

ADAPTING TO THE NEW NORMAL

A time of greater stability
in UK politics?

SPRING 2025



Foreword – Kevin Craig, Founder



Nine months ago, we witnessed a truly historic election result as Keir Starmer's transformative leadership of the Labour Party delivered a sweeping victory including landmark results in the "red wall" and Scotland which had caused the party so much pain in the last decade.

Yet start to life for this Government has been unprecedented in how difficult it has been, with Starmer only able to enjoy a very short honeymoon period. Summer riots, a Budget that has seen significant pushback from the business and rural communities and the loss of Chief of Staff, Sue Gray have all contributed to this. Despite Starmer's leadership of the "coalition of the willing" and encouraging GDP figures for February, events across the pond have dominated our domestic politics and likely will have a negative impact on any economic "green shoots" of recovery we were starting to see.

To track these developments, I am delighted that the PLMR Group, will be polling the British public in collaboration with Electoral Calculus every quarter from now until the next General Election in 2029, providing real-time voting patterns across all UK constituencies.



Foreword – Kevin Craig, Founder



Our first two MRP polls predict a significant shift in the political landscape in the run up to the next election. Labour is expected to suffer major losses at the next General Election, while Reform UK is poised to capitalise on voter discontent driven by financial pessimism.

It appears that we are heading towards uncharted territory, a three-way split of the vote is practically unheard of in British politics and points to shifts in the political make-up of the United Kingdom.

As the three-horse race for Number 10 continues, it is striking that the majority of the public either don't know which of the UK's Party leaders they can trust, or don't trust anyone to represent the UK on the international stage.

This speaks to a wider crisis of political confidence that the Prime Minister must grapple with in order to remain in Government in four years' time. Sir Keir Starmer, however, continues to demonstrate a steady hand abroad and has earned recognition for his calm, competent presence on the global stage—qualities that are increasingly resonating with voters seeking reliability in uncertain times.

Nevertheless, these numbers show that success overseas doesn't automatically translate to trust at home. The Prime Minister must now focus on getting his message across to voters in the UK, and instilling confidence in his domestic economic agenda, as this continues to be essential for unlocking voter support.

In this PLMR Insights paper we report on the polling we've conducted and assess the current state of the UK political parties, how the Labour Government impacts our expert sector areas and our regional offices in the West Midlands and East of England.

One thing remains certain, although we have a strong Labour majority, the next five years is unlikely to usher in the stability the business community once hoped for. As we have done since 2006, PLMR Group will be on hand to help our clients navigate the challenges that lie ahead.

The Road to 2029

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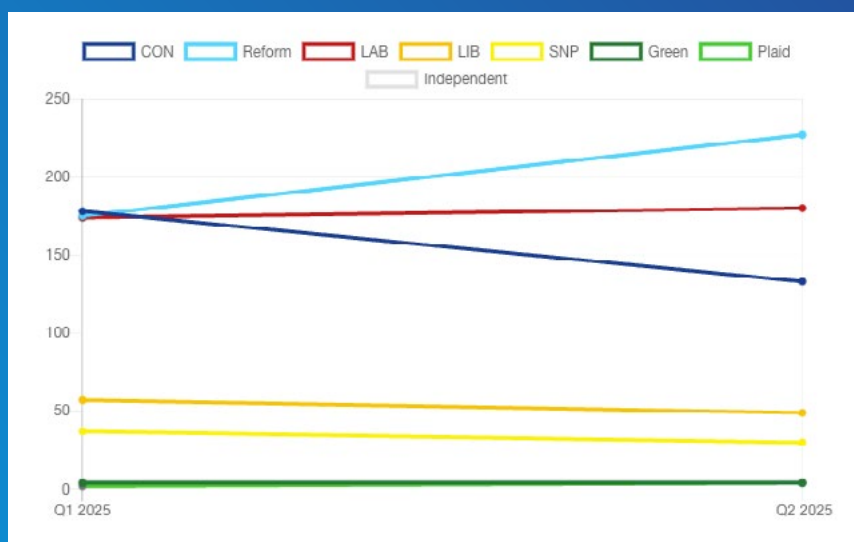
PLMR's latest polling with Electoral Calculus shows a continuing three-way jostle for the top spot, as Reform enjoy a narrow lead (25%) over Labour and the Conservatives who are both on 23%. If a General Election were held tomorrow, it is increasingly plausible that Nigel Farage could be heading to Number 10, propped up by a slimmed down Conservative Party.

Following a tumultuous quarter in international relations, we also took the temperature of the public around their interpretation of who is best to represent the UK on the international stage.

These findings point to a pervasive crisis of political trust. A full third of respondents say they do not trust any major party leader to represent the UK internationally and a further quarter remain unsure where to place their faith. Of the leaders who do command support, Sir Keir Starmer and Nigel Farage are tied at 16% each, while Kemi Badenoch trails at 5%.

The Prime Minister has gained plenty of plaudits in media and diplomatic circles for his handling of Donald Trump and his leadership in rallying Europe to support Ukraine. However, this poll shows that that has yet to translate into meaningful support at the polls.

Why? One suggestion is that there is a clear correlation between economic expectations and trust in individual leaders to be effective overseas. People who believe their finances are on the upswing show a marked preference for Starmer, whereas those who anticipate worsening finances are likelier to trust Farage. For any party hoping to win over undecided voters, the message is clear – improving household financial prospects and communicating that plan effectively will be vital in the run-up to the next election.



At the same time, success on the world stage does not necessarily yield gains at home. The Prime Minister cannot rely on foreign achievements alone if domestic voters remain unconvinced about the economic trajectory. Winning the trust of the British public will require clear, consistent messaging and tangible progress on bread-and-butter issues such as cost of living, the NHS and employment.

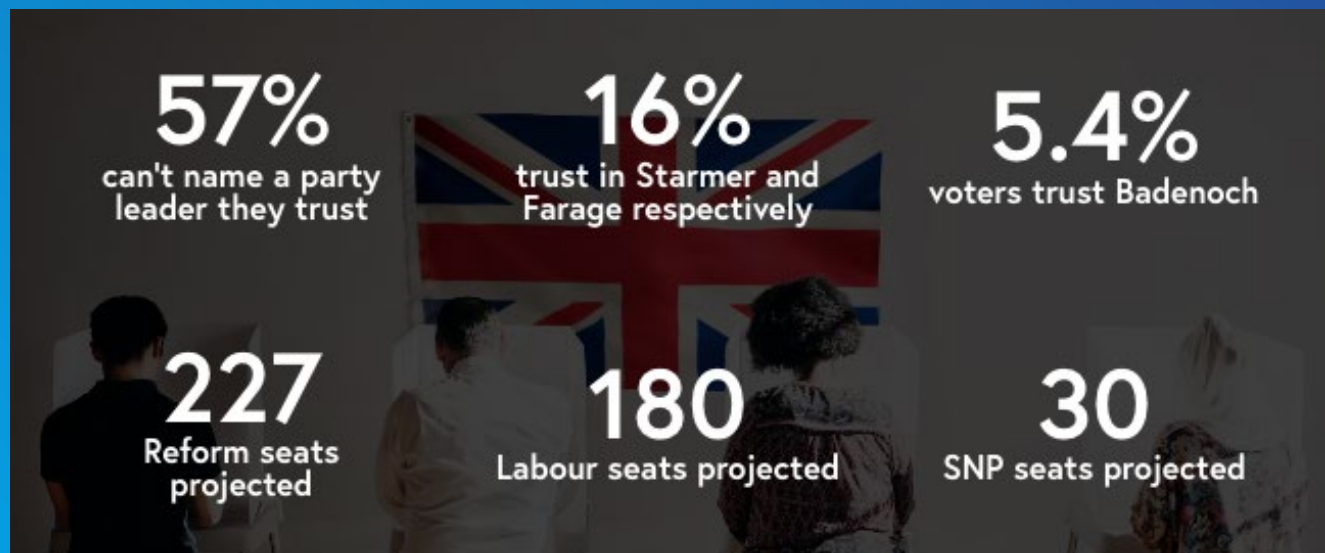
Against this backdrop, all three parties vying for the top spot must prepare for a political environment that is more fluid than ever before.

