



# NEXT LEFT?

The Shape of a Labour Government



NEXT

LEFT?



**Next Left? The Shape of a Labour Government** is WA's second in-depth analysis of the Labour Party.

Our 2023 report **Next Left? A guide to engaging with the Labour party** explores the senior advisers and key influencers shaping the party, and the policy-making processes through to the general election.

[wacomms.co.uk/report/next-left-a-guide-to-engaging-with-the-labour-party](https://wacomms.co.uk/report/next-left-a-guide-to-engaging-with-the-labour-party)



#### Labour Candidate Research

Proprietary WA research analysed the profile of 119 leading Labour candidates – those in the party's key target constituencies (seats with the smallest 2019 majority where Labour came second) and safe seats where the current MP is standing down, as well as a further 19 where boundary changes mean the notional majority is far easier for Labour to overturn.

A list of these PPCs can be found at [wacomms.co.uk/next-left-ppc-list](https://wacomms.co.uk/next-left-ppc-list).

#### Social Media Analysis

Throughout this report, we feature WA social media analysis, exploring how Labour PPCs tweet. Our analysis examined the tweets from:

- 308 Conservative MPs
- 190 Labour MPs
- 113 of the top Labour PPCs referenced on the left

The data, graphs, and analysis in this report are rebased to reflect the different numbers of MPs and PPCs (typically showing 'tweets per person').

#### YouGov Polling

Our work with YouGov, to explore Labour's Pathways to Power, draws on a range of the firm's existing data (except where otherwise stated) as well as new polling specifically for WA.

For WA's exclusive polling: The total sample size was 6,196 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 1st – 7th March 2024. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

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# CHARTING A CHANGING BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

**DOMINIC CHURCH**  
Managing Director



Welcome to WA's latest guide on how Labour is preparing for power.

There has not been a change in the governing party since 2010 and so it is necessary to delve deeper than usual to assess what is likely to happen if Keir Starmer wins the looming general election.

Even those at the top of the Labour Party are not wholly sure how they will respond to the challenges of power but there is a lot of work being done behind the scenes in Keir Starmer's office, the Shadow Cabinet, and well beyond, to prepare for government. Some of the current policy pitches are deliberately vague while some are surprisingly detailed.

The analysis in this guide draws together insights and intelligence from across the WA team – from private conversations behind the scenes with the key Labour figures, as well as extensive assessment of publicly declared commitments from Starmer and his colleagues.

Quite a lot will depend on the size of Labour's majority, and in the coming pages we examine the implications of varying swings. While Labour is polling at around 18% ahead of the Conservatives, it's equally important to remember that a commanding majority is not a done deal – while Tony Blair secured Labour its largest ever Commons majority on a swing of 10.2%, the task facing Keir Starmer is much tougher (for example boundary changes mean that for Labour to win an overall majority requires a swing from the Conservatives of 12.7 percentage points).

This goes some way to explain Starmer's continued caution, and the range of post-election scenarios that businesses should prepare for.

In any scenario however, there will be many new Labour MPs, some more influential than others. We explore the likely new parliamentary party and the role it will play in underpinning, or perhaps sometimes challenging, the next Labour government.

Very quickly after the election there will be a Budget and a King's Speech with an extensive legislative programme based around the manifesto. But this will be a government for the longer term. Starmer has stressed it will take ten years for Labour to achieve its goals. This means there is plenty of space for businesses to engage in policy development long after the manifesto is published and some of the policies have been implemented.

The last time there was a change of governing party, a coalition was formed. That was an unusual challenge for businesses. Where did power lie when two parties were working together? The prospect of the first Labour victory from opposition for decades raises even more questions. We hope this guide provides some of the answers in the run-up to the election and beyond.

To explore our analysis in more detail, and understand how the shape of the next government will affect your organisation, sector and situation specifically, please get in touch – by email at [dominicchurch@wacomms.co.uk](mailto:dominicchurch@wacomms.co.uk) or on **020 7222 9500**.



**Dominic** has spent more than two decades advising clients on strategic public affairs. He has significant grassroots political experience, including as a Labour Councillor, activist and fundraiser.

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# The course of the campaign

# LABOUR ON THE EDGE OF POWER

## STEVE RICHARDS

Senior WA Advisor,  
Broadcaster and Journalist



**The Labour Party will almost certainly form the next government, a rare occurrence in British politics. The last time Labour won a majority from opposition was 1997 and the time before that was 1964.**

The party's tendency to lose elections determines the cautious approach of Keir Starmer now. In spite of polls and by-elections suggesting he will be Prime Minister by the end of the year, he does not dare to believe it. He fights a war on complacency. As a result Starmer's top team focus above all on winning the election. In effect the campaign is already underway. Starmer is out on the road most of the time, away from Westminster.

There is important policy work being carried out behind the scenes, especially in relation to the first hundred days of a new government, but mostly attention remains largely on the political battle ahead.

This means policy is being developed on two related but different levels. The embryonic manifesto is in place and ready to be published when an election is called. Obviously there can be changes but Shadow Cabinet members submitted their manifesto ideas to Starmer's team in February. Their proposals are being 'bomb proofed' by Starmer and his senior advisers, while Rachel Reeves will scrutinise every item for any hint of spending implications.

**THERE WILL BE NO BIG SURPRISES IN THE MANIFESTO. BASED ON NEW LABOUR'S APPROACH IN 1997, IT WILL SEEK TO BE REASSURING WHILE OFFERING ENOUGH 'HOPE' ABOUT VAGUELY DEFINED 'CHANGE'.**

But in power Starmer hopes to hit the ground running. Indeed, he knows he has to give the impression of a decisive sense of purpose from day one. There will be a budget shortly after the election, and a King's Speech. Relevant Shadow Cabinet ministers are preparing legislation now. The budget will include the tax on non-doms and private schools but will Reeves dare immediately to raise other taxes that were not specified in the election campaign? Those who know her well think this is unlikely. Instead they expect Reeves to make a striking structural move, as Gordon Brown did in 1997 when he made the Bank of England independent. There is no equivalent on that scale but there is speculation that she might give the Treasury a new specified responsibility in relation to economic growth.

Securing growth is Starmer's top mission but the means to achieve this are vague. Expect speedy moves to establish closer ties with the EU, although there will be no attempt to join the single currency or the customs union. In the first King's Speech there will be bills to establish a new publicly owned energy company, measures to speed up planning, breakfast clubs in schools and the rest of the familiar items that will shape the manifesto.



But the means to the ends still remain quite vague. How will Labour meet its hugely ambitious climate change targets by 2030? How will it achieve the fastest growth in the G7?

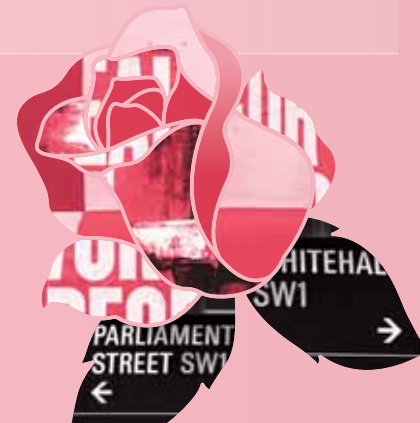
Starmer began this process with a blank sheet of paper, having dumped the 2019 manifesto. He is new to policy making at this level. There will be many gaps and much space for businesses to engage when and if Labour forms the next government.

**Steve** is a political commentator, writing for the Sunday Times, Guardian, Financial Times and The Independent, and appearing on Newsnight, the Today programme and Sky News. He is a member of WA's Advisory Board, which provides regular strategic political and communications counsel to our clients.

# BEFORE THE BALLOT BOX

## THE KEY MOMENTS SHAPING THE POLITICAL WEATHER IN 2024

w/c 25th March	Purdah begins for Mayoral and Local Authority elections
26th March – 15th April	Parliamentary Easter Recess
"The Spring"	Possible first Rwanda asylum flights
<b>2nd May</b>	<b>Local and Mayoral Elections (inc. London)</b>
2nd May – 7th May	Parliamentary May Day Recess
23rd May – 3rd June	Parliamentary Whitsun Recess
6th June – 9th June	EU Parliament Elections
<b>28th June</b>	<b>Labour NEC and National Policy Forum deadline for nominations</b>
July	The UK hosts the European Political Community's annual summit
w/c 8th July	<b>Chancellor's Mansion House speech</b>
23rd July	Parliamentary Summer Recess Starts
14th August	July's RPI figure will dictate 2025's rail fare increases
1st September	The second stage of the government's childcare expansion, extending free care to children as young as nine months, takes effect
1st September	Parliamentary Summer Recess Ends
September	Potential pre-election fiscal event (following on from the Spring Budget)
8th – 11th September	TUC congress



# AND THE GENERAL ELECTION'S LIKELY TIMELINE

## OCTOBER GENERAL ELECTION

5th (or 12th) September	PM calls election and purdah begins
8th – 11th September	TUC congress
w/c 9th September	Manifestos published
w/c 16th September	Leaders' TV debate #1
19th September	Bank of England MPC meeting
	*An October general election would almost certainly mean the cancellation of each Party Conference
w/c 23rd September	Leaders' TV debate #2
10th (or 17th) October	Polling day

## NOVEMBER GENERAL ELECTION

19th September	Bank of England MPC meeting
22nd – 25th September	Labour Party Conference
29th September – 2nd October	Conservative Party Conference
10th (or 17th) October	PM calls election and purdah begins
w/c 14th October	Manifestos published
w/c 21st October	Leaders' TV debate #1
w/c 28th October	Leaders' TV debate #2
5th November	US Presidential Elections
7th November	Bank of England MPC meeting
14th (or 21st) November	Polling day

Exit polls are announced at 10.00pm, with results from the first seats typically coming in from around 11.30pm.

The impact of **voter-ID requirements** – which will apply to this year's general election for the first time – on turnout and voter demographics is also a must-watch.



# DELIVERING A NEW DIRECTION: HOW THE CIVIL SERVICE PREPARES FOR A CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT

**SIR PHILIP RUTNAM**  
Chair, WA Advisory Board



**NATASHA EGAN-SJODIN**  
Director



**General elections are a busy time for the civil service. No new government arrives without grand plans and across any given department work will already be underway to map priority policy areas, political priorities and the feasibility of delivering against a new government mandate.**

This work evolves over the course of the general election process, from tracking first indications of policy commitments, to auditing party political manifestos, through to greeting a new Minister to the department. At each stage there is an opportunity for businesses to engage.

## PRE-ELECTION PLANNING

The machinery of government comes into its own during an election year. Whilst policy development is always a two-way process – with Ministers setting political direction and officials submitting policy proposals – this shifts over the course of the electoral cycle.

As the Opposition begins to set out its policy platform on key issues, policy teams across Whitehall will be tracking announcements and assessing compatibility with existing policy, divergence from planned activity, resource required to support this change of direction, and feasibility of delivering the overall policy objective.

Civil servants are concerned with long-term policy development and stability; there are workstreams that have been in development for a decade, which will not benefit from disruption by a change in political leadership.

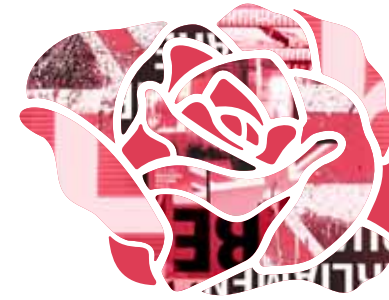
This is therefore a critical period for businesses and organisations to provide officials with evidence of how a new policy direction, or indeed a continuation of an existing policy direction, will play out and deliver benefits or barriers.

## ACCESS TALKS

One of the rituals of the run-up to a British general election, ‘access talks’ are the private, official talks between the Opposition and the Civil Service, which allow both sides to prepare for a possible change of government.

But what happens in access talks, and do they actually matter?

To start with one thing that shouldn’t happen: don’t expect a running commentary in the press. The talks are tightly controlled – this year for Labour they’ll be overseen by Sue Gray, which will likely mean an even tighter and more disciplined process than usual. There are powerful incentives for secrecy: for Labour, it’s about message discipline running up to the election; and for civil servants, it’s about building the confidence of your likely future employers.



The meetings between shadow Secretaries of State and departmental Permanent Secretaries are an opportunity for the politicians to ask lots of questions about the department and the real challenges it faces, and for both sides to discuss the practical implications of big new policies.

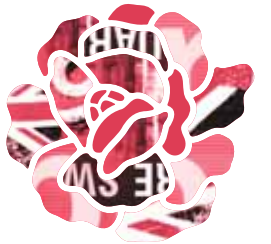
It’s also personal – an opportunity for people to get to know each other. On the official side the people involved are all very senior, Director General or above plus one (senior) link person, and the Opposition team will be similar.

While these private talks do not present an opportunity for organisations to directly press their case, it is still a critical time to engage the top of the Civil Service in every area. However, the approach needs to be broader and more subtle than a focus directly on the access talks. Instead, every organisation should be asking itself about the evidence, insight and relationships that it can bring to bear, to help the senior people in departments get through this phase and achieve shared goals.

## MAKING MANIFESTOS WORK

As the parties move to set out their final general election manifesto pledges, central strategy and policy teams will gather to audit the commitments set out and begin developing first-day advice on how these can be achieved. This is a massive task, with central teams pooling insight from across the department to develop a comprehensive picture of how it will respond to this new government’s priorities, and preparing Departmental Permanent Secretaries and Director Generals for early questions from a new Minister on how to get the ball rolling.

The advice here can be complicated. For some policy teams, clear alignment with existing work and use of resource will emerge early and minimal changes to set workplans will be needed. For others, new priorities and workstreams will need to be created and resource will need to be reallocated.



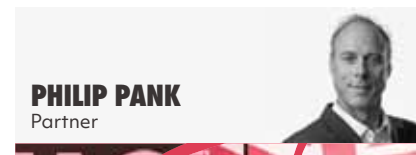
The Director Generals need to have a clear view on how this will impact their directorate before a new government forms, and the restricted (purdah) period is used to put practical plans in place to support this.

Ensuring you are in touch with relevant policy teams – both within department and across Whitehall – is critical at this stage as they look to industry for input and reactions. The central departments, HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office, have a sweeping role to play here and should not be overlooked.

**Sir Philip** is a former Whitehall Permanent Secretary, senior Treasury civil servant, and European Investment Bank official.

Before joining WA, **Natasha** was the Head of Ministerial Briefing at the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy.

# HOW TO GET YOUR STORY HEARD DURING AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN



**PHILIP PANK**  
Partner

A change of government can be a daunting prospect for brands seeking to protect and enhance their reputations amidst shifting national priorities, policies and regulations.

**IN THIS AGE OF ROLLING NEWS AND TRIGGER-FINGER SOCIAL MEDIA, THERE IS A REAL RISK OF CORPORATE ANNOUNCEMENTS BECOMING POLITICISED IN THE FEBRILE MONTHS IMMEDIATELY BEFORE AND AFTER AN ELECTION.**

So we thought we'd draw on our experience – and that of our media network – to find ways through this critical period.

We asked two senior journalists for their views on two contrasting scenarios:

- What should brands do if they inadvertently become a political football in the election period?
- How can organisations connect with media if they are struggling to find airtime?

Our huge thanks to Caroline Wheeler, Political Editor, The Sunday Times, and Sam Rix, Senior News Editor, Good Morning Britain, for sharing their thoughts, as part of our 'Navigating the media in an election year' breakfast.

## HOW TO RESPOND IF YOU FIND YOURSELF IN THE EYE OF THE POLITICAL STORM

As the American newspaper publisher-turned-showman P. T. Barnum reportedly said: "There's no such thing as bad publicity." But try telling that to your comms team when your organisation is unintentionally drawn into the storm.

Our panel gave three clear recommendations to help.

## 1. CREATE BESPOKE PACKAGES FOR YOUR MOST INFLUENTIAL MEDIA

As a Sunday newspaper Editor, Caroline Wheeler lives and breathes exclusives. For her, the key to successful brand management lies in selective media engagement.

"My view is that blanket coverage which is out of control will be more difficult, if you do get into trouble with the media," she said. "Who are the audiences you want to target? What is your messaging? What is the media going to be interested in?"

"Build a bespoke package for key media so you have control over that coverage. If you put out blanket coverage, it tends to fuel the news cycle. Careful management will be more effective in shutting down the news story. There will be one more day of it, but you feed the beast once in a compelling way."

She cited the example of Henry Staunton, the former Post Office chairman, who put a bombshell under the Department of Business and Trade with one carefully crafted Sunday Times interview.

