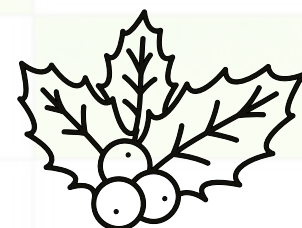


FESTIVE EDITION

**GOD REST
YE MERRY
BACKBENCHERS**



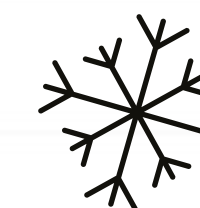
What's today, my fine reader? Today, why, it's Weber Shandwick's festive political newsletter publication day! Our team starts by looking back at the (many) big moments of 2024 - from Starmer's election Miracle on Downing Street, to Lou Haigh's Nightmare before Christmas - plus some of our own client highlights too.

And while we may be celebrating this festive season, we are also looking ahead to 2025: a year already promising monumental moments, millstones and milestones including a Spending Review, the NHS Long Term Plan, and a raft of new (jingle) Bills to keep our political minds racing.

As ever, if you're looking for friendly, expert, support to navigate the political landscape, drop us a line. But for now, pour yourself a mulled wine, sit back, and let's dive into all the twists and turns of the year that was...

THE POLITICAL FORECAST

THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME(S) OF THE YEAR



At the risk of making it all about us, we're sharing some team highlights from a very busy (and very successful!) year at Weber... as well as some big new client wins, we navigated the surprise election, created our podcast and newsletter, spent long weekends on the doorstep, survived Party Conferences, and delivered brilliant campaigns in partnership with our clients. Last week alone, we organised four Parliamentary events in Westminster, attracting around 200 MP offices (before you ask, yes, we are all looking forward to a BIG rest over Christmas).

We also had a big year of celebrity guests! Our podcast featured John Curtice and Caroline Wheler, our Scotland team organised a private lunch with Chris Stark, we hosted Women in Public Affairs networking events and lunches, and we welcomed Professor Nicola McEwen at our Glasgow office to discuss all things devolution - who says the Internal Market Act can't be fun!

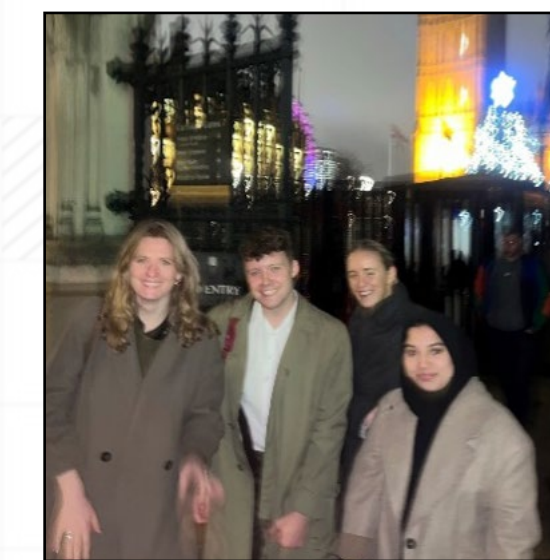
Lastly, big thanks to all of our loyal Political Forecast readers for your lovely feedback and for following our team's antics over the past months. We're looking forward to more of the same in 2025!



Some of us at the Weber election party (before pulling an all-nighter - the "after" photo isn't for public consumption)



Our Scotland team at a private lunch they organised for clients with Chris Stark, Ed Miliband's Clean Power Lead



After pulling off two very successful Parliamentary receptions in one afternoon



Fangirling after the chance to meet with Britain's most accomplished political commentator, John Curtice, who featured on our podcast!



The Chancellor backs our "Unwelcome Home" campaign for our IKEA client at Labour Conference



A packed Parliamentary reception (with around 180 MP offices making an appearance!) on the Terrace for a happy client



The team at a WIPA Event in Scotland

BUSINESS BULLETIN

A new Government needs a new Budget, and the new residents of No.10 and 11 Downing Street took their time over Labour's first in fourteen years. Could it live up to the promises in their manifesto and maintain warm relations with the business community?

Businesses were hoping Labour would usher in a more welcoming landscape for them to operate, however the Budget delivered by Chancellor Rachel Reeves in October has left more questions than answers. Immediately after the budget, the IoD reported two-thirds (67%) of business leaders feel negatively towards the Autumn Budget and two-thirds (67%) think that it does not support the Government's growth mission, a feeling that does not seem to have shifted.

There is a looming concern that the broad increases in operating costs are at odds with the Government's primary mission on economic growth. Nevertheless, this could be the worst of it. Rachel Reeves chose to make tough decisions early and set a trajectory to the end of this Parliament. Only time will tell...



BEYOND THE BUBBLE

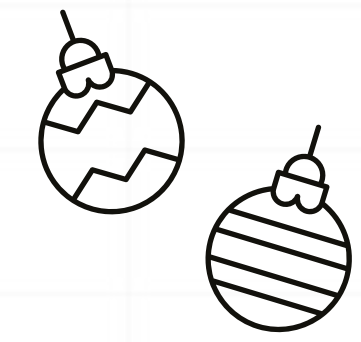
Beyond O Little Town of Westminster, plenty has been going on in Holyrood (and Ivyrood).