As things stand, none can rely on an outright majority and building constructive coalitions or alliances will become a practical necessity. Those who can show decisive leadership on the domestic front stand the best chance of cutting through the noise, rebuilding voter confidence and securing the path to Number 10.

Of course, we are a long way from a General Election, but the Parties will be put through their paces next month at the local elections—where voters will be less interested in what goes on behind the scenes in Washington and Kyiv, and more interested in who will fill potholes, collect their rubbish and fix streetlights. In other words, voters want to see politicians focus on micro priorities that impact their day-to-day lives.

Find Out Now interviewed 5,180 GB adults online from 21-28 March 2025. Data were weighted to be demographically representative of all GB adults by gender, age, social grade, other demographics and past voting patterns. 'Weighting targets come from the 2021 census and reported election results. Weighted population total is the effective sample size (the size of the equivalent uniform sample with the same sample errors).

All polls are subject to a wide range of potential sources of error. On the basis of the historical record of the polls at recent general elections, there is a 9 in 10 chance that the true value of a party's support lies within 4 points of the estimates provided by this poll, and a 2 in 3 chance that they lie within 2 points.



Labour in Government: Delivery, the machine, priorities



**DOMINIC
MOFFITT**

**Associate
Director**

Stability has arrived, and barring a major cataclysm, the next general election will be in May 2029. Three hundred days in, and public expectations remain low—the future will be hard, the country is in crisis, and recovery will be difficult. Our most recent polling with Electoral Calculus shows Labour on only 23% of the vote, and the experience of the last government shows that governments can always lose more.

The Spring Statement confirmed that this government won't be engaging in giveaways. However, with expectations so low and satisfaction bottomed out, the hope for Labour is any signs of improvement—particularly if people feel better off—will return votes and lift the PM's fortunes.

Delivery matters. It is the mechanism by which all the positivity, the energy, and the ideas that went into winning the election collide with people. Across foundations, missions, first steps, and milestones, it is the theme that pervades Labour's message time and again. The party believes its success hinges on its ability to deliver—whether in economic growth, national renewal, or restoring a sense of pride in Britain.

Labour knows Reform is the primary threat today. Every week, MPs are encouraged to use their incumbency to reinforce their majorities, large and small alike. The last election showed volatility within seats—no one can take incumbency for granted. From deportation flights to citizenship rules for those who entered the country illegally, the PM is not afraid to court the more authoritarian working-class vote, to the dismay of the more liberal-minded wing of the party. A Nigel Farage vehicle doesn't outlive its usefulness, and while Reform lacks the infrastructure of traditional political parties, Farage—the great survivor of British politics—clearly still has more to offer. The local elections next month will be an important test, and Reform will be hoping to take swathes of council seats in traditionally Labour areas. The Red Wall may well have shifted from blue to red and to turquoise within the space of a year. Our polling suggests many of these voters remain unconvinced by any party's offer—but are willing to give Reform a try.

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Keir's rise in the Labour Party did not follow the traditional route—he didn't spend years in church halls on rainy Thursday nights debating procedural motions or the scope of a chair's ruling. His experience is different, and his plan is simple: get elected, govern effectively, remove the barnacles from the boat, win again. Ed Miliband can have his way when it doesn't conflict with growth—but a third runway at Heathrow and the Rosebank Oilfield remind us: it's the economy, stupid.

While Keir campaigned to remain in the EU, privately welcomed a second referendum, and took the knee, in government he films deportation flights, blames the last government for being soft on immigration, and cuts overseas development spending. His shift from progressive activism to pragmatic governance reflects a clear political calculation: values must not obstruct electability. So far, our polling suggests this recalibration hasn't cut through. Just 16% of voters trust Keir Starmer to represent the UK internationally—the same figure as for Nigel Farage, but three times higher than for Kemi Badenoch.

Labour's priorities and plan are clear: leave the country in a better state than it was found, make people richer, begin to reverse the decline, and win the next election. Labour is now the party of the perpetual campaign. With annual electoral tests, it operates in a state of continuous campaigning, leaving no room for stagnation. The appointment of Hollie Ridley as General Secretary underscores Labour's prioritisation of electoral success.

Reform is the main threat—but no one doubts the risk posed by insurgent Green or Lib Dem campaigns, particularly where a 'lazy' MP is scented. Local elections will offer valuable inspiration for the Greens, who are already campaigning hard in what were traditionally safe Labour seats - in opposition.

The Prime Minister is ambitious and has little to lose in trying new ideas. He is in power and willing to listen—but the machine around him is more cautious. It is less willing to be Conservative, but more conservative in temperament. For now, a secondary but emerging concern is that, while polling remains poor, a growing number of MPs will begin to consider their next steps and position themselves accordingly.

Seats: 411

PLMR Polling: 23%

PLMR MRP seats: 180



The Conservatives, Reform and the fight for the (centre-) right



LEON EMIRALI
Senior Counsel

Under Kemi Badenoch's leadership, the Conservative Party in opposition has set about a sweeping internal and policy overhaul. Determined to show she is neither timid nor complacent, Badenoch has restructured CCHQ and assembled a team whose shared vision is already reshaping Conservative priorities.

Rachel Maclean, the former MP for Redditch, has become Director of Strategy, ensuring Badenoch's policy aims translate into coherent messaging. Maclean works alongside co-chairmen Nigel Huddleston MP and Lord Dominic Johnson, whose collective expertise in trade, tourism and finance provides a pragmatic edge to the party's leadership. Huddleston's ministerial experience informs efforts to restore the party's pro-business credentials, while Johnson, with a background in investment, refines fundraising approaches and steers candidate selection.