## 2. DON'T BE TOO DEFENSIVE

Journalists will assume they are onto something if your comms team is too defensive – all the more so if that turns to outright hostility.

"There is always defensiveness from people who have not been in the [media] industry and defensiveness tends to perpetuate the story rather than shut it down," Wheeler said.

## 3. RESPOND QUICKLY TO FRAME HOW THE STORY IS TOLD

There are times when putting your head above the parapet is ill-advised. But if you know that a story has legs, it often pays to engage. Sam Rix said that early intervention is best, to frame how your story is being told in the media.

"A quick response that will help frame the narrative is important," Rix said. "You tell your story first, before the media do. Frame the narrative and make it your story."

## HOW TO GET YOUR STORY HEARD DURING A BUSY ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Many a PR will agree with Oscar Wilde when he wrote: "There is only one thing in life worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about."

Seasoned journalists gave us their views on how communications professionals stand the best chance of getting heard during the election tumult.

## 1. MAKE SURE TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH KEY MEDIA

When space is short and competition for stories even more intense, personal relationships become even more important.

"It is good to have contacts in the media before we get to an election. Go to events, invite a prominent journalist to come to your event, to establish your own network. It's important to build relationships," Wheeler said.

## 2. MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A COMPELLING STORY TO TELL

At a time when media interest can become myopic, if you are able to present interesting, counter-intuitive information, then you stand a decent chance of having your voice heard.

"The old adage is true: dog bites man is not an interesting story, but man bites dog is. Have you got a narrative that is going to solicit interest?" Wheeler said.

## 3. COMMISSION POLLING OR FOCUS GROUPS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION A JOURNALIST CAN USE

Polling or focus group work only gains in importance at election time. If you can find the resources to pay for national polling on interesting issues you might well cut through the noise. Especially if you can pay for those expensive constituency-level surveys.

"Providing that added value is a very good thing. Many newspapers can't afford to do any polling in a consistent way. If you can commission a piece of polling, that might help," Wheeler said.

Before joining WA, Philip spent more than a decade as a senior journalist at The Times, including more than five years as the paper's Transport Correspondent.



# The shape of the next Parliament



## PATRICK ENGLISH

Director of Political Analytics,  
YouGov



The electoral path to a Labour government will bring together coalitions of voters, each with different priorities and concerns: the Labour benches behind a slim majority will have very different characteristics from the cohort of MPs returned if Keir Starmer succeeds in repeating a 1997-style landslide – and both will look different from today's Parliamentary Labour Party.

Working with YouGov, we explored the profiles of the constituencies behind four potential scenarios in which Labour takes power – identifying the types of voters that would switch to the party, and the backbench issues and priorities that might feed into Keir Starmer's decision making based on different majority sizes.

**The exact size of any Labour majority – and the constituencies it is built on – will have major implications for the type of government Starmer will be able to form and the policy agendas he will be able to manoeuvre through the House of Commons.**

### DIFFERENT LEVELS OF VICTORY WILL BRING WITH THEM DIFFERENT CAUCUSES OF NEW LABOUR MPS REPRESENTING DIFFERENT INTERESTS AND CONCERNS FROM VOTERS UP AND DOWN THE COUNTRY.

Beyond the 'who wins' headline result (which at this point seems extremely likely to be Labour) there are a number of different outcomes regarding parliamentary composition which will have important consequences for how the UK is governed in the next five and even 10 years.

Pathways to various Labour electoral victories (or Conservative victories, for that matter) are, by necessity, driven by analysis of swing.

As such, this analysis looks at four different scenarios of prospective voter behaviour, what type of voters would move toward Labour under each, and what sort of House of Commons composition Keir Starmer would be working with in each circumstance.

### 1. A 'MODERATE' CON TO LAB SWING

Let's imagine that by the time the general election comes around, the polls have narrowed a huge amount, to leave both parties essentially within touching distance of one another. This would imply a moderate swing from the Conservatives to Labour at the national level, with headline vote intention figures approaching essentially a reverse of what we saw between the Conservatives and Labour in 2017. For context, under Blair, Labour managed around a 10-point swing from the Conservatives in 1997.

In this scenario, we also assume a slight swing from the Conservatives to both the Liberal Democrats and Reform UK, and a six-point swing between the Scottish National Party (SNP) and Labour in Scotland. This would represent a similar performance by the SNP as in 2017.

This national pattern of voting would leave Labour as the largest party in a hung parliament. Any confidence-and-supply or coalition arrangement to install Starmer as Prime Minister in this House of Commons scenario would involve significant compromise on the party's legislative agenda, and leave little headspace, if any at all, for thinking about long-term governance.

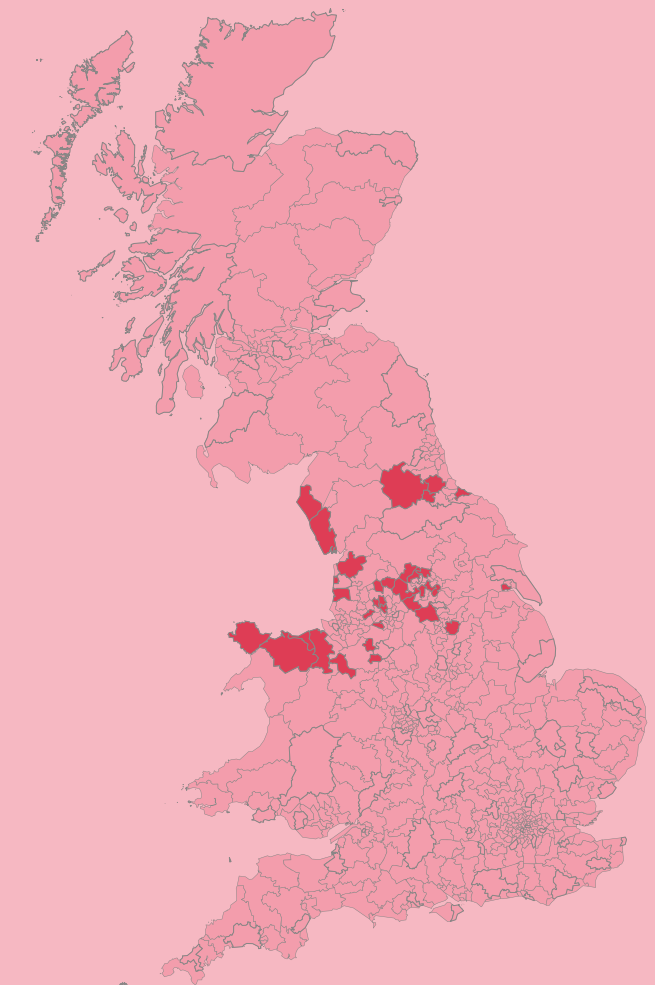
### THE 'DECADE OF RENEWAL' PLAN WOULD BE VERY MUCH ON ICE. STARMER WOULD ALSO LIKELY FACE DIFFICULTIES FROM INSIDE HIS OWN PARTY, WITH A DELICATE GOVERNING ARRANGEMENT GIVING MPS FROM ALL FACTIONS, CAUCUSES AND BLOCS A LOT OF POWER TO HOLD UP OR EVEN DENY LEGISLATION.

- Labour would change quite significantly as a parliamentary party from its current form, with constituencies across what James Kanagasooriam coined the 'Red Wall' filing back in to returning Labour MPs.
- Significant numbers of constituencies in the East Midlands (11, 23% of the constituencies in the region), Wales (9, 28%), Yorkshire and the Humber (11, 20%), and the North West (14, 19%) would flip.

The map below visualises the constituencies we would expect to change hands in such a scenario in the key political battlegrounds of the North of England and North Wales. Scottish Labour would remain only a small part of the parliamentary party, with around seven or so MPs, while the SNP would retain seats.

### FILLING IN THE 'RED WALL'

**Projected outcome – constituencies likely to flip to Labour on a moderate Con-Lab national swing (modelled swing using notional 2019 results data)**



The type of voters who would most likely fuel a 'Labour largest party' scenario would predominantly come from the segment of the voting population first coined by UK Onward as 'Workington Man' – recently reidentified and named the 'Patriotic Left' by Labour Together/YouGov in the 2023 'Red Shift' report.

Workington Man typifies the class of voter who switched from Labour to the Conservatives from 2015 through to 2019, mainly driven by the issues of Brexit, immigration, and disdain for former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. The Patriotic Left tend to be 'right on culture, left on economics', but while concern about immigration runs high in these communities, they nonetheless prioritise the cost of living and improving public services over other 'culture war' issues.

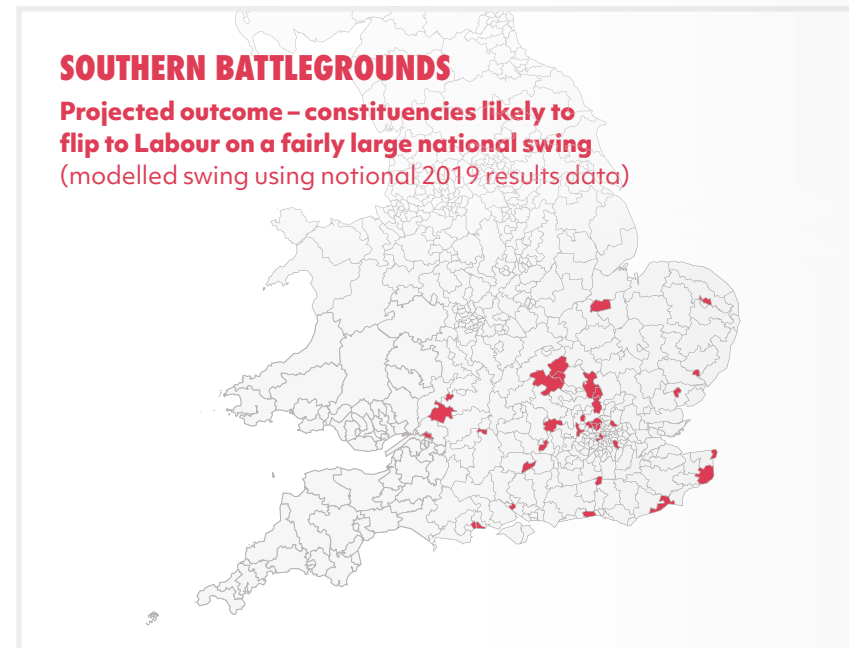
A Labour victory (short of a majority) powered by a return of the Red Wall and wins in Midlands marginals such as Loughborough and Lincoln may put Starmer into Number 10, but with the most challenging parliamentary arithmetic (even within his own party) to deal with.

## 2. A SMALL LABOUR MAJORITY

If Labour under Starmer are able to put together a performance which gets close to matching the swing that Blair achieved in 1997, then this will be enough to put Keir Starmer into Number 10 with a mathematical majority, and therefore without the need for any coalition or confidence and supply deals. As well, we will assume a similar-sized swing between Labour and the SNP in Scotland.

- Such a result would see Labour picking up over 150 seats, with **significant gains coming in particular in the North West (23, 32% of the constituencies in the region), Yorkshire and the Humber (27, 31%), and Wales (11, 34%).**

- **In Scotland, Labour would move up to 12 seats while the SNP remained on 37, still by far the most dominant Scottish party.**
- Most importantly, compared to the hung parliament scenario, **Labour start making significant inroads into Conservative-held seats in areas which have not been electorally competitive for the party in some time, including in the East of England (8 in this scenario, versus 4 in Scenario 1), the South East (7, vs 12), and the South West (8, versus 4).**



In a Labour majority scenario, the constituency of Stevenage flips from being a Conservative hold to a Labour gain. This is a highly symbolic and important observation, as this commuter-belt town lends its name to the crucial second segment of the electorate that Labour must win over in order to win a parliamentary majority – Stevenage Woman, or, the 'Disillusioned Suburbans'.

This cluster tend to be **younger than the Patriotic Left, have a female gender split, are generally quite economically insecure, tend to have young families and live in towns or on the outskirts of big cities, do not tend to think about or engage in politics all that often, and are highly disillusioned with the parties and leaders currently on offer** in British politics. For Labour to get over the majority line, they will need to add a large portion of this segment to their coalition on top of winning back Workington Man.

Labour MPs returned from constituencies like Stevenage, and by voters like Stevenage Woman, will be representing people who have not had a Labour MP since the last time the party were in government. These voters have turned their back on the party essentially ever since they fell out of power almost 15 years ago.

They, and their concerns, are quite different from the urban-heavy support of the 2019 Labour voter coalition, and the 'Workington Man' group who would predominantly drive Labour to victory in a hung parliament scenario.

Disillusioned Suburbans are by no means 'core' or 'traditional' Conservative voters, but they will vote with their pocketbook to a strong degree, making economic credibility and addressing voter-financial concerns a key trick to winning over and keeping voters who will deliver the seats to get Labour across the majority line. They **also care about public services and the provision of them, as their relatively high economic insecurity leads them to being more reliant upon the state** than many other segments.

**THIS SORT OF PARLIAMENTARY SCENARIO, WHILE STILL A LABOUR WIN, WOULD CREATE A LONG BARREL OF PROCEDURAL AND LEGISLATIVE PROBLEMS FOR STARMER – SIMILAR TO THE HUNG PARLIAMENT SCENARIO, BUT WITH HOLDUPS AND HOLDOUTS COMING SOLELY FROM HIS OWN PARTY RATHER THAN FROM OTHERS.**

With his majority small, any caucus or lobby of Labour parliamentarians could potentially have the ability to frustrate, or even kill, legislation. Labour's Scottish contingent would not be all that large in this scenario, but could well be the difference between a bill passing or not. Similarly, the socialist grouping within Labour would be hugely strengthened in such a House of Commons, and could come into direct clash with first-time incumbents representing areas like Stevenage and other southern seats where economic credibility and financial competence are the terms of the day, rather than a constant drive to increase government spending.

Finally, while Starmer would likely be able to bet fairly safely on Labour staying in power for a full term (even if Labour were to dip below 325 or even 320 seats, it would be highly unlikely that an alternative government could put together a larger bloc of MPs to oust Labour from power), defending this majority for a second term would be extremely difficult. As such, he and Labour would be likely pushed more toward legislation, spending and investment that they believe would bring quicker, more short-term rewards.

### 3. A STRONG LABOUR MAJORITY

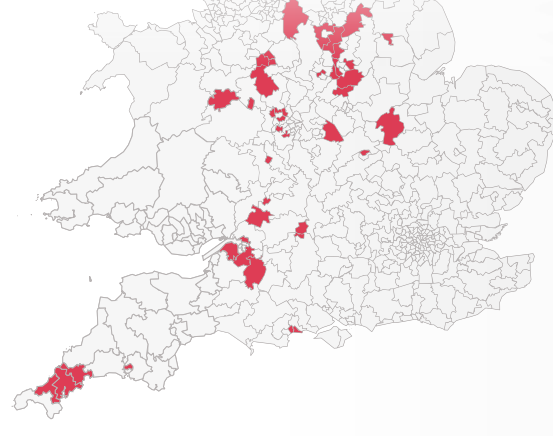
A third possible scenario covers the event in which Labour outdo Blair's achievements in 1997 in terms of swing, and win by a comfortable margin over their Conservative rivals in terms of vote share. A swing north of 10 points would be enough to see the 2019 result essentially fully reversed, and leave Labour with a majority of around 70 seats. In this scenario, we also assume a double-digit swing in Scotland from the SNP to Labour.

Unlike in the two former scenarios, a win such as this would leave Starmer in a comfortable position regarding getting through Labour's legislative agenda in the first Parliament, and also establish at least some level of confidence in the ability to set down and realise a two-term, 10-year plan. Governments with majorities of this hypothetical size do tend to defend them.

- In this sort of scenario, **Labour would be winning big across the west of the country in particular.** This includes many constituencies not held by the party since 2010, such as Plymouth Moor View and Telford, some not won by the party since 2005, such as Swindon North, and even some not in Labour hands since all the way back to 2001, such as Rugby.

#### WINNING THE WEST

**Projected outcome – constituencies likely to flip to Labour on a large national swing (modelled swing using notional 2019 results data)**



- To win a healthy majority, **Labour will be winning over the vast majority of 'swing' voters from all key groups, including the Patriotic Left, Disillusioned Suburbans, and the more Liberal Democrat-leaning 'Centrist Liberals' group.**

This segment of the British voting population is, according to the 'Red Shift' report, **economically to the right of the other two 'swing' segments, but culturally liberal.**

**FOR INSTANCE, THEY ARE LESS KEEN ON GOVERNMENT SPENDING THAN EITHER WORKINGTON MAN OR STEVENAGE WOMAN, BUT ARE FAR MORE PRO-IMMIGRATION AND PRO-CLIMATE CHANGE LITIGATION.**

Labour winning big among this group would demonstrate that they are convincing voters with high economic-competency thresholds to back Starmer and Reeves – and convincing many voters who might otherwise go to the Liberal Democrats to support Labour instead.