John Swinney looks to have pulled off a massive comeback following the recent draft Scottish budget. Rewind 6 months, and it was looking bleak for the SNP, who were struggling in the polls. They would go on to lose their position as the third largest party at Westminster on a devastating night for the party. Scottish Labour was on the up and Anas Sarwar would have been thinking the 2026 election couldn't come soon enough! Oh, how the tables have turned...

Polling now says the SNP would remain the largest party in Scotland and Labour would return the lowest number of MSPs since devolution. This is due in no small part to decisions taken at a UK level (think winter fuel payment), but also off the back of a Scottish budget which saw spending increases across multiple departments landing well with many north of the border. With the draft budget reported as the kick-off for the 2026 campaign, 2025 looks set to keep us all on the edge of our seats...

POLITICS IN NUMBERS

Introducing the Political Forecast's 12 Days of Christmas for 2024...

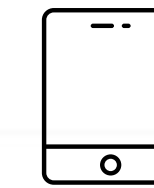


(click on each icon to learn the story behind it)



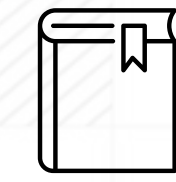
12

women in Cabinet (for the first time!)



11

-thousand-pound iPad data roaming bill



10

Years to Save the West



9

Secretaries of State ousted

NF

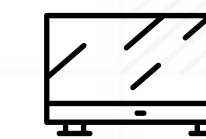
8th

time lucky for Nigel Farage



7

rebellious Labour MPs



6

Rees-Mogg children hitting TV screens near you



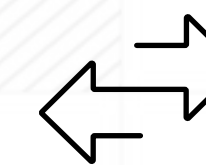
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Reform MPs



4

happy Greens



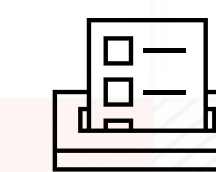
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MP defections



2

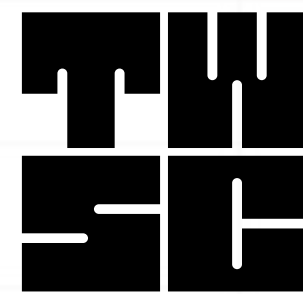
Prime Ministers



1

surprise General Election!

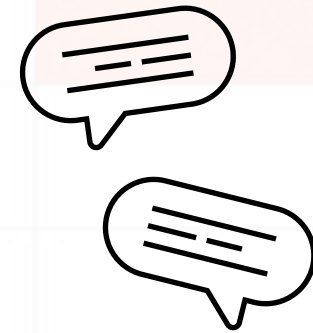
(and **zero Sky TV subscriptions** 😞)



QUOTE OF 2024

“Lunch is for wimps. I have food brought in and I work and eat at the same time. I don’t think sandwiches are a real food ... I will not touch bread if it’s moist.”

– Kemi Badenoch, Conservative Party Leader



VIRAL VIEW



Earlier this year, a protester made headlines by throwing a milkshake over Reform UK Leader Nigel Farage, leaving him in a rather sticky situation. The protester has managed to shake off any prison time, with a hearing this week declaring a suspended sentence....

MAKING A SPLASH IN 2025

As we head into 2025, the political stage is set to test the UK Government abroad and at home.

TRUMP CARD:

January 20th, when Donald Trump takes office for a second term, will be a significant day for British diplomacy and the UK will need to balance its relationship with the new administration while managing the very significant European tensions, and relations with China. The Government has already made overtures to mend relations with the incoming President-elect (even the Foreign Secretary has said he would aim to find common ground with Trump after previously providing some very, erm, frank words on the former President).

ARE EU KIDDING ME?

Since July, Starmer has been on a high-profile diplomatic push abroad, signalling his clear intent to reposition the UK on the world stage, particularly in relation to the EU. No doubt the festive spirit Starmer hoped for has been soured by the EU’s decision to take the UK to court over alleged breaches of freedom of movement rules... and next year will be a tricky exercise in bridge-building.

NIGHT-MAYOR BEFORE CHRISTMAS:

This week the Government unveiled its ambitious “Devolution Revolution” plan, granting Mayors across England new powers over housing, transport, skills, and local economic growth. The plan proposes significant local government reforms, including streamlined structures and fairer funding – however, the Local Government Association didn’t hold back and was quick to warn that “devolution is not an end in itself and cannot distract from the severe funding pressures that are pushing local services to the brink”. The LGA also argued councils should be reimbursed for increases in employer national insurance contributions announced in the Budget – without proper funding, this devolution revolution could quickly find itself in reverse...

CABINET CRACKS:

In recent weeks there have been signs of internal disagreements at the Cabinet table, with key figures publicly clashing over the situation in Syria and assisted dying legislation. And with Starmer’s external business relations at a low ebb after the budget, could 2025 be the moment these tensions reach boiling point?



GET IN TOUCH

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