Lee Rowley, Chief of Staff, manages the day-to-day running of operations, ensuring internal communications remain consistent. He works closely with Deputy Chief of Staff Henry Newman, known for his astute political messaging honed under Michael Gove and Boris Johnson. Together, they aim to unify a party that has been fractured by internal disagreements.

On policy, Badenoch has, so far, offered limited detail. Instead, she appears focused on reinforcing party structures and signalling a break from old conventions before revealing a full manifesto. Still, her interest in radical economic solutions, including considering a flat tax, indicates a willingness to push boundaries. Mel Stride, Shadow Chancellor, aligns these free-market ideas with the operational demands of government and remains open to dialogue with businesses keen on deregulation and simpler taxation.

Foreign affairs are led by Dame Priti Patel, now Shadow Foreign Secretary. Known for her robust stance on security, Patel emphasises forging strong trade relationships overseas. Meanwhile, Chris Philp as Shadow Home Secretary focuses on domestic security and tighter immigration controls, echoing Badenoch's cultural conservatism.

Alex Burghart, despite being relatively new to frontline politics, serves as Badenoch's de-facto deputy and Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary, addressing constitutional and regional matters. He is tasked with integrating varied policy ideas—ranging from net zero to public inquiries—across the United Kingdom's differing needs.

The Conservatives, Reform and the fight for the (centre-) right



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While Badenoch questions whether the existing net zero timetable is economically realistic, she maintains that environmental targets remain integral, provided they align with growth and competitiveness. For businesses, this could present an opportunity to pitch innovative, green solutions that demonstrate economic benefit. At CCHQ, Rachel Maclean's team welcomes input from companies hoping to influence the party's recalibrated vision, while co-chairs Huddleston and Johnson seek practical partnerships and financial backing.

Despite tightening budgets, the Conservatives' business engagement remains active, with figures like Florence Quirici and Mike Chattey seeking fresh policy ideas. This "clear-eyed conservatism" marries free-market principles with a firm sense of national identity, appealing to some organisations while challenging those favouring liberal immigration or unwavering environmental commitments.

Beyond internal reforms, Badenoch faces the spectre of Nigel Farage's Reform party, which has drawn support away from the Tories. With Reform polling strongly, neutralising this threat may be Badenoch's greatest test in her quest to position the Conservatives as Britain's next credible government. Her first 100 days in the role have been difficult, both failing to land significant blows on the Government and seemingly being outflanked on the right by Reform.

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Seats: 121

PLMR Polling: 22%

PLMR MRP seats: 133



Reform



LEON EMIRALI
Senior Counsel

Though Reform UK won just five MPs in the July 2024 General Election, it has evolved from a fringe movement into a serious contender, soaring from 14% to nearly 28% in the polls. Much of its momentum stems from Nigel Farage, now considered the frontrunner to succeed Sir Keir Starmer as Prime Minister. Yet the party's transformation is not solely about Farage's persona: a tight nexus of advisers, donors, and policy specialists also defines its direction.

Farage remains the figurehead, but new Chairman Zia Yusuf—who joined after making a substantial six-figure donation—has become integral. Yusuf is an investor and entrepreneur whose corporate discipline confers legitimacy once lacking in the party. As a key power-broker, he underwrites operations and offers vital boardroom acumen.

Nick Candy, better known for high-end property developments and pop-star connections, was once a Conservative donor but is now Reform UK's Treasurer. He parted ways with the Tories in December 2024, convinced Reform was more dynamic. His knack for courting wealthy backers quickly emerged: he is said to have arranged a meeting between Farage and Elon Musk, highlighting Candy's capacity to engage global elite circles.

George "Posh George" Cottrell, who served time in the US for wire fraud in 2016, is another notable figure. Despite his chequered past, Cottrell's cryptocurrency expertise and aristocratic ties speak to the party's blend of old-world networks and modern disruption. He provides a crucial link to high-society circles, enabling Reform UK to access areas otherwise off-limits to populists.

Insiders note that the party's new policy council meets weekly to fine-tune its platform, appealing to frustrated voters. Reform UK also benefits from transatlantic connections, drawing on advisers linked to a former Steve Bannon aide. Farage's American ties date back to early endorsements by stateside conservatives during the Brexit campaign. These relationships sharpen the party's media outreach, lending it a polished style distinct from mainstream British politics.

The party's populist agenda prioritises a freeze on "non-essential" immigration and immediate returns for those crossing the Channel. It champions low taxes, funded by reduced foreign aid and lower working-age benefits. Critically, Reform UK vows to scrap net-zero commitments, opting for increased domestic oil and gas extraction and fast-tracked nuclear energy. Critics call these plans reckless; supporters see them as pragmatic responses to energy insecurity.

Populism—when wedded to charismatic leadership and substantial resources—can reshape Britain's political landscape.

Reform

On public services, the party pledges an extra £17 billion a year for the NHS, partly by leveraging private-sector efficiencies, and aims to recruit 40,000 police officers. True to Farage's combative style, it promises 'zero tolerance' policing.

While it holds just five MPs, Reform UK's challenge is converting its limited Parliamentary presence into tangible influence. Its robust infrastructure and deep-pocketed donors could power further gains at the next General Election, provided Farage remains fully engaged. Backed by millionaires, aristocrats, and transatlantic strategists, it shows how **populism—when wedded to charismatic leadership and substantial resources—can reshape Britain's political landscape.**

The party's rise has seemingly been stemmed somewhat, as developments in the Russia-Ukraine conflict have put Farage on the spot as to how close he should align with the Trump administrations outlook, often at odds with the UK public. Rupert Lowe also presents a problem. The Great Yarmouth MP has won admiration from Elon Musk and criticised Farage's "messianic" leadership. With Lowe now expelled from the party facing allegations from bullying there will be questions over whether this Reform surge can endure, nonetheless the party's presence will help define the nation's politics for years to come.

Seats: 4

PLMR Polling: 27%

PLMR MRP seats: 227



LEON EMIRALI
Senior Counsel



Liberal Democrats – harnessing the parliamentary caucus



GEORGIA
ANGELA

Account
Manager

The July 2024 General Election revitalised the Liberal Democrats, catapulting them from 11 seats to 72 and re-establishing them as Westminster's third force. Few modern political declines were as dramatic as the Liberal Democrats' post-coalition collapse. After governing alongside the Conservatives from 2010 to 2015, broken tuition fee promises and association with austerity left the party devastated, reduced to just eight MPs in 2015.

The first real signs of recovery emerged in 2021, with unexpected by-election victories in traditional Conservative strongholds. Capitalising on local issues and voter disillusionment, the Lib Dems began to claw their way back. By 2024, Labour's lacklustre leadership and Tory infighting created ideal conditions for a Liberal Democrat resurgence, particularly in the South West, where they had long enjoyed a stronghold.

At the heart of the revival was Sir Ed Davey's unapologetically theatrical yet deeply localised strategy. His mix of headline-grabbing stunts and grassroots organising proved a potent combination. He made social care a flagship policy, recognising how poorly addressed this issue was by Labour and the Conservatives. By championing reform in a system under immense strain, Davey tapped into widespread concern about ageing demographics and chronic underfunding.