### 4. A LABOUR LANDSLIDE

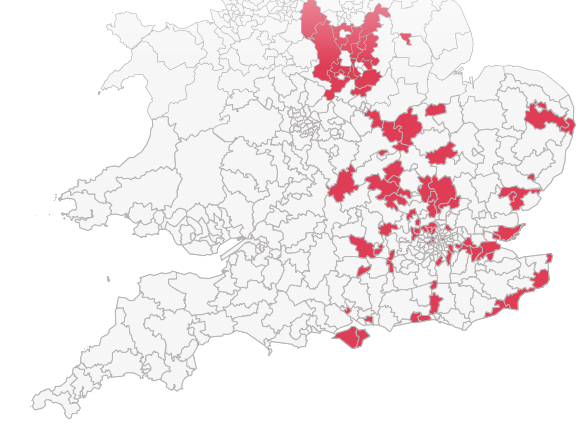
The final scenario explored in this analysis is a Labour landslide. If the polling numbers we see now, with 15-, 20-point Labour leads, hold up until the general election date itself, then Labour will be looking at a House of Commons victory in line with what Blair managed to accomplish in 1997 and then again in 2001.

**WHILE THE DIVERSITY OF VOICES AND INTERESTS WITHIN LABOUR WOULD BE LARGE IF THEY WERE PUSHING 400 WINS, SUCH WOULD BE THE SIZE AND COMMAND OF STARMER'S AUTHORITY THAT IT WOULD BE UNLIKELY THAT ANY INDIVIDUAL FACTION WOULD BE ABLE TO SINGLE-HANDEDLY PUSH GOVERNMENT POLICY IN ONE DIRECTION OR THE OTHER.**

In a landslide vote, **Labour would be winning over significant portions of loyal Conservative voters from what the Red Shift report describes as 'English Traditionalists'. These voters tend to be older, more likely to be retired, unlikely to be university educated, but also unlikely to be economically insecure.** They tend to be on the political right on most issues, including the economy, culture, immigration, and government spending and intervention.

#### ENTICING THE EAST

**Projected outcome – constituencies likely to flip to Labour on a landslide national swing (modelled swing using notional 2019 results data)**



They do, however, prioritise and reward competence and good management, and typify the sort of Conservative voter who will remain loyal to the party in most, but not all, circumstances.

- With traditional Conservative voter support would **come into the Labour fold a number of constituencies that have been voting Conservative since 2005 and earlier – particularly in the country's Eastern regions.** This includes a raft of seats not held by Labour since 2001, including Gravesham, Kettering, Bexleyheath and Crayford, and Northampton South.

- Elsewhere, in what would be quite remarkable results, both Isle of Wight seats could also flip in this sort of national environment (the equivalent current whole-island seat has never elected a Labour MP), as would Aldershot (also having never returned a Labour MP in its entire existence).

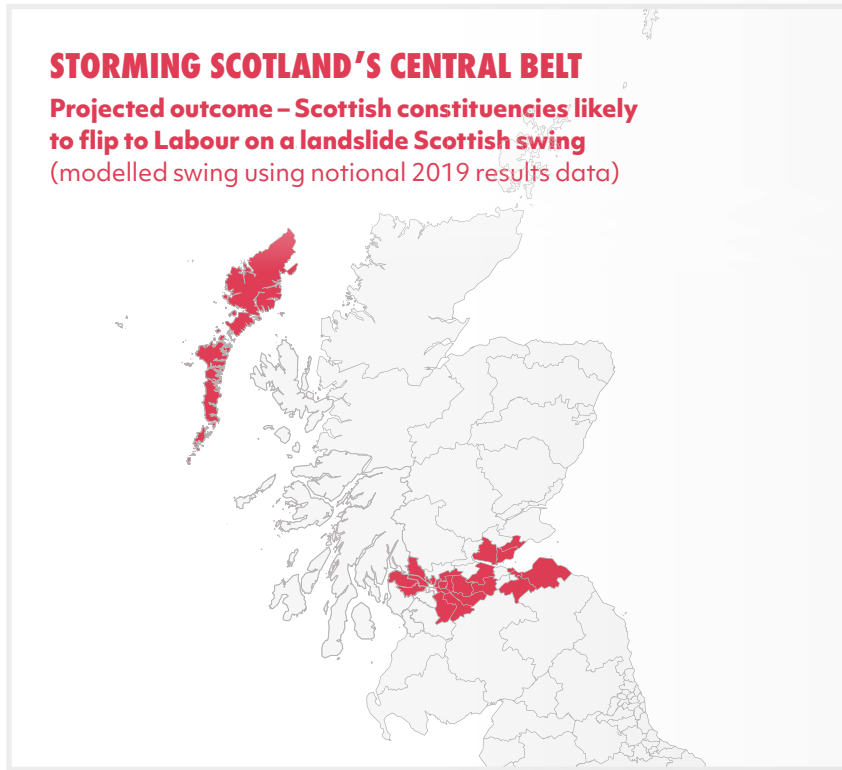


- For **Scottish Labour**, this sort of performance nationally would see them become the largest party in Scotland again, representing a symbolic shift in politics north of the border. They would be projected to win 28 seats, the SNP 22, the Liberal Democrats 5, and the Conservatives 2. Since 2015, the SNP have been the dominant force in Scotland, and even a significant withdrawal of the yellow tide in the 2017 election did not remove them from their position as the country's largest party.

For Labour to achieve this for the first time since the 2010 general election would be a result of significant importance. The vast majority of any such wins would come from the 'central belt' of Scotland – traditional Scottish Labour strongholds.

Labour in Scotland will be representing constituents with views and priorities markedly different from those of voters in other areas. Aside from the question of Scottish independence and the delicate and often volatile situations this creates (particularly for parties and politicians on the left), **policy discussions around 'net zero' and the exploitation of North Sea Oil also take on a very different shape in Scotland**, with much of the country's economy tied to that resource (an estimated 12% of GDP).

**STORMING SCOTLAND'S CENTRAL BELT**  
**Projected outcome – Scottish constituencies likely to flip to Labour on a landslide Scottish swing (modelled swing using notional 2019 results data)**



But, as alluded to above, while the issues Scottish Labour MPs represent would be quite unique, and their caucus substantial, the overall size of the Labour majority in this situation would not leave Starmer nor Labour's front bench needing to fear a Scottish Labour rebellion – or a rebellion of any other party faction – all that much. That said, they would be able to exert significant influence short of this, and Scottish MPs would be represented by a Westminster-governing party in numbers not seen in since 2005.

**PATHWAYS, REGIONS, AND ISSUES – COULD DIFFERENT SCENARIOS BRING IN DIFFERENT ISSUE AGENDAS?**

Now that we have outlined the different regions of the country which come more and more into play as the Labour winning margin grows, we can appeal to the latest polling, conducted exclusively for WA Communications, on how issue priorities vary across them to see what sorts of different priorities new Labour MPs will be representing.

YouGov asked over 6,100 people for their three 'most important issues facing the country today' and are able to provide robust regional estimates thanks to this large sample size.

While the top issues are quite consistent between all, there is interesting and important inter-regional variation. We can see for instance that **'inflation and the cost of living'** is a slightly stronger priority for voters in the **North East and Wales** (the first building blocks on Labour's road to victory) than it is in the South East or South West (which come in to play to build Labour majorities).

Similarly, **'immigration'** is much more of a pressing concern for those in the **North and Midlands** (key battleground areas for Labour) than it is for people living in London (already a Labour stronghold) and Scotland (where Labour require a big swing to re-establish themselves as the largest party) and, to a lesser degree, for those living the South East and South West.

Among all Brits, 14% picked **'energy supply'** as one of their top three most important issues facing the country today. This covers the generation and supply of energy to UK homes and businesses. While concern over UK energy did not vary dramatically when looking across regions, it was notably higher in the **North East of England, Yorkshire and the Humber, and Scotland** than in London and (to a lesser extent) the South East. The remaining regions were clustered closely around the GB average.

**'Transport'** was more of a concern in **London and Yorkshire and the Humber** than Wales, the North East, and the West Midlands.

People in the South West, Wales and the East of England are more concerned about **'health'** as an issue than those living in the **North East and West Midlands**. The rest of the regions track the GB average in this regard.

Finally, people living in Scotland and Wales in particular are concerned about the country's **'economy'** to a greater extent than those in the **West Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber, East Midlands, and the North West**.



# THE NEW PARLIAMENTARY LABOUR PARTY

It has been more than 18 months since Labour selected their first prospective parliamentary candidate for the General Election.

Now, as the Party looks to fill final vacancies in the final remaining non-battleground seats, we explore some of the candidates likely to make up the Labour benches after the election.

For our analysis, WA looked at 100 candidates in some of Labour's key target constituencies (seats with the smallest 2019 majority where Labour came second) and safe seats where the current MP is standing down, as well as a further 19 where boundary changes mean the notional majority is far easier for Labour to overturn.

Our analysis of Labour's top candidates reveals several trends:

## LOCAL CANDIDATES

**80%**

of Labour's top candidates can be considered 'local' (defined here as born, raised, lived or worked in the constituency before becoming a candidate).

## UNION MEMBERSHIP

It is a long-standing tradition for Labour candidates to highlight their union membership as they seek selection, and so it is with the new cohort, as more than two-thirds of candidates reference the union they are members of on their website or social media channels.

**40%**

belong to the GMB union, reiterating its significant presence within Labour.

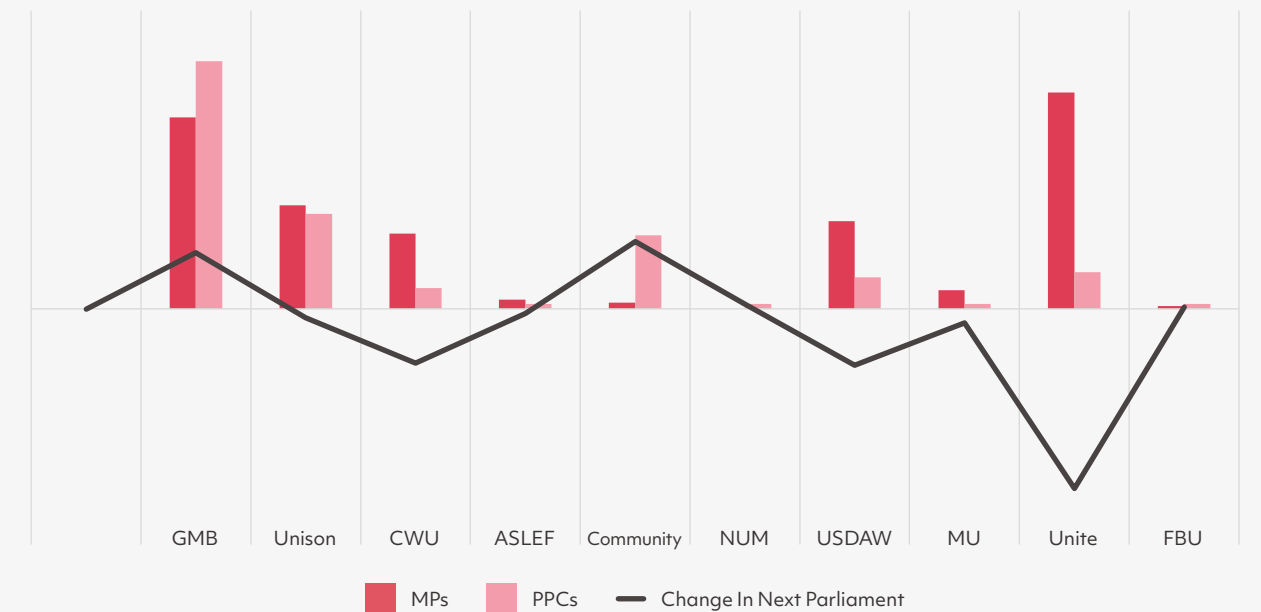
In addition Unison and Community, reflecting their large memberships, feature prominently among potential candidates.

Comparing the union membership of these Labour candidates with 180 current Labour MPs with identifiable union links, suggests significant movement in the membership levels of the major Labour-supporting unions after the election.

In particular, the significant difference between the number of current Labour MP's supporting Unite, versus the number of candidates associated with the union – 35% of MPs vs 6% of candidates – illustrates how far a newly elected PLP will have moved in four years. Unite, which had been Jeremy Corbyn's most supportive union backer under its previous General Secretary, has made a conscious decision to focus on industrial activity rather than political activity under new leadership. This is a significant move for a trade union that is an amalgamation of the TGWU, MSF and AEEU, three of the most influential unions in the history of the Labour Party.

Our analysis on page 59 explores the central role that trade unions play in government and policymaking under Labour, and the perspectives different unions bring.

## UNION MEMBERSHIP



## LEGISLATIVE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPERTISE

**ALMOST 10%**

of Labour's top candidates are former MPs.

Along with a former MSP, and a former MEP, they would bring much-needed legislative experience to Labour's benches if elected. The list of those looking to return to Westminster includes six former Shadow Ministers, as well as Douglas Alexander, who served as a Secretary of State in the last Labour government before losing his seat in 2015.

Equally, many senior politicians over the years have cut their teeth in local government, which continues to provide a perfect launchpad for those seeking a path to Westminster.

**32%**

of Labour's top candidates are current or former local councillors.

## BUSINESS EXPERIENCE

**29%**

of Labour's top candidates come from the private sector.

While a wide range of sectors and industries are represented across these PPCs – from FMCG and the media, to utilities and infrastructure – overall, the limited first-hand experience of business reiterates the need for firms to clearly communicate their work, their contribution to the UK's economy and society, and how they can partner with government around shared aims.

We looked at a selection of frequently used words – all from the top 500 most commonly used in tweets by Conservative MPs, Labour MPs, and Labour PPCs\* – and compared the ranking of their use.

- Tweets by **Conservative MPs** are far more likely to use the words business, economy, and investment. Business is the second most used word in our ranking from Conservative MP tweets, but only the 6th or 8th most used by Labour MPs and PPCs respectively.
- In contrast, **Labour MPs and PPCs** both talk frequently about children and schools, the NHS ... as well as pay.

In most cases, the ranking of word use within the Labour Party – whether MPs or PPCs – is very similar, although Labour candidates are far more likely than Labour MPs to use the word “green” or “investment”.

Ranking	Word	Conservative MPs Twitter Mentions	Word	Labour MPs Twitter Mentions	Word	Labour PPCs Twitter Mentions
1	work	12814	work	12154	work	7488
2	business	5087	child	5759	child	3337
3	energy	4289	school	5619	school	3177
4	economy	4195	pay	5523	pay	2936
5	school	3807	nhs	5026	nhs	2854
6	child	3422	business	3574	energy	2112
7	investment	3252	health	3387	economy	2007
8	health	2724	energy	3275	business	1896
9	pay	2706	economy	3135	health	1657
10	nhs	2255	worker	3079	green	1506
11	young	2000	young	2440	young	1363
12	growth	1979	staff	2391	worker	1314
13	staff	1750	union	2030	staff	1288
14	industry	1745	growth	1784	growth	995
15	education	1743	green	1689	education	962
16	hospital	1371	education	1527	union	941
17	green	1311	bus	1418	bus	925
18	bus	1274	hospital	1363	investment	815
19	transport	1155	industry	1354	hospital	743
20	climate	1143	climate	1279	climate	662
21	charity	1081	rail	1054	industry	582
22	rail	816	investment	1025	transport	542
23	childcare	807	charity	873	childcare	510
24	worker	787	transport	816	charity	487
25	union	731	childcare	737	rail	402

26 \*The figures above show total unadjusted number of mentions by 308 Conservative MPs, 190 Labour MPs and 113 Labour PPCs.







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# A developing policy platform

# LABOUR'S RELATIONSHIP WITH BUSINESS

**TOM FRACKOWIAK**  
Senior Partner



**DEAN SOWMAN**  
Senior Partner



**“How does this compare to the ‘97 election?” It’s a question being increasingly asked of us, as businesses are drawing parallels to predict what they might expect from an incoming Labour government.**

Some similarities are clear. A steady polling lead that’s barely moved in the last year. A long period of Conservative government, that’s become fractious. And, indeed, familiar figures, particularly Blair and Brown, advising and shaping policy.

