploitative zero hours contracts. While some unions have already labelled the proposals too weak, the Government's large majority may mean they won't be backing down anytime soon, despite potential pushback from businesses that could complicate things. The challenge for the Government will be to balance business demands and warnings about economic impact with the pressure from unions to deliver on the workers' rights promised in the manifesto and expected of a new Labour Government.

If you would like to receive more information on the Bill, including its proposals, purpose and timeline, do get in touch.



## GET IN TOUCH

To learn more about Weber's Public Affairs team and our services, [click here](#).