The party has also kept a firm grip on key voter concerns and remained focused on health, water and education, identifying them as core policy issues that resonate with its target voters. Their commitment to delivering a consistent, policy-led message signals serious intent to move beyond protest politics and into the realm of credible governance.

In the post-Brexit landscape, the Liberal Democrats have grown increasingly confident in their pro-European stance. Their recent commitment to rejoin the EU's customs union is a clear olive branch to Remain-aligned voters, offering a tangible step toward restoring fractured ties with Europe.

On foreign policy, Davey has made headlines as the only major UK leader consistently critical of Donald Trump. This vocal opposition has resonated with centrists and liberal voters, particularly amid mounting unease over Keir Starmer's muted response to the recent tariff dispute. A small but significant bump in the polls followed, suggesting the strategy is landing with voters.

For now, the Liberal Democrats' 2024 performance has returned them to the political conversation.

Liberal Democrats – harnessing the parliamentary caucus



GEORGIA
ANGELA

Account
Manager

Despite their historic gains, the Lib Dems remain on shaky ground. Over a quarter (26%) of their 2024 voters backed them tactically, and only 57% said they would vote Lib Dem in a truly competitive contest, the lowest loyalty rate of any major party. Voter enthusiasm was also low, only marginally better than that of the Conservatives and far behind the Greens, Labour and Reform UK. Many of the party's victories came on slim margins, a 5% swing against them could see the Lib Dems lose a staggering 21 seats,

But questions persist. Beyond their core issues of social care, clean water, and European engagement, critics argue the party's platform lacks a robust offering on other key issues, particularly housing, education, and economic renewal.

For now, the Liberal Democrats' 2024 performance has returned them to the political conversation. Their message of local, balanced, community-led governance resonates with voters disillusioned by the status quo. But unless they can build a more cohesive policy platform, cement voter loyalty, and withstand a likely Tory recovery, history may yet repeat itself.

Still, after nearly a decade in the political wilderness, the Liberal Democrats have seized a second chance. The question now is whether they can make it count, and it depends on them delivering meaningful results and offering voters not just a reason to vote against the alternatives, but a reason to vote for them.

Seats: 72

PLMR Polling: 12%

PLMR MRP seats: 49



Everyone Else: The SNP, Plaid Cymru and the Green Party



CATRIN
PRESTON

Senior Account
Manager

Scottish National Party

According to our polling, the SNP is experiencing a resurgence. Despite the party's difficulties following Sturgeon's departure, voters seem ready to offer it another chance. Our poll reveals that a significant number of Scottish seats would shift from Labour to the SNP, leaving Labour nearly wiped out in Scotland. Since becoming First Minister, John Swinney has successfully stabilised the party in Government and polling figures for the 2026 Holyrood elections look set to return the SNP to winning ways. Big names including Nicola Sturgeon, Humza Yousaf and Shona Robinson will all stand down as MSPs, presenting an interesting question for the likes of SNP Westminster Leader, Stephen Flynn looking to secure himself a seat north of the border.

Seats: 9

PLMR Polling: 23% (Scotland)

PLMR MRP seats: 30



Plaid Cymru

Plaid Cymru, the Party of Wales, remains a prominent force in Welsh politics, championing greater autonomy and the preservation of Welsh culture. Although still trailing Labour in the Senedd, it has consistently grown its support, frequently attracting voters who seek a stronger Welsh identity and enhanced powers. Under Rhun ap Iorwerth's leadership, Plaid Cymru prioritises social justice, climate action, and economic rejuvenation, guided by its overarching vision of independence. Since breaking out of its co-operation agreement with Welsh Labour in the Senedd, Plaid have been more outspoken, challenging Labour's record in Wales and positioning itself as the alternative option to lead Wales. While our MRP poll hinted the party could be squeezed by voters shifting to Reform, Plaid Cymru has categorically ruled out any form of power-sharing arrangement with that party following next year's Senedd elections. With the adoption of a purely proportional representation system and an expansion of the number of members, securing a robust result in 2026 will be crucial for Plaid Cymru's continued influence.

Seats: 4

PLMR Polling: 9% (Wales)

PLMR MRP seats: 4



Everyone Else: The SNP, Plaid Cymru and the Green Party



CATRIN
PRESTON

Senior Account
Manager

The Green Party

The Green Party has experienced steady growth in recent years, positioning itself as a significant voice for environmental responsibility and progressive social policy. With four MPs and three councils, the Greens have showcased the appeal of sustainable urban planning, ethical investment, and community-focused initiatives. New leadership and innovative campaigning strategies further enhance their presence on key national issues. The Green's will look to capitalise on Labour's vulnerabilities on the left as the Government seeks to make tough decisions on welfare spending and NHS reform. Moving forward, the Greens are targeting key councils this May ahead of a fight to take on councils like Hackney and Camden when they come up for grabs in 2026.

Seats: 4

PLMR Polling: 10%

PLMR MRP seats: 4



Some 23 seats were won by other parties, all in Northern Ireland, and independent candidates.

The impact of the 5 independent MPs (including former Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn) will continue to be an interesting trend in the run up to the next election. The candidates focused strongly on the conflict in Gaza and were able to defeat significant Labour figures such as Jonathan Ashworth in Leicester, while Health Secretary Wes Streeting and Home Office Minister, Jess Phillips also found themselves vulnerable.

The quest for growth



SIMON DARBY
Head of Public
Affairs

At the 2024 General Election, voters were offered the promise of 'growth' from Sir Keir Starmer on the campaign trail. This was placed front-and-centre of Labour's manifesto, as a route to enhanced living standards and a way of funding improved public services. As this Labour administration seeks to grapple with many of the long-term and systemic issues facing the UK, delivering on these ambitions is proving challenging.

A combination of anaemic growth, global economic headwinds (caused by the Trump tariffs), and increased demands on spending (i.e. defence spending) continue to place immense pressures on the UK's public finances, creating extremely limited headroom for Reeves to act without breaking her own borrowing rules.

In driving this transformation, a series of crucial cross-cutting agendas and initiatives will focus attention across government in the months ahead, all of which are critical for organisations seeking to engage with Westminster and Whitehall to have top-of-mind:

- The **Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR)** currently underway—and expected to be finalised then published by HM Treasury in June—will provide departmental spending settlements for the next three years. The 'zero-based review' (the first for 17 years) requires departments to review spending line-by-line, achieve savings and efficiencies and demonstrate how spending commitments are aligned to the delivery of the government's 'missions'. With a tight fiscal picture, proposing value for money reforms is the guiding principle for officials working across individual departments.
- Linked to the above, the **transformation of public services through technology adoption**, including the harnessing of AI, will be driven by the Cabinet Office and Department for Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT) and will remain at the top of departmental thinking, notably in respect to driving greater productivity, easing spending pressures and modernising public service delivery.
- Scrutiny will be placed on regulation—and regulatory bodies—to ensure frameworks and structures are supporting growth across a range of sectors. We can expect a **regulatory reform agenda** to develop across policymaking circles in the coming period. The Chancellor has recently spoken of the need for regulators to 'tear down regulatory barriers' that hinder growth. The recent appointment of the widely respected former Conservative minister, Lord Willetts, as the Chair of the newly established Regulatory Innovation Office (RIO), with the remit to bring 'game-changing' technologies to market quicker and more easily.