All this evokes memories of that landslide election, and what it gave to businesses; confidence, long-term vision, and opportunities (all of which have been largely missing for the last few years).

But it’s also where some of the parallels end. Blair and New Labour promised that ‘Things can only get better’ and were in a strong position to make good on this. Blair inherited a burgeoning economy nationally and globally; the UK’s position on the international stage was stable; and domestically, while public services were far from perfect, they were arguably functioning effectively. Since then, we’ve had the triple shocks of Brexit, the COVID pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which have only worsened the toll taken by years of austerity.

This Labour team are very aware of the tough economic circumstances they are going to inherit if elected – but accept that you can’t pick the elections you win, you just have to govern when given the opportunity. So, despite caution within Labour on their consistent large polling leads over the Conservatives, winning the General Election might be the easy part.

And central to Labour’s vision for government is an adherence to “ironclad discipline” in relation to public finances.

**LABOUR’S FINAL NATIONAL POLICY FORUM DOCUMENT STATES: “LABOUR’S FISCAL RULES, AS SET OUT BY SHADOW CHANCELLOR RACHEL REEVES, ARE NON-NEGOTIABLE. THEY WILL APPLY TO EVERY DECISION TAKEN BY A LABOUR GOVERNMENT, WITH NO EXCEPTIONS. THAT MEANS THAT LABOUR WILL NOT BORROW TO FUND DAY-TO-DAY SPENDING, AND WE WILL REDUCE NATIONAL DEBT AS A SHARE OF THE ECONOMY.”**

This is why we have seen Labour’s key economic and net zero £28bn green pledge jettisoned, and why the Shadow Treasury team is carefully costing every manifesto policy commitment.

So, what does this mean for how a Labour government will govern? Given there are no shortage of challenges to solve.

Tony Blair was fond of the catchphrase “education, education, education!” A Keir Starmer Labour government will be about “delivery, delivery, delivery!”

Labour will make hard choices and pick a small number of winning policies, ruthlessly focused on its Five Missions: Secure the highest sustained growth in the G7; Make Britain a clean energy superpower; Build an NHS fit for the future; Make Britain’s streets safe; and Break down the barriers to opportunity at every stage.

They have repointed towards business, who they view as a collaborative partner, and are determined to create an economic strategy which is based on providing a stable economic environment to encourage private investment.

Policy making will be focused on long-term decisions, with an industrial strategy and infrastructure plan that Labour will stick to.

Therefore, Labour Shadow Ministers and a Labour government will be open to new thinking if it doesn’t come with a price tag and can be shown to deliver.

The open question is: will a potential thawing in the relationship with Europe add additional economic benefits or opportunities for business? Or will Labour’s rhetoric about making Brexit work fall short when it meets the reality of negotiating what this means for the UK?

Keir Starmer may well dance to the tune of ‘Things Can Only Get Better’ on election night. But if that is going to be made true, they have a mountain to climb in government – and they want business there for the ride.

## MANIFESTO TRACKER

In this section we explore Labour’s developing policy platform.

This is part of our on-going manifesto tracker, which will bring together the key Labour, Conservative, and Lib Dem policies, in advance of the general election.

While the final Labour Manifesto will be continually in development until the election date, and subject to the party’s Clause V process, our analysis divides policies in to four bands:

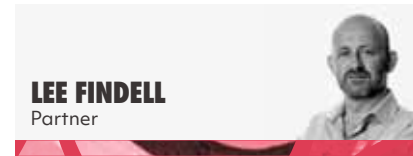
**Manifesto Primed** – for example, formally announced in a Labour Party report, by a Shadow Minister, as part of the National Policy Forum process, or similar.

**Under Discussion** – for example, suggestions from the party’s remaining policy review processes.

**Areas to Watch** – for example, off-the-record Labour briefings, media commentary, or ideas from influential organisations such as Labour-related think tanks, unions or groups.

**Gaps** – the key remaining areas where policy is still to be set, or lacks significant detail.

# EDUCATION AND SKILLS



**LEE FINDELL**  
Partner

**“IT IS MY MISSION TO SHATTER THE CLASS CEILING IN BRITAIN, SO THAT WHEN PARENTS TELL THEIR CHILDREN: ‘IF YOU WORK HARD, YOU CAN ACHIEVE ANYTHING’ THEY WILL BE ABLE TO, NO MATTER WHERE THEY’VE COME FROM”**

Keir Starmer

**Education policy doesn’t often come up when we look at the themes that may define the General Election campaign, and yet it could be an area where (even incrementally) Labour look to make a profound impact on society.**

Although rarely commented upon, the upper echelons of the Labour Shadow Cabinet are made up of people who have come from modest (and in many cases impoverished) backgrounds. Many rose to these prominent positions through a good education and academic achievement, yet they now see a country in which the opportunities they were afforded may not be available for those who come from similar backgrounds.

The difficulty is that Labour will inherit burning platforms across the sector – expensive childcare, crumbling schools, pupil absenteeism, teacher shortages, industrial unrest, a disjointed skills system, and universities facing bankruptcy.

In broad terms, Labour will look to reset the relationship from one that has become overly confrontational to one that celebrates the sector and those who work in it. But in practical terms there is little or no money to address the many challenges.

Even sorting out the multitude of problems with early years settings and schools is a mammoth task that could take 10 years. That is before we get onto the central role that skills will need to play in a successful industrial strategy, and the importance of universities to place-based economic growth.

While changing the mechanics of Whitehall may not be a priority for an incoming government, it would not be surprising if a new Labour government were to take a leaf out of the last Labour administration’s book and move tertiary education out of the Department for Education to better align it with the new industrial strategy.

We can anticipate early moves such as: introducing VAT on private school fees; a curriculum review; reform of Ofsted; and a pause and reassessment of the impact of T-Levels and defunding of level 3 qualifications. In addition, as the issue rises up the political agenda, they will need to make a decision on international student visas and closing the university funding gap.

It is a Herculean challenge, but it is clear that the Labour team, from the leader down, see a fairer education system that breaks down the barriers to opportunity for every child at every stage, as their abiding mission in government.

## RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS SECTOR

RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Crisis management</b> – Labour has big ambitions on education, but will be inheriting a sector in crisis, and must find a way to manage these issues and progress its policy ambitions. For example, it is easy to see a situation whereby sensible initiatives, such as the curriculum review, are derailed by issues such as further industrial unrest with teachers.</li> <li>• <b>Big policy gaps still exist</b> – There are a number of issues within the sector that sit in the ‘too big to deal with until we’re in government’ bucket. For example, university finances and the related issue of international students is one of those which could easily consume not only the DfE but also the Home Office and Treasury.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A more positive relationship</b> – Labour will move quickly to change the – at times – antagonistic relationship the Conservative government has had with the sector. Stakeholders who can make a positive contribution both to the sector’s future and to enabling Labour’s policy ambitions will have opportunities to be ‘in the tent’.</li> <li>• <b>Review, review, review</b> – Labour have been on a listening exercise with sector stakeholders, which has led to a series of promises to review some of the fundamentals across the sector, including regulation, funding and the curriculum. These reviews will offer an important opportunity for stakeholders to bring forward policy solutions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic growth will be the over-riding priority for Labour if they enter government. Central to that will be productivity and skills. Businesses and organisations with <b>data-led insight and expertise</b> that can address the skills gap will get a hearing.</li> <li>• Many of the education challenges that Labour will need to address will need medium-to-long term solutions, but they will want to <b>get moving with reviews and planning</b>. Across different parts of the sector, there will be opportunities to engage in these reviews and policy-development exercises.</li> </ul>



## EDUCATION AND SKILLS – POLICY TRACKER

### MANIFESTO PRIMED

#### Early years

- Make parental leave a day-one right, and simplify the complexity of shared parental leave and pay.
- Drive an ambitious programme of childcare reform, with higher standards for early education, better availability for all parents and stronger regulation of the financial sustainability of providers.
- Remove barriers for local councils to open more nurseries where needed.

#### Schools

- Invest in more teaching and support staff through a comprehensive school improvement plan.
- Utilise funds from ending tax breaks for private schools to recruit an extra 6,500 teachers to fill vacancies.
- Undertake a curriculum review to ensure a broad curriculum, address the narrowing of subjects (e.g. creative arts) and include practical life skills. Make the new curriculum compulsory for all state schools.
- Provide ongoing teacher training and more training opportunities for support staff.

- Introduce two weeks' worth of compulsory work experience for every pupil and provide professional careers advice in schools and colleges.
- Reform of Ofsted inspections, replacing current grading system with new 'report cards'.
- Set higher standards for academies and Multi-Academy Trusts, including making them subject to Ofsted inspections, SEND inclusion requirements and the requirement to follow the national curriculum.
- Introduce fully funded free breakfast clubs and strengthen school uniform guidance to keep costs down for families.

#### Tertiary education

- Ensure genuine choice and equivalency in further and higher education with vocational and academic courses.
- Champion a thriving college and training sector, including creating Technical Excellence Colleges to help connect learners with jobs.
- Reform the Apprenticeship Levy to create a new Growth and Skills Levy.

- Reform the tuition fees and loans structure for fairer repayment and accessibility.
- Ensure universities provide excellent teaching, support researchers and engage with local communities.
- Work with universities to increase the commercial success of start-ups and spinouts from their innovation and research.

#### Skills

- Labour's overarching plan to address the skills shortage in England is centred on the establishment of a new expert body, Skills England, to coordinate action to drive forward skills development in line with the wider industrial strategy. The new body will have a remit to tackle regional skills gaps as well as coordinating national action to develop the skills needed to achieve decarbonisation and boost priority growth sectors.

### UNDER DISCUSSION

#### Children's social care

- Labour have been relatively quiet on their plans for children's care, but with costs spiralling they know it will need to be addressed. With Josh McAllister, the author of the government's Care Review, likely to enter Parliament as a new Labour MP, expect Labour to set out plans for how they will address the funding and capacity challenges the sector faces.

#### Tertiary education

- Labour have been very critical of the Office for Students, calling it 'politicised' and promising reform. It is not inconceivable that its powers are brought under a new Skills England with lighter-touch regulation.

### AREAS TO WATCH

#### Schools

- Even though the Government have begun consultation on the introduction of the Advanced British Standard (ABS) to replace A levels, the new baccalaureate-style qualification is likely to be abandoned under an incoming Labour government.

- There are clear signals that tertiary education could be moved away from the DfE. Skills is central to the Industrial Strategy, which lies within Jonathan Reynolds' Business remit, and traditionally in Labour governments, universities have sat alongside Science and Innovation, currently Peter Kyle's brief.

### GAPS

#### Early years

- The costs of childcare can be crippling for families, preventing parents returning to the workplace. Labour have recognised the problem, but how it can be solved alongside better integration with the education system is to be resolved.

#### Schools

- There are structural issues at the heart of school provision in England on the role of local authorities and the independence and freedom of academies. This confusion of responsibilities will need to be addressed and resolved by a Labour government within its first term.

#### Tertiary education

- There are promised reforms to student finance, but what this looks like is unclear and the sector is teetering on the edge, with the real possibility of some universities going bankrupt. A Labour government will need to find a way of closing the gap between the fees paid by domestic students versus the real cost of their education, without increasing the debt burden and repayment levels on graduates.
- UK universities are traditionally an attractive destination for international students, but a combination of increased competition from other markets (especially Australia and Canada) and the current government's measures to reduce visas for dependents and restrict the graduate 'right to work' visa is putting downward pressure on applications, exacerbating the sector's funding crisis. Labour will need to balance the UK's openness to international students with ongoing concerns over migration levels. One way around this would be for a new government to remove international student numbers from migration figures, something that has been suggested by several senior figures within the Labour Party.

# ENERGY



**Labour's energy policy platform is arguably the boldest and most ambitious set of ideas they have. Over recent years they have incrementally knitted together an agenda which, while broadly in line with the current direction of travel, goes beyond current government policy and substantially steps up the pace.**

Fundamentally, Labour's Clean Energy Mission has three key components: greater pace, with an ambition to decarbonise the power sector by 2030 (compared with the current government target of 2035); a greater role for the state, with the establishment of a publicly owned energy company, GB Energy; and greater public investment through the Green Prosperity Plan, with more public spending for the Net Zero agenda, even in a recently scaled-back form.

The party's agenda here is driven by Shadow Net Zero Secretary Ed Miliband, perhaps providing some explanation for the more radical platform compared with the safety-first approach they have taken elsewhere. Despite tensions on some aspects of their plan – most notably the level of public funding required to deliver it – there's a recognition from other senior figures, including Keir Starmer, Rachel Reeves and Jonny Reynolds, that the clean energy transition is critical to their wider economic growth and industrial strategy priorities.

## SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS – ENERGY

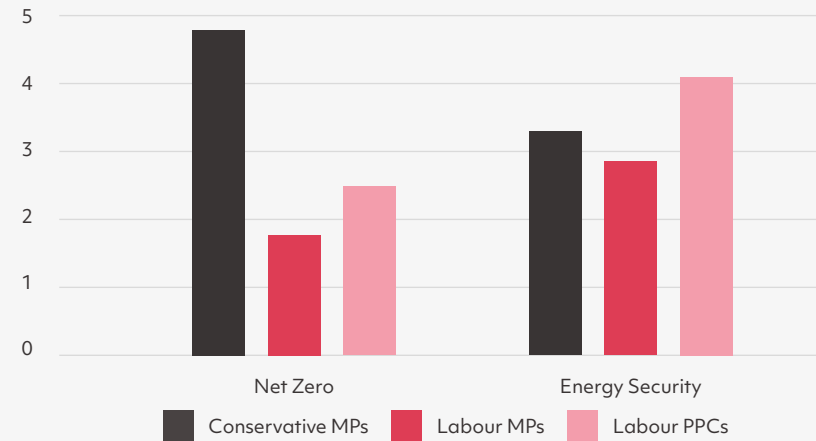
Analysis of Twitter posts from current Conservative MPs, Labour MPs, and top Labour candidates illustrates the different dimensions of the energy policy conversation.

Conservative MPs focus more on **net zero** topics, while both Labour MPs and (even more strongly) sampled Labour candidates are more likely to emphasise **energy security** issues.

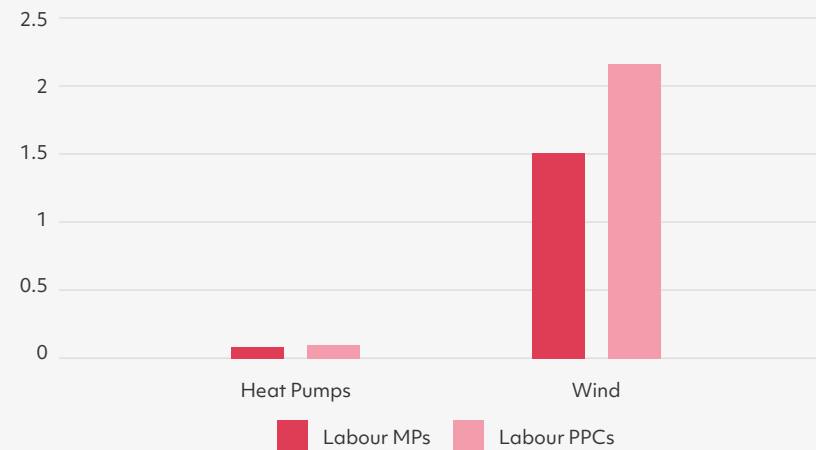
The Conservative emphasis on Net Zero compared to Labour's focus on Energy Security was also found in our recent MP polling – "which energy goal MPs thought the UK government should prioritise", as well as a number of other findings, can be found on [page 11 of our report 'Making the UK a Clean Energy Superpower'](#)



## ENERGY POLICY PRIORITIES



## HEAT PUMPS VS WIND POWER



Twitter Analysis – mentions per sampled MP or PPC.

A comparison between mentions of 'Heat Pumps' against 'Wind Power' reveals that the bulk of the political conversation is around generation (particularly renewables) rather than what is possibly the most difficult bit: decarbonising homes.

There are a number of challenges remaining:

**1. Deliverability:** it's widely accepted across the energy sector that decarbonising the power sector by 2030 is a Herculean task, and even if all factors were in a Labour government's favour, the target would probably be impossible to meet. Miliband himself acknowledges this, arguing the ambition is the most important element, but expect significant media and political scrutiny in the coming months and don't be surprised if other figures in Labour carefully distance themselves from this target.