The quest for growth



SIMON DARBY
Head of Public
Affairs

- Continuing this theme of supply-side reform, **the government's reforms to the planning system**, contained within the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, will incorporate measures to make it significantly easier to drive forward development across regions and communities. Number 10 and the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) see this legislation as crucial to unlock development.
- Efforts to support people back into work and re-engaging those who have moved away from the labour market – the government's **Get Britain Working** agenda—will seek a shift in tightening welfare support whilst creating opportunities to move individuals back into employment. Spearheaded by Work & Pensions Secretary, Liz Kendall, with HM Treasury keeping a close eye, the welfare budget is seen as an area significant savings can be achieved.

Many of the challenges Starmer's government is focusing on to drive growth are long-standing problems and ones that previous administrations have sought—with varying successes and failures—to address. Nor are they uncontroversial. The willingness to tackle local 'NIMBYism' over planning reform or face down opposition to welfare reforms will determine the action matches the rhetoric we have seen to date from this Prime Minister and his Cabinet. The coming period will prove an indication of Labour's ambition to turbocharge UK economic growth.



Tech & AI in government: A time to shine?



BEN FARMER
Senior Account
Manager

The Labour Party is repositioning itself as a leader in technological innovation and digital transformation. The 2024 general election marked a turning point, showcasing Labour's commitment to leveraging technology not just as a campaign tool but as a cornerstone of governance. From a ground-breaking digital campaign to an ambitious AI agenda, Labour is making a concerted effort to align itself with the future.

Tech Leaders in the Labour Party

Labour's digital charge is spearheaded by the forceful Peter Kyle MP, Secretary of State for Digital, Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). He is supported by a team of technology advocates including Feryal Clark MP as AI Minister, Patrick Vallance as Science Minister and Callum Anderson MP as DSIT PPS.

Labour's tech-forward approach is supported by a cadre of MPs with strong digital credentials. Figures like Josh Simons MP, who brings expertise in AI ethics, and Samantha Niblett MP, an advocate for diversity in tech, exemplify the party's commitment to innovation. Others, such as Dan Aldridge MP and Claire Hughes MP, contribute their experience in IT policy and digital transformation. This new generation of MPs is reshaping Labour's image, presenting it as a party rife with innovators.

AI Plan and Push Across Government

Following their election victory, Labour's focus shifted to integrating technology into governance. First, the Government announced a new Gov.uk Wallet and App, set to be introduced this summer, to simplify access to public services and documents. Next came the ambitious AI Opportunities Action Plan which set out a strategy to position the UK as a global leader in artificial intelligence. DSIT Secretary Peter Kyle MP has been instrumental in driving this initiative, earning respect for his ability to turn vision into action.

At the heart of the AI strategy is "Humphrey," a suite of AI tools aimed at modernising the civil service. These tools, including "Parlex" for policy analysis and "Minute" for meeting transcription, are designed to increase efficiency and reduce costs. Beyond Whitehall, Labour is also focusing on practical applications of AI, such as reducing NHS waiting lists and reimagining local infrastructure. By addressing tangible issues, Labour aims to demonstrate that technology can deliver real benefits to everyday citizens.

Tech & AI in government: A time to shine?



BEN FARMER
Senior Account
Manager

Challenges Labour Face

While Labour's tech agenda is ambitious, it is not without challenges. Critics have raised concerns that AI and digital innovation feel disconnected from the daily lives of many voters. Labour have promised to prioritise skills and training programmes to ensure the workforce can adapt to an AI-driven economy but with a technology that progresses at such breakneck speed, that is no small feat.

Another pressing issue is energy consumption. AI technologies demand significant energy resources, raising sustainability concerns. Labour must balance the push for innovation with their steadfast commitment to environmental responsibility. Above all else however, success at the next election will hinge on the electorate witnessing tangible benefits from Labour's drive to embrace tech. They must also walk-the-walk!

Conclusion

Labour's transformation into a tech-savvy political force has been deliberate and strategic. By leveraging digital campaigning, embracing AI in governance, and fostering a new generation of tech-focused leaders, the party is redefining its reputation on tech. Yet, challenges remain. Success will depend on Labour's ability to translate its vision into tangible benefits for the public.



Power shift: The future of devolution and policy delivery



**ARIANNA
ROBERTSON**

Senior Account
Executive

The UK's devolution agenda is entering a transformative new phase. The Labour Government's Devolution White Paper, published in December 2024, envisions a major overhaul of local governance aimed at spurring economic growth and improving public service delivery. This blueprint prioritises mayoral-led governance, integrated funding settlements, and stronger strategic authorities, with significant implications for local councils, businesses, and communities.

Following the election of three new metro mayors in May 2024, there are now eleven areas with metro mayors, covering 18.8 million people (34 per cent of England). Including the Mayor of London, exactly half of England's population—27.7 million people—now has a directly elected or metro mayor. Over the next year, England is set to gain at least eight more mayors, bringing the total in the country to 18—with the likes of Cumbria, Greater Lincolnshire and Norfolk and Suffolk now part of the devolution settlement. These new authorities reflect a shift away from purely urban centres, toward broader and more diverse regional leadership.

The White Paper sets out a tiered model of 'Strategic Authorities', replacing Mayoral Combined Authorities and aiming for universal coverage. These fall into three types:

- **Foundation Strategic Authorities:** Non-mayoral areas with limited devolved powers.
- **Mayoral Strategic Authorities:** More empowered regions, often transitioning toward full autonomy.
- **Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities:** Fully fledged administrations with integrated funding settlements and maximum fiscal independence.

Under this model, mayoral authorities oversee seven policy areas: Transport & Infrastructure, Skills & Employment, Housing & Planning, Economic Development, Public Services & Safety, Environment & Climate, and Health & Wellbeing. They control local transport networks, guide major planning decisions, champion net-zero initiatives, and collaborate with NHS and social care providers to enhance public health.

In April 2025, the Government awarded the first Integrated Single Settlements to Greater Manchester and the West Midlands—a flagship commitment of the Devolution White Paper. These multi-year, flexible funding packages offer mayors unprecedented autonomy to direct investment across their portfolios. It marks the first glimpse of the White Paper's vision in practice: empowering strategic authorities to govern more like devolved nations, with clearer accountability and greater control over economic levers.

Power shift: The future of devolution and policy delivery



**ARIANNA
ROBERTSON**

**Senior Account
Executive**

Despite its ambition, delivery challenges remain. The Government has pledged £1.3 billion in 2025/26, including a £600 million Recovery Grant, but only Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities will benefit from integrated settlements. Others will continue to navigate fragmented funding streams. Meanwhile, momentum is building for greater fiscal autonomy: a recent Labour Together report, backed by over 100 MPs, urges that mayors be granted tax-raising powers akin to those in Scotland and Wales.

May's local elections will offer the first real test of the White Paper's political traction. Voters in Greater Lincolnshire and Hull & East Yorkshire will elect mayors for newly minted authorities, a litmus test for Labour's pledge to 'take back control' locally. At the same time, the Government has postponed elections in Suffolk, Norfolk, and Essex to allow time for structural reform, a decision that has drawn criticism for sidelining local democracy in favour of system redesign.

Businesses that stay proactive, monitor policy shifts, and collaborate with local leaders can position themselves for success in a decentralised landscape. Seizing opportunities tied to infrastructure, skills development, and low-carbon initiatives could offer a competitive advantage. Ultimately, deeper local autonomy may reshape England's economic geography, empowering regional leaders to respond effectively to community needs. If executed well, it could herald a new era of sustainable growth, civic engagement, and collaborative policymaking, demonstrating the transformative potential of devolved governance for local economies and public services.



The sudden death of NHS England: A political gamble and a new governance order



**MATTHEW
SPENCER**

Account
Director

On the 13th March, the Government did what no one saw coming: it announced the abolition of NHS England.

"I don't see why £200 billion of taxpayer money, on something as fundamental as the NHS, should be controlled by an arms-length body."

With that one statement, Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer brought to an end the governance structure created by Andrew Lansley in 2012. NHS England was designed to insulate operational delivery from short-term political pressure and empower clinicians to lead reform. That logic has now been reversed. Health Secretary Wes Streeting has framed the move as one of democratic accountability. In his view, NHS England had become a "blocker to reform," infantilising system leaders and obstructing innovation. Its abolition, he argued, will bring delivery back under ministerial oversight and free up the frontline to act.

Ministerial Control Means Ministerial Risk

Bringing NHS England into the Department of Health and Social Care is not just an administrative change. It is a political gamble. Ministers can no longer point to operational independence when reforms stall or targets are missed. The separation between politics and delivery has been erased. Streeting now owns both the vision and the implementation. If waiting lists remain high or hospital flow worsens, there is no buffer. The gains of central control are clarity and direction. The cost is direct accountability.

Mackey's Mandate: Trusts at the Helm

At the centre of this shift is Sir Jim Mackey, interim Chief Executive of NHS England, whose early public comments indicate a clear direction of travel: towards a more provider-led model of system delivery. The philosophy underpinning Mackey's approach is pragmatic: systems should "do a small number of things well," and where ICSs duplicate the functions of capable provider trusts—particularly around performance, communications and oversight—they should step back. The dynamic emerging is one where trusts lead and ICSs enable. That vision is mirrored in the composition of NHS England's transition team, which includes senior leaders from large provider organisations, particularly research-heavy trusts.

The sudden death of NHS England: A political gamble and a new governance order



**MATTHEW
SPENCER**

**Account
Director**

The Real Test: Patient Flow and Political Judgement

For all the structural focus, the core operational issue remains unresolved: patient flow. How quickly people are seen, how effectively they are moved through the system, and how safely they are discharged into community care will remain the biggest determinant of NHS performance and the political test that matters most. Reducing waiting lists in particular is the issue on which the Government will ultimately be judged at the next general election. The central reform may change who is responsible, but it has yet to prove it can change what matters most to patients.

What Now?

This isn't just another NHS restructure. It's a political reset. A deliberate shift in where power lies and who carries the responsibility for results. Wes Streeting has taken that responsibility squarely on himself. If the reforms deliver, he will be seen as the architect of meaningful, ministerial reform. If not, there's nowhere else for blame to land. But the questions don't stop with the restructure. We now look ahead to the Spending Review in June, where critical decisions will be made about who pays for the redundancies triggered by this merger—whether the costs will be borne by NHS England or funded directly by the Treasury.

There's also the matter of the Government's 10-Year Plan. Originally pitched as the foundation for long-term reform, it now risks being overshadowed by the immediate structural transformation. With the prospect of ICS consolidation still on the table, there are real questions about how the recommendations of that plan are implemented amidst the overhaul of both national and local NHS structures.



Education, Education, Education



TIFFANY BECK
Associate
Director, Head
of Education

With major policy shifts across all education stages, 2025 is set to redefine the sector.

In December 2024, Starmer announced a goal for 75% of children to be school-ready by five, emphasising the importance of seamless coordination among childcare settings, family support services, and educational providers. The Government has recently provided new funding for early years, announcing the first 300 school-based nursery settings to expand the offer of high-quality education and care for young children across the country, enhanced training for staff in early years settings and encouraging closer collaboration between family hubs and children's centres. This reflects a focus on strengthening the sector's ability to deliver robust early support, ensuring children develop the foundational skills required to succeed academically and socially.

In schools, the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill has come under intense scrutiny. Although its safeguarding measures are broadly applauded, some proposed reforms have drawn criticism from academy trusts concerned about losing flexibilities they rely on to turn around struggling schools. One significant area of contention was the Government's initial plan to align academies with the national pay scales of maintained schools, curtailing flexibility on teacher pay. A more moderate stance has now been adopted, introducing a pay floor without a ceiling, and similar accommodations may emerge in other policy areas.

Recent research suggests scepticism about mandating qualified teacher status for all teachers, as this could hinder the hiring of SEND or subject-specific experts in areas such as art or PE. With the research also showing an expectation of negative or no impact whatsoever from the Bill, trust leaders warn the Bill risks diverting ministerial focus away from more pressing problems, including SEND provision, attendance and workforce shortages. Ongoing consultations on Ofsted and accountability reforms add to schools' uncertainty, generating worries about increased workload. There is a strong call for Government to closely engage with the sector, ensuring that any reforms are genuinely beneficial, evidence-based and effectively support teaching and learning.

In FE, HE, and skills, creating a highly skilled workforce remains paramount. Skills England is central to Labour's reform strategy, particularly as IfATE is dismantled, and the Apprenticeship Levy is replaced by the new Growth and Skills Levy. Though the specific proportion remains uncertain, shorter apprenticeships, relaxed English and maths requirements, and the reallocation of funds from level 7 apprenticeships have been mooted. Meanwhile, T levels are here to stay, but BTECs and other T level equivalents, which secured a short-term defunding reprieve, still face an uncertain future. Ministers also frequently cite Labour's "Missions" and "Milestones" as guiding principles, underscoring the importance of aligning FE and skills policy with broader economic targets. Engagement is more important than ever now that Skills England's Chair, Phil Smith, has been appointed.

Education, Education, Education



TIFFANY BECK

**Associate
Director, Head
of Education**

The Education Select Committee's wide-ranging inquiry seeks to explore how FE can better equip young people with the skills and qualifications needed in sectors facing labour shortages. This dovetails with Skills England's upcoming task to craft a post-16 strategy. In higher education, the Lifelong Learning Entitlement, set to commence in 2026/27, aims to reshape HE finance, but arrives amid serious financial threats to universities that may lead to forced mergers or closures.