**2. The critical detail:** arguably Labour have given more detail on their Clean Energy Mission than many other areas of policy, but there are still critical pieces of information missing, and industry lacks any sense of a clear 'roadmap' for achieving the ambition. In some areas – particularly renewables deployment – Labour are further ahead in their thinking, but in others, particularly nuclear, CCS and heat decarbonisation, the crucial 'how' is missing. Key elements including how to resolve grid connection and planning issues, and tackling net zero skills, need 'ready to deploy' plans aligned across different departments.

### 3. Is it politically achievable?

Achieving this vision requires politically difficult choices to be made – how do you deliver new energy infrastructure at pace without alienating communities; how can you build UK supply chains while still delivering value for money; and how do you decarbonise homes without adding expense and causing disruption for homeowners? Successive governments have swerved some of these tough questions, and it's unclear at present to what extent Labour will take these on. Partly that will depend on the scale of their majority and the places where they win – if Labour does well in Scotland, a more pragmatic approach to the North Sea oil and gas industry could be on the cards; and similarly a landslide majority that sees Labour win swathes of seats in places like Wales, East Anglia and down the East Coast may make it harder to force through radical planning reform to build new power lines and energy infrastructure.

### 4. 'Selling' the mission to voters:

one of the key questions industry regularly asked on the Green Prosperity Plan (up to £28bn per year in public spending by the end of the next parliament, before it was scaled back) was why the party hadn't done more to articulate the benefits of the package to voters. In part this was due to wide recognition that the package was constantly under threat, but the question could also be asked about other elements of their energy plan: the party have an opportunity to tell a clearer and more tangible story about how this agenda will genuinely improve the lives of communities across the country – new, high-quality, long-term jobs and cheaper energy bills.

Miliband talks of adopting a 'Covid Vaccine' style mentality to achieve this mission. It remains to be seen whether he'll have the political support, capacity and resource to drive this forward.



## RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE ENERGY SECTOR

RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Unknowns</b> – While Labour's thinking on energy policy is arguably more advanced than in other areas, there are significant gaps still to be filled and plenty of questions over 'how' a Labour government will achieve this. That creates uncertainty for developers and investors.</li><li>• <b>Policy being made without the involvement of key industries</b> – With plenty of policy gaps, a need for quick progress upon entering government and a small team with limited bandwidth, there's a risk that some decisions could be made quickly either pre- or post-election without the full involvement of key industries.</li><li>• <b>Clear shift away from some parts of the sector</b> – While clean-energy generators and those driving forward electrification will be clear winners under a Labour government, the party is also clear that they see a shift away from oil and gas and are sceptical on the role of hydrogen for heating.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Clarity on ambition</b> – Even if the 2030 power decarbonisation target is not met, it provides a clear direction of travel, positive for clean-energy developers and investors who want certainty.</li><li>• <b>Pace</b> – To have any chance of achieving power decarbonisation, Labour needs to move fast, providing significant opportunities for businesses with major projects that need to progress promptly, from offshore wind to carbon capture.</li><li>• <b>Clear role for the private sector</b> – Labour's ambition and the recent downgrading of public investment in the energy transition open up a significant role for the private sector.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>A Labour government will need quick wins</b> – Projects that can be delivered at pace (within their first term), and make a tangible contribution to their 2030 power decarbonisation target will get most traction.</li><li>• Labour are aware of the challenges they face in achieving the Clean Power Mission. <b>Businesses that can provide implementable solutions</b> – where possible with clear actions for industry as well as government – will get the best hearing.</li><li>• <b>A year for politics rather than policy</b> – The energy sector is blessed with plenty of exciting, innovative solutions that provide the perfect background for site visits and photo ops – make the most of this.</li><li>• <b>Build allies with influencers</b> – There are clear influencers on Labour energy policy, from think tanks and academics to trade unions and key parliamentarians. It's vital to build bridges with these critical allies, who can echo your message in an increasingly congested environment.</li></ul>



## ENERGY – POLICY TRACKER

### MANIFESTO PRIMED

- A commitment to decarbonise the power sector by 2030, with 100% zero-carbon power.
- Establishing Great British Energy, a publicly owned energy company – headquartered in Scotland – to invest in clean homegrown power, capitalised with £8.3bn (including the Local Power Plan's £3.3bn).
- A Local Power Plan (£3.3bn of GB Energy's £8.3bn) to invest in community power, with a target of 8GW of clean power by 2030.
- A £7.3bn National Wealth Fund (aiming to 'crowd in' £3 of private finance for every £1 of public spending) to invest in key parts of the net zero economy, including green steel, port infrastructure, industrial hubs, gigafactories and green hydrogen production.
- The British Jobs Bonus to incentivise clean-energy developers to support British jobs and supply chains, by providing capital grants to help companies target their investment particularly at the regions that most need it. The exact mechanism and critical details on how this will work have yet to be set out.

- Introducing a Warm Homes Plan, with an additional £6.6bn of public investment, doubling the current level of government funding, as a national programme to upgrade up to five million of the UK's 16 million homes below an EPC rating of C over the course of the next parliament.
- Strengthen and extend the oil and gas windfall tax – partly to fund elements of the Green Prosperity Plan where government borrowing has been scaled back – by increasing the headline rate to 78%, removing investment allowances and extending it until the end of the next parliament.
- A transition away from oil and gas with a commitment to no new oil and gas licences – the exact definition of this still being under debate.
- A commitment to planning and grid connection reform early in the first term of a Labour government, with a plan to 'Rewire Britain', although with many outstanding questions over how to do this and an indication that early progress will be made without legislation.

### UNDER DISCUSSION

- Reforming how infrastructure is delivered with Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury Darren Jones currently undertaking a review into Major Capital Projects.
- Exploring how to boost private investment in energy infrastructure projects through the establishment of a British Infrastructure Council.

### AREAS TO WATCH

- Reforms to Ofgem are unclear – but in the pipeline – with an expectation that Labour will launch a review of regulators upon entering government.
- Wider reforms to the energy governance landscape could also be on the table as part of their plans to establish GB Energy, with it currently being unclear what institutions and structures they will use to drive progress towards GB Energy (with the role of organisations like NESO, code bodies and Ofgem in this unclear).

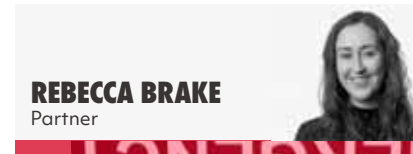
### GAPS

- A clear plan for decarbonising homes is still missing, with the downgraded Warm Homes Plan giving some clarity but major question marks still hanging over how a Labour government will decarbonise heat, with a decision expected in 2026 on future heat technologies. Labour are expected to double down on heat pumps over hydrogen for domestic heat, but the exact mechanism for increasing uptake is still unclear.
- Plans for the retail energy market are unclear, with Labour focused on generation. Beyond ruling out nationalisation of networks and suppliers, and an ambition to provide cheaper energy bills, it's unclear what a Labour government will mean for energy consumers. The role of GB Energy in the supply market and the way in which a Labour government will support the transition to smarter, more flexible energy markets are not fully defined.

- Despite commitments – from across the party – to supporting different energy technologies, from wind (offshore and onshore) to nuclear, and solar to CCS, Labour's exact plans for how to support the development of different generation technologies are not yet clear, with detailed plans for each missing.
- Clarity on how Labour will solve the Net Zero skills challenge is lacking.



# HEALTH



**REBECCA BRAKE**  
Partner

Should Labour form the next government, they will inherit a healthcare system in perilous condition, with the NHS contending with some of the largest care backlogs ever recorded.

**WITH AN AGEING POPULATION, MAJOR ILLNESS ON THE RISE, AND A SOCIAL CARE SYSTEM STUCK IN THE 'TOO DIFFICULT' BOX, THE URGENT IN-TRAY IS PILING UP.**

Fronted by the Shadow Health Secretary, Wes Streeting MP, Labour have confidently set out their stall on how they will seek to improve the UK's crippled health system.

However Labour's overarching plan for fiscal responsibility has not been spared for health. The message is clear – Labour will not simply pour cash into the NHS through increased taxation, and reform is the priority.

Labour's published mission to 'Build an NHS Fit for the Future' provides the policy platform to back this up. It sets out their objectives: bring more care into the community through support for primary care, build a workforce for the future with a focus on retention and training, and harness technology, such as AI, to support the NHS. These are all underpinned by a commitment to embedding prevention and not shying away from working in collaboration with the private sector when best for patients.

Their mission-driven approach will also draw on a bold idea to embed health in all policies – trying to remove departmental silos that limit government's ability to drive through real change. Their call to action is for businesses and civic society to get behind the missions too – in effect having a whole societal effort to achieve big outcomes. This expansive thinking has been welcomed; there have long been calls for the health impact of poor housing, employment and education to be tied together. However, such an approach is challenging to deliver and political reality may win the day.

Given that health will likely be a key election issue, Labour will be expected to be watertight on how their ambitions will be delivered and how plans will be funded. This job has become even harder as the Chancellor stole Labour's long-trailed plan to fund cuts to NHS waiting lists by scrapping the non-dom tax.

Should Labour be handed the keys to No.10 towards the end of the year, they will need to act quickly. Public expectations are high, and the inevitable NHS winter crisis will be viewed as an early major test for a new government.

Handled well, this could provide the opportunity for Labour to show they can deal with an ailing NHS competently. However, the consequence may be that it limits their ability to delve into their desired reform right away.

## RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE HEALTH SECTOR

RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Given the widespread challenges in health, and the pressure from other parties to ensure every policy is fully costed, <b>Labour may avoid making concrete commitments within healthcare</b> that are seen as too politically risky.</li> <li>Labour's plans are supportive about working with the private sector to support the NHS, which provides an opportunity to engage. However, amongst some wings of the Labour party and members, there remains a <b>negative attitude towards private sector support</b>.</li> <li>Labour have introduced a wide-ranging vision for the NHS. However, it will need to be implemented in the current landscape. <b>Increased pressure on the NHS could divert attention</b> from long-term objectives to short-term firefighting.</li> <li>Labour's mission will require support and buy-in from across the UK's health providers. <b>It will be a challenge for Labour to get all relevant parties on board</b> and working towards their mission, which may hinder some of their plans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Labour's '<b>Build an NHS Fit for the Future</b>', contains the blueprint for engaging with the party ahead of the election, and provides clarity on where they believe the challenges are most pertinent.</li> <li>Within the plan, there is a <b>clear role for the private sector</b>. Labour knows there is a long road ahead to elevate the NHS to where they want it to be. This means an acceptance of the need to work with businesses in the short term, providing vital opportunities to build relationships.</li> <li>Along with the private sector, <b>Labour are working closely with the patient community</b>, illustrating that engagement which is rooted in strong policy objectives and backed by wider stakeholders and patient groups can gain traction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging with Labour <b>through the lens of their mission to 'Build an NHS Fit for the Future'</b>, can be beneficial, and provides a strong platform across a wide range of topics on which to engage. Engagement that can clearly illustrate an organisation's role in helping to achieve Labour's missions will be well received.</li> <li>Achieving Labour's mission will involve multiple stakeholders. It will be important to <b>continue working with other partners in health</b> to illustrate how you can support them in delivering future priorities.</li> </ul>

## HEALTH – POLICY TRACKER

### MANIFESTO PRIMED

- £1.1 billion investment to reduce NHS waiting lists in England through paying nurses and colleagues to provide out-of-hours appointments and procedures. It is hoped this investment will fund an extra 2 million appointments a year.
- Commitment to reform the Mental Health Act within Labour's first legislative programme, along with recruitment of 8,500 more mental-health practitioners.
- £171 million per year for a 'Fit for the Future Fund', to purchase new technology to help alleviate waiting lists.
- Commitment to deliver a Child Health Action plan seeking to cut waiting lists for paediatric services, support child mental health and dentistry, and regulate tobacco, vapes and the promotion of junk food. The plan also includes a commitment to train more health visitors to administer routine immunisations for at-risk children.

- Expand the role of community pharmacy through accelerating the roll-out of independent prescribing to establish a Community Pharmacist Prescribing Service covering a broad range of common conditions.
- Develop a Dentistry Rescue Plan which will seek to provide 700,000 extra appointments a year, along with a recruitment fund for dentistry.
- Labour have committed to passing a Clean Air Act with statutory targets on air pollution in line with WHO recommendations.

### UNDER DISCUSSION

- To rebuild the NHS, Labour have committed to a 10-year plan to reform and modernise services and the NHS estate.
- Labour have committed to make an assessment of all NHS capital projects to ensure they are best value.
- Through the NHS Digital Transformation Fund, add functions to make the NHS App a 'one stop shop' so patients can book appointments directly without going through their GP, as well as providing notifications and information on treatments and conditions.

- Commitment to slash QOF and IIF indicators to reduce red tape with incentives for continuity of care within updated frameworks.
- Seeking to achieve a 'Neighbourhood Health Service', Labour will trial Neighbourhood Health Centres with varying specialists at one location. This is reported to include GP hubs for patients to have appointments at evenings and weekends, as well as a doubling of district nurses and 5,000 trained health visitors.
- Labour will instruct NICE to make recommendations on instances where patients can refer themselves to specialist services.
- Create an open-access mental health hub for children and young people.
- Commitments to improve horizon scanning for emergency treatments to help prepare the NHS, as well as reform of incentives for technology adoption.
- Creation of a national framework to ensure health in all policies is embedded in long-term planning across government and public services.
- Introduce a target to end the Black maternal mortality gap.

### AREAS TO WATCH

- Labour's plans have mentioned the journey towards a National Care Service, but commitments on this have remained vague to date.
- On social care, they have mentioned a 10-year plan for reform which will include national standards.
- Labour's plans mention the delivery of a long-term workforce plan and although there has been initial funding commitment for staff, commitments on a plan are still to be confirmed.
- A plan for procurement, adoption and spread of technologies, along with plans to remove unnecessary bureaucracy, has been mentioned by Labour. Larger plans for this are to be confirmed, along with plans on how Labour will hold ICSs to account.
- Within Labour's plans they have referenced cancer, CVD and suicide as three main areas to combat, but plans to date have focussed on other activity to help drive this, such as primary care reform and improved uptake of new treatments.

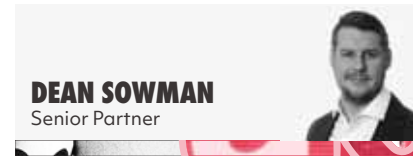
### GAPS

- Commentary has suggested Labour will avoid publishing a detailed, costed plan for social care, to avoid commentary on how this will be funded.
- Although Labour speak often about the need for reform, to date there have been no concrete proposals on reforming NHS structures.
- Labour have spoken strongly about the role of data and new technology such as AI, but beyond the 'Fit for the Future Fund' and 'NHS App', commitments to bolster this are vague beyond working with partners. They have mentioned opening data up to business and researchers (in line with data protection rights).





# LIFE SCIENCES



**DEAN SOWMAN**  
Senior Partner

**The life sciences industry is often held up as one of the UK's crown jewels by political leaders – but the sector has often felt that the rhetoric has not been matched by policy or commercial reality.**

As a result, there has been significant interest in Labour's proposed approach for supporting life sciences – not least because of the party's pro-business stance in contrast to the previous leadership's radical Medicines for the Many plan to nationalise drug development.

Launched in January, Labour's Life Sciences Strategy sought to appease concerns and demonstrate long-term commitment. It embeds life sciences both within broader economic ambitions (including around skills, long-term investment and productivity) and healthcare proposals around supporting innovation and data. Increasing participation in clinical trials features strongly.

As a statement of intent, it has been largely successful, with key industry bodies acknowledging that their concerns have been heard across the breadth of challenges facing the sector.

The Strategy covers a lot of ground and hits all the major issues – including a longer-term approach to investment in research and development, unblocking the regulatory regime, better use of data, the workforce, and access to treatments.

Most eye-catching from a delivery perspective is the ambition to move life sciences and innovation within the Health Secretary's ministerial responsibilities, giving it greater priority within healthcare and tying treatments in to Labour's wider 'health mission'. This approach will work alongside a stronger cross-sectoral Industrial Strategy to provide greater stability for UK industry, and a beefed-up Office for Life Sciences, and statutory Life Sciences Council.

Despite the positive words, the UK life sciences sector cannot succeed in isolation, and a thriving NHS is needed to improve R&D and ensure rapid adoption of approved treatments. Indeed, the wide-ranging challenges for the sector are unlikely to be quickly resolved, including uncertainty and bureaucratic hurdles in bringing new treatments to patients, and deep-rooted NHS system challenges in ensuring uptake.