Additionally, the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act is imposing fresh regulatory burdens on universities, requiring them to safeguard free speech or risk significant repercussions. Critics question the timing, arguing that financial stability should be a priority over further compliance obligations.

Ultimately, 2025 demands close collaboration between Government and the education sector, with evidence-based policies, timely interventions, and robust stakeholder engagement essential to fostering enduring benefits for learners at every stage.



Energy and ambition run high – but Labour must push hard against the clock



PATRICK
COUSENS

Head of
Energy and
Sustainability

Labour was elected on a pledge to 'Make Britain a Clean Energy Superpower'—and there can be no doubt that the Government has set about this mission with significant purpose and no small amount of delivery over its first ten months. However, with opposition parties and the media ramping up net zero skepticism, and major controversies lying in wait, whether this early progress—and the ambition that underpins it—will result in an electoral pay off remains to be seen.

The Labour government's ambitions in the energy sector are considerable. In particular, the target to hit clean power by 2030 is one of the most radical in the Government's agenda, requiring massive investment and significant policy change to deliver.

The production of a plan to reach the 2030 target—informed by advice from the National Energy Systems Operator (NESO)—was an impressive early deliverable from its first six months in power, alongside the accompanying NESO-led process to 'strategically align' the grid connections queue in support of the regional technology ambitions that the plan sets out.

The government has also set in motion a vast array of other policy changes, including the Warm Homes Plan, substantive devolution, sweeping planning reforms, and the establishment of GB Energy (albeit with uncertain scope and possibly diminishing capital—all eyes on the Spending Review).

However, relatively speaking, this has been the easy bit. Delivering on this agenda whilst maintaining public support is the challenge that lies ahead—particularly with some much new energy infrastructure being required around the country. With Reform calling to scrap net zero as one of its totemic policies, Kemi Badenoch rowing back on the 2050 target, and the re-election of Donald Trump both a symptom and a cause of a fraying global climate consensus, this will not be easy.

In that context, former leader Tony Blair calling for a 'reset' on net zero is unhelpful, even if, in reality, his Institute's recent report is not hugely critical of Labour's agenda (rather focusing on CCS and frontier nuclear as typically Blairite techno-optimist solutions to the current global paradigm). However, as welcome as advances in direct air carbon capture and nuclear fusion would certainly be, technology is not the limiting factor to the energy transition. We have most of the tools we need. What Blair does correctly diagnose is that it is a net zero backlash (to which he may have invertedly contributed) that represents the real risk to climate progress.

Energy and ambition run high – but Labour must push hard against the clock



**PATRICK
COUSENS**

**Head of
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Sustainability**

It is also a risk to the Labour government. Ed Miliband's pitch to the electorate is based on three core claims; that net zero will reduce bills, that it will deliver jobs, and that it will increase energy security. He is almost certainly right on each—but the question is one of extent and timing.

Electrification will, long term and with the right reforms, be cheaper than our current system. Yet the NESO advice on the short-term financial benefits of clean power were far more measured (CP30 can be delivered without increasing costs) than the £300 annual saving by 2030 that has been promised as recently as February this year. This creates political risk.

Likewise, the promises on jobs. The energy transition will produce jobs—transitioning oil and gas workers and training up the workforce to become network engineers and energy efficiency retrofitters, is a hugely important task—but requires skills that the UK doesn't currently have enough of. This makes 650,000 jobs a tough yardstick to aim at within five years.

The argument on energy security and reducing the reliance on gas is stronger now even than a year ago, hence leading Labour's current messaging, though it is also true that the transition to renewables relies heavily on China—something that not only China hawks in the opposition but even its own MPs such as Alex Sobel are reminding them.

The challenge that Labour faces is that it is undertaking a noble mission—one that demonstrates genuine global leadership and should pay off for the UK long term—but not necessarily within the next four years. Skilled communications and evidence of tangible outcomes will therefore be key, even if not all milestones are met.

In this fraught environment, it is fascinating that the major imminent controversy is inherited; whether and to what extent to implement locational pricing—one of the most bitterly debated topics the sector has seen in years, and one which many investors fear could derail the 2030 target and create acrimonious regional divides. At this stage, key figures in the Government remain divided too—but Reform, the Greens, the Lib Dems and many of the unions have come out against. Labour may need to be wary of providing their opponents with another stick.

Planning and Infrastructure – the catalyst for growth



MARTHA KOOL

Account
Director

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill forms a pivotal component of Labour's strategy for economic growth and delivers the reforms that the planning system has been in desperate need of for some time. Its primary aim is to accelerate housebuilding, streamline planning processes, and facilitate critical infrastructure delivery, supporting Labour's vision of a fairer, more prosperous Britain. By addressing longstanding impediments within the planning system, the Bill seeks to stimulate investment, drive development, and deliver widespread economic benefits.

The Bill is currently at Committee stage so there is an opportunity for changes to be made, but the main takeaways so far are:

A national scheme of delegation, clarifying which planning applications will be determined by officers or committee. Training for committee members and tighter limits on committee size with the aim of fostering more informed decision-making.

Local authorities will be empowered to set their own planning fees, enabling them to reinvest revenues in the planning system and mitigate the current £362 million funding deficit.

Development Corporations will help deliver 1.5 million new homes, reflecting Labour's commitment to tackling the housing crisis. A new spatial development strategy system will ensure local authorities collaborate on major housing and infrastructure projects, bolstering consistency and efficiency in planning decisions and ensuring that planning is more strategic and cross boundary.

Compulsory Purchase Reform will streamline acquiring land for development by balancing fair compensation for landowners with curbs on excessive payouts. It will facilitate progress on vital initiatives without undue delay.

Revisions to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) regime to consolidate legal challenges, reduce red tape, and expedite major transport and energy schemes. By limiting challenges, it shortens timelines and encourages swifter investment in critical sectors. This focus on enhanced connectivity and energy security aligns with Labour's broader plan to foster sustainable growth and long-term prosperity.

Planning and Infrastructure – the catalyst for growth



MARTHA KOOL

Account
Director

Overall, the Planning and Infrastructure Bill is poised to drive economic recovery and stimulate job creation. By promoting significant improvements to housing delivery, ensuring robust infrastructure, and safeguarding the environment, the Bill embodies a key pillar of Labour's Plan for Change. Its reforms address pressing issues, from housing shortages to bottlenecks in planning, and signal a commitment to growth that benefits communities nationwide.

This legislation is a positive step forwards for planning, and highlights Labour's recognition that economic transformation requires decisive policy interventions. Removing procedural blockages, boosting vital infrastructure, and reducing planning delays are crucial steps towards achieving economic growth and as such greater opportunity for all.

There is still, of course, some way to go and only time will tell if the Bill delivers on its promises to accelerate planning, and deliver the growth that the country needs. The challenge with planning will no doubt continue to be the differing views between developers, central government, local government and local communities. With so many stakeholders involved in planning and development, it will be interesting to see how the Bill and in particular elements such as the National Scheme of Delegation is received by the various players in practice.