A potential Labour government's commitment to the sector will be put to the test shortly after an election, when the 2024 voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing, access and growth has its 18-month review. The scheme was not referred to in the Strategy and with the economic challenges a Labour Government will face, there will be limited wriggle room that can be played with to placate global boardrooms.

## RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE LIFE SCIENCES SECTOR

RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivering these missions for the life sciences sector, particularly around clinical trials and medicines uptake, will <b>require a strong NHS</b>. Given the current state of the NHS, this may not be instantly achievable and could require a degree of expectation management.</li> <li>Unlike wider health plans, <b>many of these commitments remain uncosted</b>, which makes understanding their impact at this stage difficult to assess.</li> <li>Many of Labour's commitments for life sciences sit under <b>wider health priorities</b> such as workforce and data sharing. As these are developed, it will be important to make sure the importance of making reform work for life sciences is not overlooked.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Like Labour's Mission to 'Build an NHS Fit for the Future', Labour's life sciences plan sets out a <b>strong platform to engage</b>, working collaboratively with Labour to make this a reality.</li> <li>The plan specifically looks at how to <b>elevate life sciences as a key sector</b>. Industry should therefore not be afraid to join the discussion about how to bring growth to the UK, and what role businesses can play.</li> <li>There has never been better <b>acknowledgement from the Labour party</b> of the role life sciences can play in combatting health challenges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Industry should look to communicate to stakeholders <b>beyond brand-specific activity</b>, showcasing how businesses' role drives economic activity and contributes to the UK health system more broadly.</li> </ul>

## LIFE SCIENCES – POLICY TRACKER

### MANIFESTO PRIMED

- Increase research and development in Britain's pharmaceutical industry by £10 billion a year. The focus of this investment would be in areas such as cell and gene therapy, mRNA vaccines and the use of AI in healthcare.
- Introduce a Regulatory Innovation Office to hold regulators accountable for delays in bringing innovations to Britain, and a plan to unlock pension funds for investment in innovative businesses.
- A commitment has been made to develop a comprehensive innovation and adoption strategy in England. Working with industry, patients and ICSs, the strategy will align to the existing Life Sciences Vision and focus the system on harnessing innovation to improve outcomes.
- Labour will publish a trade strategy which will set out priorities for growth sectors, including life sciences.
- Introduce 10-year budgets for institutions such as UK Research and Innovation, compared with the three-year budgets currently set.
- Place life sciences and innovation directly under the Health Secretary's ministerial responsibilities.

### UNDER DISCUSSION

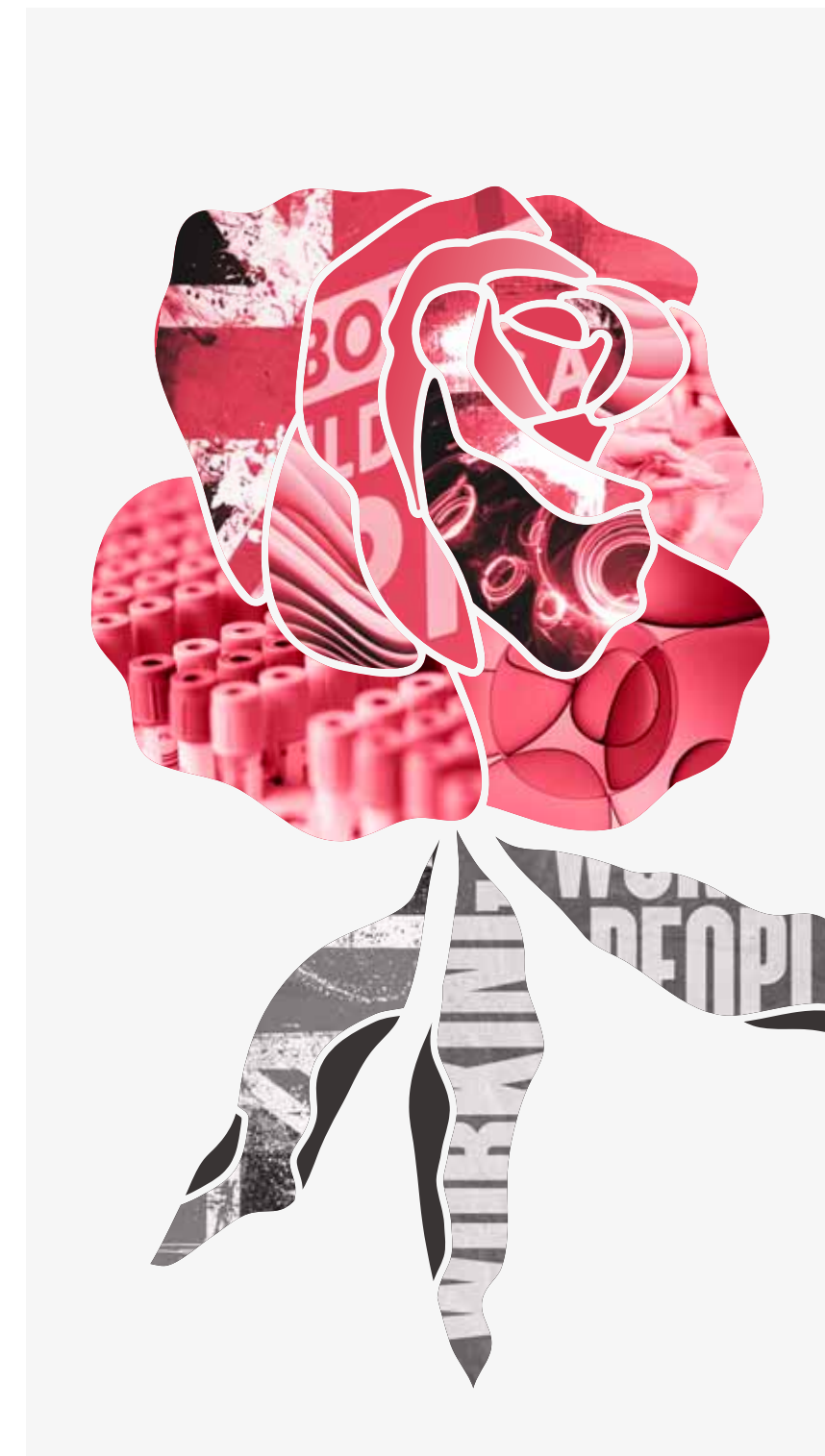
- As part of Labour's plans to increase the numbers of nurses and midwives, staff will be trained to support clinical trials.
- A commitment to combat unnecessary bureaucracy to set up clinical trials, with a commitment to conduct clinical trials in community settings and GP practices.
- Building the UK's capacity for clinical trials, Labour will look to speed up recruitment and give more people the chance to participate, with a focus on increasing diversity.
- Commitments have been made to bolster the Life Sciences Council, having its decisions reported into the Industrial Strategy Council.
- Commitments to appoint a senior official accountable for delivery across DHSC organisations, with the role to report to the Life Sciences Council on progress.
- Labour will look to work with other countries to find opportunities to remove redundant or duplicative requirements UK medicines face when accessing markets overseas, and maximise opportunities presented by our high regulatory standards to minimise regulatory trade barriers.

### AREAS TO WATCH

- Strengthening the Office for Life Sciences has been communicated by Labour but there have been no proposals as to how they will do that in practice. They have committed to ensuring the Council is 'politically empowered to deliver across government'.
- Labour will look to create a proper federation of data sets, with a single access point for researchers.
- Labour will encourage the British Business Bank to work to increase access to finance for the life sciences sector.
- Labour will evaluate the R&D tax credit scheme by sector, in which life sciences would be first.

### GAPS

- The plan is wide-ranging but doesn't delve into key treatment types that could be bolstered with targeted action, such as cell and gene therapies and mRNA vaccines.
- Labour's plans mention they will work within the current Life Sciences Vision, not committing to developing a vision of their own.
- Labour's plans, although wide-ranging, don't touch upon some key sector challenges such as NICE reform and VPAG. On MHRA reform, Labour note the pressures on the MHRA but do not commit to extra funding for the organisation to speed up review times.



# FINANCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES



**TOM FRACKOWIAK**  
Senior Partner

**NATASHA EGAN-SJODIN**  
Director

**Labour’s financial services platform – spearheaded by Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves – is an area of early clarity from the party and many of its plans have already been outlined in a bid to give the sector certainty. It has been resolutely clear in its ambition to achieve two key priorities: enhancing international competitiveness and growth, and reinforcing consumer protection.**

Reeves and her team have invested heavily in developing their plans early, with reviews by both Shadow Economic Secretary Tulip Siddiq and Shadow Chief Secretary Darren Jones underway in recent months. This pace has been driven, in part, by the importance of the sector in achieving the party’s ambition to become the fastest growing economy in the G7 and its plans are peppered with a heavy reliance on industry “playing its part” to revive the sector and ensure the UK remains competitive against a backdrop of declining listings and profit reports.

Central to these plans, the ‘Financing Growth’ report published ahead of Labour’s Business Conference in February has set out much of the party’s position on key financial services policies, a culmination of recommendations from Siddiq’s long-awaited review of the sector.

With an industry consultation window spanning the past six months, there are few surprises in the party’s financial services plan, and it offers continuity on many issues. Amongst them, a continuation of the bank ring-fencing scheme, a roll-out of community banking hubs, and progressing work underway with regulators on open banking, the advice and guidance boundary, and establishing a central bank digital currency. This stays true to Reeves’ stated aim of providing stability and security with her proposals, avoiding any major upheaval in policy to promote investor confidence and growth.

That said, early priorities for a new Labour government will centre around reforms pitched in direct response to inertia from the incumbent Conservative government. Industry can expect action on BNPL regulation, the Building Societies Act, the FCA’s Consumer Duty, and the EU / UK framework, in the first year.

A review of The City’s regulatory DNA, with possible reform of the PRA, the FCA, the Competition and Markets Authority, the Pensions Regulator, and the Payment Systems Regulator (PSR), also on the cards.

Whilst Labour’s plan for the sector has been laid out, there is significant detail to follow and there is a clear desire for a closer working relationship, unmarred by a banking windfall tax, should Labour take pole position at the next election. For those looking to engage, identifying how regulatory barriers can be unlocked to drive growth and deliver for consumers will be key.

## RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FINANCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES SECTOR

RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Regulatory overhauls</b> – a sector-wide review of regulatory mandates, with possible widespread reform, could be impactful and disorientating for businesses. Inputting into these consultations, and monitoring how the new watchdog shapes the industry-regulator dynamic, will be critical for established players and smaller innovators alike.</li> <li>• <b>Banking access</b> – Labour’s commitment to community banking access and financial inclusion could reopen access to cash and banking policy, with reform of the Financial Services and Markets Act an option to mandate greater access. This could increase pressures to meet demand, as well as the scrutiny of performance on in-person services.</li> <li>• <b>Consumer protection or competition and innovation</b> – the team are committed to driving international competitiveness, ensuring the UK is a financial global hub. But continued strong emphasis on consumer protection within new FS regulations may create red-tape for consumer-facing products, particularly in consumer credit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Undefined parameters</b> – there are a number of newly announced policies which have ambitious goals but lack a defined roadmap to reform. There is a gap to be filled with industry knowledge and guidance that can influence the policy formulation process.</li> <li>• <b>Innovation and fintech</b> – Labour is focused on the role innovation and fintech will have on financial services, and how the UK can maximise these opportunities from becoming a global standard-setter in AI and delivering on delivering Open Banking, tokenisation and a central bank digital currency.</li> <li>• <b>A new partnership</b> – Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves have been clear that they want a partnership with business and particularly financial services to drive economic growth, improve regional inequalities and build the next generation of green infrastructure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Consumer evidence</b> – the focus on consumer protection and outcomes means demonstrating gains for them is key to informing policy decisions. The Shadow Treasury team want evidence of how adopting new policies and regulations will benefit consumers; unique data and insight is therefore key to getting traction.</li> <li>• <b>Clear links to G7 economic growth mission</b> – with so much detail still to be determined and Rachel Reeves clear she needs growth to come from the FPS sector, having a clear position on how changes will impact the sector – economic growth, jobs and skills – will be important for businesses wanting to shape policy decisions.</li> <li>• <b>Policy pitches need to be generative, not costly</b> – Rachel Reeves has been clear that a line-by-line spending review will be needed early in a Labour government and that she will be tight on new spending commitments. Policy proposals put forward by industry can’t carry a high price tag and ideas which use existing frameworks or are industry funded will be warmly regarded.</li> </ul>



## FINANCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES – POLICY TRACKER

### MANIFESTO PRIMED

- A Labour government will make the UK an international leader on green finance – including defining a timeline for completion of the taxonomy and mandating increased financial institutions reporting.
- The regulation of Buy Now Pay Later will come within the first 12 months of a Labour government – a personal commitment made by Shadow City Minister Tulip Siddiq.
- Labour has signalled support for the on going work on the Future Regulatory Framework to push forward the UK's financial services sector outside of the EU. It has done so with the view to strengthen the UK's engagement with international jurisdictions to increase services exports and collaborating on shaping international standards.
- On access to community banking facilities and access to cash, Labour has committed to accelerate the roll-out of at least 350 bank hubs – working with banks and bringing in new powers for the FCA.

### UNDER DISCUSSION

- The Shadow Treasury team are planning a financial inclusion strategy and are currently looking to stakeholders for input on strategic priorities and how success can be measured at a national scale.
- The Labour Shadow team are developing policy on the impact of AI in financial services, but we are unlikely to see any firm detail this side of the General Election.
- The party has committed to undertaking a major review of the pensions and savings landscape, consulting across the whole industry and consumer group representatives to not only consider how the public can increase returns and be better protected, but also to encourage greater investment into UK-based assets.
- Labour has placed a heavy emphasis on growing regional financial centres outside of London and Edinburgh – taking lead from recommendations of Labour's 'Start-up, Scale-up'. Tulip Siddiq has flagged Manchester, Birmingham, Cardiff and Glasgow as growth spots.

- There will be a continuation of current FCA work on tokenisation and crypto-currencies, and they will advance the sandbox looking at innovation in the sector. How far the party go on championing consumer protection is yet to be determined.
- With a view to tackling increasingly cases of fraud, Labour will look to launch a working group between the financial sectors, tech, and consumer groups to encourage cross-industry collaboration. However, it has been noted that getting tech companies in the room will be a challenge.
- Tulip Siddiq and Rachel Reeves have positioned themselves as passionate advocates for increasing the representation of women at all levels in financial services and will support diversity and inclusion guidance led by the FCA and PRA.
- Labour has expressed support for the efforts of the Joint Regulatory Oversight Committee (JROC) to lay out the roadmap for the next phase of Open Banking, and a desire to work with regulators and industry to develop the route for Open Finance to prove its value.

- As first trailed in the Start-Up Review, Labour will set up an opt-in scheme for DC funds to invest a proportion of their assets into UK growth assets, divided among venture capital, small-cap growth equity and infrastructure.

### AREAS TO WATCH

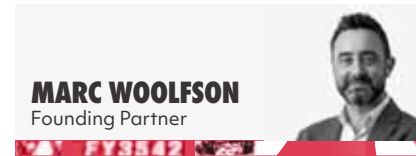
- The heavy focus on skills reform – led by Seema Malhotra – will impact the sector, with tech, use of AI and financial education likely to be amongst the topics under review.
- A review of access to cash and future of banking legislation in the Financial Services and Markets Bill is likely on the cards, building on their pledge for 350 bank hubs.



### GAPS

- Collaborating closely with Darren Jones' team and the British Infrastructure Council, the Shadow Treasury team are actively seeking input from the financial sector on how to unlock barriers to investment and hit the fastest growth in the G7. This will be an area which requires significant industry input and what the partnership between industry and a Labour Government actually looks like is yet to become clear.
- Labour's plan for the pensions market remains an area in need of development, and the Shadow team has promised a pensions landscape review early in the next Parliament. Introduction of a lifelong mortgage and regulatory reform to release equity to support infrastructure investment needs are amongst the topics to be considered.
- Labour confirmed a review into how the entire range of City regulators operate in conjunction with one another, identifying areas of overlap and gaps in oversight. Whilst promises of an FCA 'streamlining' consultation on the consumer duty and a new Regulatory Innovation Office have been made, the future shape of regulatory oversight is yet to be determined.
- An increased role for financial services in the future of UK trade has also become a centrepiece of Reeves' plan, though detail on how FPS becomes a more prominent export for the UK is something trade bodies will have a significant say in.

# TRANSPORT



**MARC WOOLFSON**  
Founding Partner

**Labour has marked out transport as an area where its ambitious reform agenda can be realised. It is one of the few policy areas where progress towards economic growth, regional rebalancing, better consumer outcomes and decarbonisation can coalesce. Labour's desire for a fairer and greener sector has not diminished, but as with so many other areas of policy, the funding picture remains highly uncertain and may yet derail their plans.**

Industry players are frustrated that the party has not yet provided the detail on flagship policies such as rail nationalisation, bus franchising and reinstating the 2030 electric vehicle targets. Some suggest that this is because the party is hemmed in by its tight fiscal rules.

Looking at regional government, The Great Manchester Combined Authority is leading the way on bus franchising within an integrated multi-modal transport system. Nationally, Labour is promising to give more power to local government to go further and other Labour-led mayoralities are already developing advanced plans. It means industry may need to look to metro mayors more than ever to set the direction on transport for the future, especially on how bus services should integrate with, and support, other modes such as light rail, micro-mobility and active travel.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT – RAIL AND BUS

Scrutiny of rail performance and ongoing industrial disputes have kept rail reform on Labour's agenda as an effective dividing line with the current government that seems popular with the wider public.

But the party has steadfastly refused to be drawn on the detail since first unveiling its commitment to nationalise rail services as contracts expire. This leaves questions on the financial plan, commercial arrangements, and the role and powers of the long planned Great British Railways.

Their radical policy position has survived thus far, despite some reported scepticism from some parts of the party. It remains as one of the few outwardly left-wing Labour policies due to its popularity with voters and limited cost implications. Industry remains highly sceptical of the plans, but Labour has committed to sharing more details soon that will clarify the way forward for rail. There is still space to shape proposals. Jurgen Maier's rail infrastructure review and Darren Jones' infrastructure review offer opportunities for industry to shape at least some of the party's thinking, especially considering the need to attract private capital to help upgrade rail infrastructure.

Bus policy is far clearer. Labour has vocally supported wider franchising following the examples of London and Manchester. Steve Rotherham in Liverpool and Tracey Brabin and Oliver Coppard in West and South Yorkshire are already taking steps to deliver franchising more widely. Commitment from Shadow Ministers to allow all local authorities to introduce franchising is clear, although whether individual councils will have the capacity and desire to use these powers is uncertain. Industry has come to accept the plans, whilst still making the point that franchising will not be suitable for every area and a more flexible approach may be required.

It remains to be seen if Labour has plans to aggressively accelerate the roll out of franchising and support councils beyond the large metropolitan regions to deliver a costly and administratively complex process.

## AUTOMOTIVE

On automotive, Labour has set its stall out in contrast to the Conservative government. It favours going further and faster on electric vehicles (EVs) to drive the UK economy and emission reduction targets. EVs have also been subject to one of the most detailed plans set out by the party – the Plan for the Automotive Sector – which details plans for charging infrastructure, consumer standards, support for gigafactories and support with manufacturing and transition.

It marks the sort of proposition most other sectors are calling for, although the detail is not universally welcomed by the sector, with some key concerns about deliverability. On charging infrastructure in particular, Labour have set out plans for faster delivery driven by local authorities. However this also creates challenges on how existing regulations from the government and Labour's plans relate, for example in manufacturing and data standards.

Whilst industry can rest assured that Labour is committed to the sector as an integral part of its overarching economic and environmental plans, there is a lot more work to do on the practical delivery.

## AVIATION

Whilst public transport and EVs have attracted significant political attention, other modes including aviation and maritime are yet to receive the same focus.

For aviation in particular, Labour will likely need to oversee significant decisions during a forthcoming government term. Most airports are seeking to expand facilities, runways or operating hours all of which will be contentious for local communities and have consequences for emissions targets. This will become an increasing problem if the party amends Air Passenger Duty in favour of regional airports as suggested by Shadow Minister Mike Kane, which will cause more people to use the UK's extensive network of smaller regional airports over the large London hubs.

Meanwhile, the aviation sector is keen to take forward Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) with the current government supportive of their plans and a commitment to a price support mechanism planned by 2026. Whilst Labour has committed to supporting the international 10% target by 2030 it has not yet fully embraced the economic growth potential that the industry offers and which could underpin the future of the sector.

Instead, Labour has sought to show its practical credentials in aviation policy, reassuring voters that holidays are safe despite their plans to reduce emissions. Whilst this might put voters' minds at ease, it leaves the sector unclear on the flightpath ahead.



## SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS – TRANSPORT

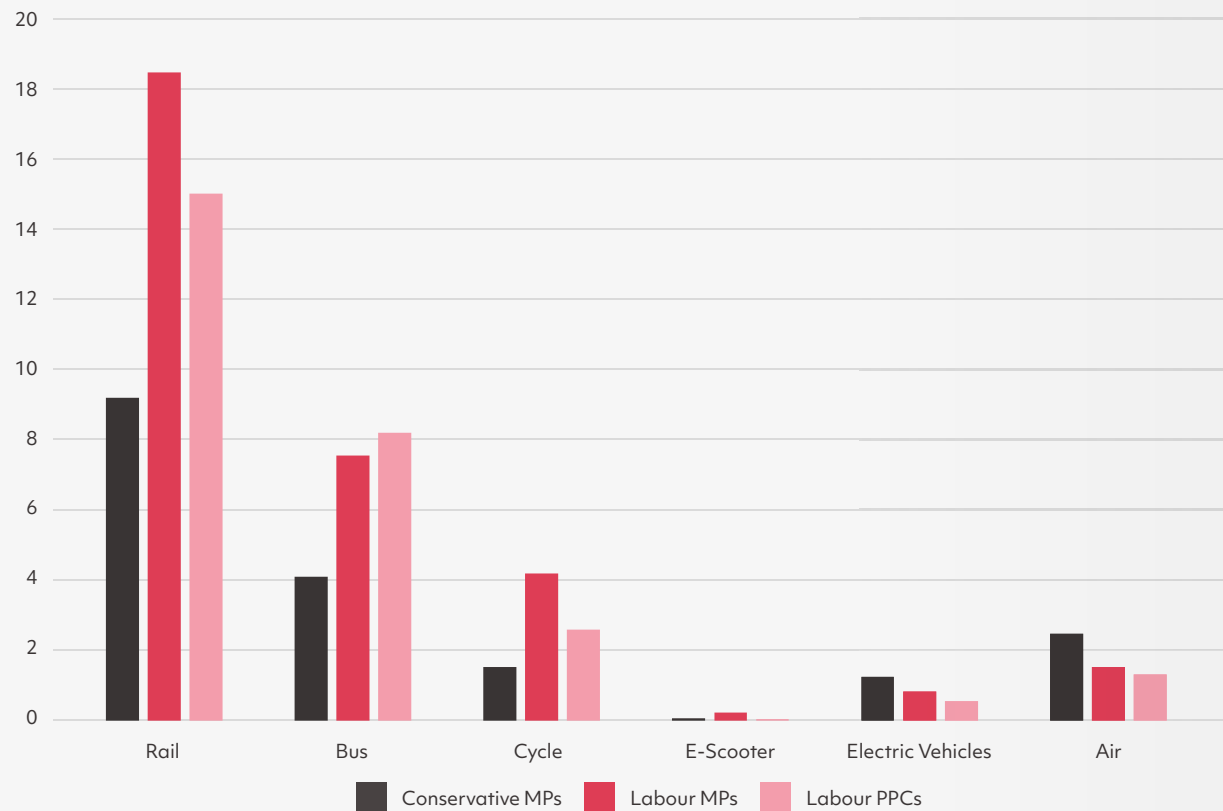
Rail and bus topics understandably dominate MP and PPC conversations on Twitter – with rail the most mentioned mode by some margin – given their importance to daily life for most constituents.

Labour MPs and candidates talk about both forms of public transport more than Conservative MPs.

The Labour candidates we sampled were more likely to talk about buses than current Labour MPs, reflecting Labour's focus on campaigning for greater control of local bus services.

E-scooters and electric vehicle mentions were significantly lower, with EV mentions reversing the public transport trend, with these conversations dominated by Conservative MPs.

Mentions around aviation were similarly much lower. Again here Conservative MPs dominate the Twitter mentions, and there is only a small difference between the volume of Labour MP and Labour PPC mentions on this topic.



Twitter Analysis – mentions per sampled MP or PPC.

## RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE TRANSPORT SECTOR

RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There some obvious risks to manage for private sector operators in rail and bus, with their role set to be <b>curtailed or more directly regulated</b>. With the commercial relationships, balance of revenue risk and return and a variety of other issues yet to be determined there is a great deal of uncertainty to manage.</li> <li>In automotive, and the EV sector in particular, the risk is more on an overly optimistic approach to the full scale deployment of the technology, potentially held up by external factors, such as availability of affordable vehicles, and access to grid connections for charging infrastructure. Unless Labour address these challenges head on they run the risk of having to <b>rollback on their ambitions once in government</b>.</li> <li>For aviation, the key risk is <b>an expectation of decarbonisation faster than the commercial and technical reality</b> allows. At the extreme end, if sustainable aviation fuel, electricification, or hydrogen cannot be made to work, then limiting demand may be Labour's next step.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Across all these areas, the opportunity is to help Labour develop workable solutions to the policy challenges they will face once in power. In every area of transport, the sector is starved of investment and in many cases the infrastructure is in need of renewal. For private sector operators, <b>being part of the solution is key</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Showcase the economic</b> impact that your policy solutions can unlock. With good jobs, economic growth, regional connectivity and productivity at the heart of Labour's overall plan for government, transport industry stakeholders need to demonstrate how they are able to play a key role in helping deliver these objectives.</li> </ul>



## TRANSPORT – POLICY TRACKER

### MANIFESTO PRIMED

- 2030 ICE ban.
- Greater public control of UK rail and bus networks.
- Commitment to implement Northern Powerhouse Rail.
- Promote the use of rail freight to lower carbon emissions.
- Introduce national minimum standards for taxis and private hire vehicles.
- Introduce a 10-year R&D funding commitment for automotive sector.
- New requirements on EV charging deployment, led by local authorities.
- Support for gigafactories and delay implementation of rule of origin provision to support the UK's supply chain.

### UNDER DISCUSSION

- Regional APD changes.
- Greater support for zero-emission buses beyond existing ZEBRA funding.
- Reform of the Treasury Green Book to support transport infrastructure projects.
- Reform of planning system to aid infrastructure delivery.

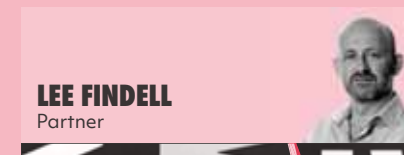
### AREAS TO WATCH

- Encouraging people to walk and cycle more, but with no clarity on how.
- IPPR calls for a social leasing scheme for EVs.
- IPPR and Campaign for Better Transport call for taxes on private jets.
- Campaign for Better Transport has proposed amendments to rail and bus fares to bring prices down.
- A private funding option for the northern leg of HS2.

### GAPS

- The detail that will underpin the party's rail nationalisation agenda.
- How local authorities will be able to overcome the barriers to bus franchising.
- What will happen to the northern leg of HS2 if private funding cannot be found.
- How to complete rail track electrification.
- Labour's plans for Sustainable Aviation Fuel beyond the 2030 commitment.
- Long-term plans for road taxation, including the future of fuel duty.
- Long-term plans for road maintenance and improvements.
- Plans for maritime sector.
- Potential for regulation of e-scooters.

## THE INFLUENCE OF TRADE UNIONS



### “THE LABOUR PARTY GREW OUT OF THE BOWELS OF THE TRADES UNION CONGRESS”

Ernest Bevin

**With the party having been out of power for 14 years, it is sometimes easy to forget the central role that trades unions have always played when the Labour Party is in government. Even under New Labour, which at times went to great lengths to demonstrate their independence from the trade union movement, unions enjoyed a prominent role at the heart of government and policymaking.**

It is very unusual for a Labour MP not to have a close link with a trade union. Almost all MPs are members of a trade union, and usually a Labour Party-affiliated one; almost every constituency party has affiliation money from local trade union branches; almost every constituency party has a trade union officer on their executive committee; and almost every MP's and PPC's election campaign benefits from funding contributions from unions. Trade unions are woven into the fabric of the Labour Party.

This influence is not in any way hidden. The policy-making structures of the Labour Party have union representation at every level, and you can see the influence of the trade unions as the Labour Party policy platform has come together over the past few months. Whether it is Labour softening their position on North Sea oil and gas licences following the intervention of the GMB; the developing Industrial Strategy emphasising skilled unionised jobs at its heart; or, most substantially of all, the proposed New Deal for Working People, which has a sweep of proposals designed to strengthen both individual and collective workers' rights.

Even the Labour Party election manifesto will be finalised with the involvement of the unions at the Clause V meeting. This is when the party leadership, Shadow Cabinet, National Executive and union leaders gather to finalise and sign off the manifesto on which Labour will fight the general election. While we know that Shadow Cabinet members have submitted their manifesto proposals in line with the report of the National Policy Forum and Keir Starmer's Five Missions, it is this meeting that will make the decision on the programme that the Labour Party will put to the country at the general election.

While there are only 11 trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party, this does include the UK's three biggest unions – Unison, Unite and the GMB. All three traditionally wield significant influence within the Labour Party – everything from being the major funders of the party through to having the most union seats in Labour's policy-making structures.

However, their influence is much more intrinsic than these official levers. Union officials often end up in Parliament, not just being selected as parliamentary candidates but also being made Life Peers. There is always at least one senior Labour politician who has worked their way up through the unions, with examples in recent years including John Prescott, Alan Johnson, Tom Watson and of course the current Deputy Leader, Angela Rayner.

Whenever Labour forms a government, this close historic relationship means that trade unions are seen as being 'inside the tent'. They are brought in to provide advice around workplace-related issues, they are members of working groups, and they are listened to across Westminster and Whitehall. This does not always mean that they get what they want, but it is very rare to see a Labour government bring forward legislation that is seen as 'anti-worker' or 'anti-union'. For example, last year's Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act is not legislation you would have seen originating from a Labour government.

Of course, trade unions are not an homogenous body. Different unions, in different sectors with different leaders, act in very different ways to protect and promote the interests of their members. There is also no correlation between Labour Party affiliation and the likelihood of industrial disputes. During the strikes that have affected services over the past 18 months, the union members taking the most prominent strike action have been in trade unions not affiliated to the Labour Party, e.g. RMT (rail workers), RCN (nurses) and NEU (teachers).

Labour in government will have to navigate around these many different unions in different sectors, both public and private, while maintaining their independence from them, but they will not be hostile. In their dealings, they will seek to maintain a position that supports business in driving economic growth, while supporting the rights and terms & conditions that workers should enjoy.

What is certain, is that employers that treat their employees well, have positive industrial relations, and recognise unions will find themselves looked upon more favourably by Labour ministers than those that have a reputation for anti-union policies or use tactics to get round employment rights, for example by using "fire and rehire" to impose new contractual terms.

Labour have promised to move quickly with their plans for strengthening rights and protections in the workplace, and if they do so, this could be one of the more substantive changes of direction we will see after the transition of power.





# Preparing for the next Parliament



# HITTING THE GROUND RUNNING: THE FIRST 100 DAYS

**The days after a Labour General Election win will see wide-ranging change in SW1, as well as the country.**

A selection of immediately deliverable policy changes are almost certain, and the party is comprehensively planning for its first King's Speech. 100+ Ministers will meet their private office teams, set priorities and seek out profile-raising opportunities. And potentially 200+ brand new MPs will pick up their parliamentary pass for the first time and navigate the corridors of power.

Crucial moments abound – from the day after the election, and as MPs and Ministers take up their positions over the next week, to key parliamentary moments throughout the subsequent 2-3 months:

## FIRST 10 DAYS

### MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENTS

More than 100 new Ministers will pick up their red boxes, and meet with senior civil servants from across each department to set out their priorities.

Special Adviser appointments will also be made quickly, including key Downing Street roles such as the Prime Minister's Director of Communications.

On page 68, Natasha Egan-Sjodin, former Head of Ministerial Briefing at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, explores the briefing of a brand new minister.

### ELECTING A COMMONS SPEAKER AND SWEARING-IN OF MPS AND PEERS

## FIRST 30 DAYS

### KING'S SPEECH

This will set out the government's key priorities, and also their likely sequencing.

- Work on Labour's first King's Speech is already underway, with the Shadow Leader of the House of Commons, Lucy Powell, chairing the party's "future legislation committee", along with her counterpart in the Lords, Angela Smith; the shadow Attorney General, Emily Thornberry; as well as the chief whips in the Commons and Lords.

- Not every policy will require a place in the King's Speech: many could be introduced as part of a subsequent Budget (for example introducing VAT on private school fees), or through existing legislation or statutory instruments.
- Debate on the King's Speech will take place in the days after – with specific days often focusing on certain themes selected by the Opposition.
- Some parliamentary business can begin before the King's Speech – for example the government could begin to introduce some bills if it wished, oral questions can begin, and secondary legislation can be considered.

In the scenario of a minority government or confidence-and-supply arrangement, it will be the first test of Labour's ability to command the confidence of the Commons.

### SELECT COMMITTEES

Key Select Committees – such as the Treasury and Public Account Committees – will be formed within three to four weeks of Parliament reconvening after the election, with Chairs being elected by MPs.

Within a month of this, Committees will announce their first set of inquiries – offering the first opportunity for targeted engagement.

## FIRST 60 DAYS

### EMERGENCY BUDGET

The Chancellor of the Exchequer will start to set out the new government's economic strategy, public finance measures, and taxation policies.

### ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS

APPGs will reform in a less formal way after MPs return to Westminster – with changes to groups, and the speed of formations depending on the number of existing MPs returning to Westminster, and the range of interests across the new Parliament.

## FIRST 100 DAYS

### MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT CHANGES

Labour's Five Missions typically bring together policy objectives that would span multiple government departments – so a Labour administration, and Sue Gray in particular, will be looking at how central government is structured, to ensure deliverability and accountability around these key priorities.

This might mean changes to government departments, but broader use of Cabinet Committees, cross-departmental teams, the appointment of external 'czars', and greater use of taskforces could also be options.

### COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW

The most recent spending review in Autumn 2021 set departmental budgets up to the end of March 2025. This may lead to two possible outcomes – a one-year CSR from the current government which Labour will adopt, or Labour being compelled to roll-over departmental budgets for a year to give them breathing space to conduct a full multi-year CSR from 2026.

### POLICIES

Across Ministerial announcements, the King's Speech, and the Emergency Budget, Labour's first 100 days in power will deliver change at pace. Likely measures include:

- A "New Deal for Working People", with an Employment Rights Bill introduced to Parliament in the first 100 days – tackling issues such as zero-hour contracts, the gender pay gap, and enhancing family-friendly work policies; and introducing a new Fair Work Standard to ensure the best employers get recognition.

- An expansion of economic devolution in England, introducing a Take Back Control Act in the first King's Speech.
- The formation of an Industrial Strategy Council made up of business and union leaders.
- The formation of a British Infrastructure Council, bringing together investors with government to unlock infrastructure investment.
- Creating a new Regulatory Innovation Office (RIO), to "end regulatory backlogs" – by setting and monitoring regulatory approval timelines, and strategically connecting regulatory activity with Labour's industrial strategy.
- An outline of the proposed 'Skills England' body, and the introduction of a Growth and Skills Levy, replacing the Apprenticeship Levy, to give businesses the flexibility to train staff and boost skills.
- Setting up a supply chain taskforce to review potential supply chain needs across critical sectors.
- Introducing a National Procurement Plan, to boost government spending with SMEs.

# MAKING THE MOVE: FROM OPPOSITION TO GOVERNMENT



**SIR PHILIP RUTNAM**  
Chair, WA Advisory Board

## So what really happens at the start of a new government? Who does what when – and what does the whole thing feel like?

The first thing to remember is that for politicians who may have spent years in opposition and now find themselves in government, this is a moment of peak adrenaline and exhaustion.

The second thing is that, even in a new government that has won a convincing victory, there is immediately a phase of high politics and uncertainty revolving around who gets what job.

It is usually obvious who is going to fill the most senior Cabinet jobs, but not every member of the Shadow Cabinet will necessarily find themselves in the real one or in the job they expected. And that is even more the case for Shadow Junior Ministers. There are almost always some surprises in the final list of names, depending on who has had a good or bad election, and No. 10's decisions on party management. The same is true for the appointment of Special Advisers and for creating a new operation in No. 10.

In short, this is a key moment for the new Prime Minister and his top team to exercise real power, as well as a big logistical exercise spanning several days.

New governments also almost always start out with lots of central control. Expect a plan for the first few months of announcements, and a tight 'grid' run by No. 10 to manage news coming out of departments. One of the first big real decisions will be the legislative programme for the first session. Another, shortly after, is likely to be an emergency Budget. They will have developed ideas for both in opposition, but only in government will they have access to the information needed for real decisions.

What is less predictable is how No. 10 will actually work with departments, as opposed to trying to control them. Lots of models have been tried over the years and an equal variety of different organisational models in No. 10, but none has lasted. We simply don't know how No. 10 will operate – unlike the Treasury, which is remarkably consistent (and effective) from one government to the next. Nor do we know how far No. 10 will go in reorganising Whitehall – creating new departments or merging others, though I wouldn't be surprised if some of Rishi Sunak's latest changes were reversed.

What about inside departments themselves? The first thing to say is that by the time a new government arrives every department will have made a huge effort to get ready.

This is a bit like a small military campaign split in two phases. One is when a small group of senior people have 'access talks' with the Opposition. This enables both sides to get to know the other, and the civil servants to start explaining the reality of how the department works. The second starts when the election is actually called. Rules then come in to limit new commitments by the existing government. At that point, many more people in each department get directly involved in preparing for possible change: reading manifestos carefully and preparing briefing for new Ministers. Some of this will be about specific, urgent things – if the new government wants to make big changes quickly, or there is a crisis that has to be addressed immediately. Some of it is making sure Ministers can get up to speed quickly with the breadth of their roles.

So the time for prep is over. New Ministers have been appointed. They arrive, excited and a bit exhausted. What happens then? The first thing is to agree how they want to spend their first week and first month. Who do they need to meet in the department and who outside? What is the right mix of urgent and important topics that needs attention? And what do they want to do to set the right tone, like any high-profile visits or events. (We take a first-hand look at how a department's Ministerial Private Office and Communications Team tackle these questions overleaf).

**MY ADVICE TO ANY NEW MINISTER IS THAT THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO BE CLEAR ABOUT PRIORITIES.**

The government machine can and will swallow up all your time with 'stuff that needs doing'. 'Events' will swallow up even more. The way to keep the initiative is to have a very short list of important but achievable things that you will actually make happen. Choose those things well. Make them specific enough to be tangible. Create the right relationships inside and outside the Government to help make them happen. And stay totally on top of progress.

One thing I predict should be clear within 100 days is which Ministers know that this is the way to control the agenda!

**Sir Philip** is a former Whitehall Permanent Secretary, senior Treasury civil servant, and European Investment Bank official.

# OPENING THE RED BOX: BRIEFING A BRAND NEW MINISTER

**NATASHA EGAN-SJODIN**  
Director



**On day one of a new government the Private Office plays an essential role.**

The preparatory work undertaken by the department (outlined on page 10) must now be presented to new Ministers as they are announced, and sudden cast list changes to predicted Ministerial teams caused by ballot-box surprises need to be factored in.

Departments cannot be left without Ministerial oversight, so whilst the purdah period halts government business, sitting Ministers remain in post to oversee critical work.

If the political party in charge changes at the election, private secretaries, the gatekeepers of Ministerial time and preferences, must learn the new habits and priorities of their primaries and, crucially, any personal policy platforms they have championed during the election campaign.

All of this must be fed back to the Director Generals waiting to be called in for first-day briefings so that the department is on the front foot.

At the same time, personal preferences must be learnt. For some Ministers, office art needs to be changed and briefing styles need to be communicated, for others new Special Advisers need to be quickly supported to get up to speed and meet critical people within the department.

For the outside world, this is a day to let Ministers and their new teams settle in and get up to speed.

First-day congratulation letters and briefings can wait until the work of government resumes; the time to feed in to those initial meetings is before this day comes, and the new opportunity emerges as policy teams are tasked with priorities in the coming weeks.

Before joining WA, **Natasha** was the Head of Ministerial Briefing at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.



# SETTING THE NARRATIVE: SUPPORTING A NEW MINISTER'S COMMUNICATIONS PRIORITIES

**RACHEL FORD**  
Director



**Once the standard day-one communication formalities are over – a broadcast clip of the Secretary of State entering the department, a tweet saying how 'thrilled' they are to be appointed, and an internal message setting out their priorities – the real work for a government communications team begins.**

**THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS IS USUALLY ONE OF THE FIRST PEOPLE A NEW SECRETARY OF STATE WILL MEET AND AN 'EARLY VISITS AND MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES' PAPER WILL ALWAYS BE INCLUDED IN THE DAY-ONE PACK.**

This presents an opportunity for businesses – weeks and months before – to feed in visit ideas and policy announcements that a new Minister can get behind.

While a Secretary of State endorsement is a top priority for most organisations, media-hungry Junior Ministers can also be a good way of getting on the radar of the new Ministerial team. And as they will be the ones working on your portfolio on a day-to-day basis, early engagement is always beneficial.

To get ahead with visit opportunities, new Ministers and their teams are usually looking for household names, strong visuals (top marks for high-vis jackets and hard hats) and easy access to London or their constituency. Partnering with or flagging nearby opportunities so they can 'make a day of it' works well too.

Beyond planning visits and early announcements, a government communications team must also quickly react and get used to changes in ministerial communication styles, and what they mean for departmental announcements and campaigns.

Will a Secretary of State require a videographer to attend every visit to gather content? Will prolific tweeters demand their posts are promoted on departmental social media channels (even when close to the line)? Will a laborious sign-off process delay announcements? Will Spads and Ministers respect the No. 10 grid or try to do their own thing?

While press officers will often spend the first few days and weeks running around trying to find cameras, rewrite quotes and persuade No. 10 to let their Secretary of State do a sit-down interview, businesses should also be tracking the change in departmental communication style and what it means for them.

For example, social media enthusiasts pose both a risk and an opportunity for businesses – it can mean easy, direct access to those at the top, but say something they don't like and this opens the door for public debate.



At the same time, understanding the new No. 10 narrative and how this drives cross-government communication activity is crucial in unlocking access. In recent years there have been cross-government communication working groups dedicated to issues such as levelling up and delivering the Industrial Strategy, so understanding the cross-government drivers and aligning activity to these messages is key in getting ahead.

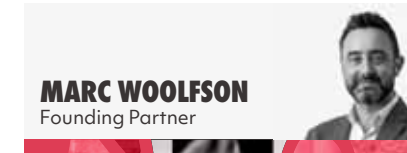
Finally, with the pressure on a new government to make an immediate impact, it is likely that underperforming Ministers will be moved on in an early reshuffle – bringing new priorities, new quirks and new communication styles for communications teams and businesses to adapt to.

The reality is that no two Ministers, and therefore no two Ministerial teams, are the same, but one thing always rings true in government communications: be prepared to expect the unexpected.

Before joining WA, **Rachel** was the Deputy Head of External Communications at the Ministry of Defence, before which she was Chief Communications Officer at the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.



## A PARTNERSHIP FOR GROWTH: HOW BUSINESSES CAN WORK WITH A LABOUR GOVERNMENT



Attendees at February's Labour Business Conference were left with a very clear message – “Labour has changed and wants to work in partnership with businesses in government to rebuild Britain”.

At the heart of their approach to business, (outlined on page 30) is the simple idea of a three-way partnership between government, businesses and working people – with mutual responsibilities and expectations for each. Building on this idea, Keir Starmer, Rachel Reeves and Jonny Reynolds have set out a vision for an active state that seeks to encourage private sector growth but is also willing to intervene in markets to ‘shape the economy, but not to control it’.

In reality, this means business needs to get used to a government willing to use the power of regulation to correct perceived market failures and to remove barriers to achieving its economic or social goals. But this also indicates that Labour will be open to arguments about where to reduce the role of state (especially if savings can be found), getting out of the way where business simply needs a stable regulatory environment to de-risk investment and unlock entrepreneurialism. This message came through loud and clear at the Labour Business Conference, where the virtue of stability and certainty was juxtaposed with the unstable and at times chaotic environment business has had to cope with under the Conservatives.

This speaks to an important fact about Labour’s approach to business and how businesses should be planning (and acting) now – ahead of the General Election, to be able to work constructively with a future Labour government. The starting point is to understand that Labour politicians have a different perspective to the Conservative-led governments we’ve had for the last 14 years.

Their driving priority is to create an economy that works for working people, providing good jobs, and that supports equality and high-quality public services. This is a shift towards the collective good that underpins the instincts of future decision-makers, and should be instructive to all businesses currently planning their public affairs strategy for the coming political era.

So, what will Labour be looking for from business and how should you assess your own ability to be influential in the coming years?

**FUNDAMENTALLY, THIS CAN BE BOILED DOWN TO HOW ARE YOU CONTRIBUTING TO THE FIVE “NATIONAL MISSIONS” THAT WILL BE THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR LABOUR IN GOVERNMENT.**

This means demonstrating how you are using your human and financial capital to invest in the skills of the workforce of the future, providing high-quality, fulfilling jobs, investing in innovation and providing capital for growth, especially in areas of historic underinvestment and de-industrialisation. Over decades of austerity, the experience and capability of officials in central and local government has been hollowed out. Again, the role for business with expertise to contribute will be critical to help address this shortfall.

So what should you be doing now to prepare for this eventuality and make sure you can capture opportunities to engage and shape both the short- and long-term direction of Labour policy?

### **1. THE STARTING POINT MUST BE AN ASSESSMENT OF RISKS, OPPORTUNITY AND REPUTATION**

What are the elements of Labour's agenda that will help you to deliver productive growth, and where are there potential causes for concern? Do you know how your business (and your competitors) is perceived by Labour decision makers and those who they listen to? Are your stakeholders aware of your contribution and aligned on the changes that would unlock future growth?

### **2. SECOND, WHAT CAN YOU MEANINGFULLY CONTRIBUTE TO HELP LABOUR AS THEY PREPARE FOR GOVERNMENT?**

What new data, market insights, international experience, or investment plans can you highlight that show why you are a voice that should be listened to? There is less than 10 months until the likely date of the next election, and the party needs detailed and thought-through policy suggestions that can be implemented quickly. So, move fast to engage with Labour's Business Relations Team and make sure you are plugged into the relevant Shadow Cabinet teams. At this point in the political cycle, time is short and attention spans are limited. The party is in campaigning mode and also trying to prepare for government, so what assets can you deploy to assist? Can you offer to host a visit (and photo-op) in a target seat highlighting an investment that will help grow the economy and create good jobs? Can you invite Shadow Ministers and their teams to a meeting of expert stakeholders to unpack a complex issue they need to get ahead of before entering government?

### **3. BE CLEAR IN YOUR MESSAGING**

Use clear and compelling communications assets on your owned, shared and earned channels, that explain what regulatory changes will help you grow and what is currently holding you back. What are the ways in which a Labour government could create the conditions for your business to release new investment, open new manufacturing or R&D facilities and create new jobs? Critically, requests for more funding or tax relief are unlikely to land well, so non-fiscal measures are the place to start. Equally, if your plans for investment are on hold due to policy uncertainty, or even from concerns over a misalignment with Labour's plans, then consider how constructively to make this clear, whilst setting out a deliverable solution.

### **IN SUMMARY, HERE IS A QUICK CHECKLIST:**

- Assess and address reputational risks that could undermine your ability to build credibility as a partner for a future Labour government.
- Set out your positive contribution, aligned with Labour's Five Missions, showing that you understand and are committed to positive economic and social change.
- Be clear about concerns and be ready with the detail and evidence to support your policy solutions.
- Invest in relationships now, understanding who can help you make your case, and build common ground with the stakeholders you work with – supply chain partners, employees, unions, consumer groups, academics, think tanks and NGOs.
- Get out and communicate! Have a structured communications strategy, making full use of public affairs, corporate communications, thought leadership and internal communications channels to set out your vision.





## CONTRIBUTORS

**Next Left: The Shape of a Labour Government** draws on analysis and insights from across WA's team, including: Ellen Bridson, Emma Rae, Erlandas Kazak, Jovana Vuletic, Josie Stephens, Ewan Wightman, Holly Ryan, Nathalie Dixon-Young, Callum Keene, Gregor Smith, Jamie Capp and Oliver Cole.

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