There is one thing that is for certain, the Planning and Infrastructure Bill underlines Labour's determination to reimagine growth. It promises to address core challenges in housing, energy, and transport while embedding environmental protections at the heart of development. These reforms embody Labour's commitment to progress and the industry has certainly been energised by this catalyst for growth.



What next for the National Care Service?



JESS PEDDIE

Account
Manager

England's social care system remains in deep crisis, with over two million older people experiencing unmet care needs and around 131,000 workforce vacancies. Financial challenges are intensifying due to recent National Living Wage (NLW) rises and higher employer National Insurance contributions (NICs). The Nuffield Trust projects these policy shifts will cost care providers approximately £2.8bn in 2025-26, raising fears of provider failure, contract hand-backs, or significant job losses—particularly among smaller organisations already operating on narrow margins.

Treasury discussions suggest that exemptions or offsets will only be considered if widespread market failure occurs, as officials believe providers can still achieve efficiency savings or reduce profits. However, local authorities counter that many care operators are already struggling, and further expenses could compel them to discontinue services, potentially leaving vulnerable individuals without crucial support.

Much of the responsibility for meeting NLW and NICs increases falls on local authorities, which face a £1.8bn funding gap. Although the Government's pledge of £3.7bn in additional funding designates only £1.2bn for social care, councils are already spending up to 80% of their budgets on care provision. Some have reached the maximum permissible council tax rates, creating widespread public discontent as taxes climb yet local services deteriorate. In many areas, social care is steadily rising on the political agenda, with voters questioning why improvements remain limited despite higher bills.

PLMR's recent polling shows Labour in tight competition with Reform UK and the Conservatives, and the Government will need to deliver bold, actionable strategy on social care if they are to regain public trust ahead of 2029.

Fiscal constraints at the national level—such as escalating defence commitments and the requirement for non-protected departments to cut budgets by 11%—limit the Government's capacity to intervene. Following the NICs increases that came in this April, many fear certain providers will enter insolvency; come November's winter pressures, the entire system may buckle further under the strain.

To address these mounting concerns, the Government plans to convene an independent commission, chaired by Baroness Louise Casey, to develop proposals for a National Care Service (NCS). An interim report in 2026 will outline immediate priorities, followed by a final report in 2028 that addresses long-term structural and financial challenges. A robust NCS could unify care standards, bolster integration with the NHS, reduce hospital admissions, and improve experiences across the board. Yet past initiatives, including ICSs, promised similar outcomes but largely failed to deliver tangible results.

What next for the National Care Service?



JESS PEDDIE

**Account
Manager**

Critics warn that the commission's drawn-out timetable risks delaying urgent measures, as its conclusions are unlikely to be implemented until just before the 2029 General Election. Sector leaders argue that postponement jeopardises both staffing and patient wellbeing. Scotland's abandonment of its own NCS ambitions, due to financial and operational doubts, demonstrates how even well-intentioned reforms can unravel under scrutiny.

Historically, comprehensive social care reform has struggled to gain traction, often faltering over whether additional funding should come from taxpayers or service users. Without prompt action to address current fiscal pressures—and a genuine commitment to using the commission's findings to establish a workable NCS—England's social care sector may remain trapped in limbo. The wellbeing of millions depends on decisive political will, as further delays risk deepening the crisis and eroding public trust. Ultimately, the question remains whether this moment will finally drive the transformative change the sector requires.



Labour gains ground in the East but a more diverse political map emerges



TIM MILLER

Managing
Director,
PLMR Genesis

The 2024 general election marked a significant shift in the UK's political landscape, with Labour achieving a substantial national swing. In the East of England, traditionally a Conservative stronghold, the change was less pronounced but still important. Labour made inroads into constituencies long held by the Conservatives, while third parties like Reform UK and the Green Party also secured seats, indicating a diversifying political environment.

Labour's resurgence in the East saw them capturing several key constituencies that had been under Conservative control for decades. Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket, a seat with a deep-rooted Conservative history, is now represented by Labour whilst Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard turned red for the first time in years.

Beyond Labour's successes, third parties have made significant inroads. Reform, led by Nigel Farage, achieved a historic victory in Clacton, marking Farage's first parliamentary seat after multiple attempts. The party also won in Great Yarmouth and South Basildon and East Thurrock, all previously Conservative. Meanwhile, the Greens made a breakthrough with co-leader Adrian Ramsay securing a win in Waveney Valley. All this underscores that, whilst Labour has a sizeable majority, there is a growing desire for alternative representations to the mainstream parties.

Regardless, businesses now have the chance to collaborate with Labour representatives who bring fresh perspectives and a commitment to regional development, from infrastructure investments to tackling the skills shortage. However, while the presence of Labour MPs is promising, their lack of cabinet positions may restrict their direct influence on national policy decisions. Businesses will therefore need to temper expectations and work collaboratively with other groups in the region.

Labour has set out its agenda to drive economic growth and the East has already proved it is a powerhouse punching above its weight. However, we need to see significant long-term investments in improving the local infrastructure, with current towns such as Ipswich frequently gridlocked, tackling high waiting lists in the region's hospitals and addressing the skills shortage where the East faces amongst the highest levels in the country. If things don't change, Labour won't see the economic growth it has committed to. If in turn people don't feel they have more money in their pockets, Labour will be punished at the next election.

Labour gains ground in the East but a more diverse political map emerges



TIM MILLER

**Managing
Director,
PLMR Genesis**

This was evident by the new MRP poll PLMR conducted with Electoral Calculus. The survey of over 5,000 people, constituency by constituency, asking how they plan to vote at the next general election revealed Labour is currently expected to face major losses. The Conservatives are projected to regain some lost ground but it's Reform which is set to capitalise on these financial concerns and become the largest party in the region with a majority of the seats. The polling shows financial anxiety is the underlying cause, with over half of respondents in Suffolk, Essex, Norfolk, and Cambridgeshire expecting worsening personal finances. It's a long way to go until the next election, but this poll gives an indication on the direction of travel if Labour fails to deliver.

Labour's devolution announcements also signal a wider transformation for the region with more power being granted to local people to make local decisions. We're set to see the creation of new regional mayors and a reorganisation of local councils. The aim is to streamline decision making across transport, housing and skills to focus on addressing specific local needs. A caveat being that Labour has postponed local elections in Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex by a year as part of the reforms. However, this is undoubtedly good news for businesses as it will provide a more direct line to policymakers, enabling them to influence local decisions that impact the local economy.

Looking ahead, businesses across the East of England have every reason to be optimistic about Labour's growth agenda but there will be short term challenges, including adapting to the changes to employer national insurance contributions. What is clear, is that whilst Labour has made ground on the political map in the East, they are still far outnumbered. Businesses and Labour's newly elected MPs will have to work hard to have their voice heard around the cabinet table.



Centring the West Midlands in the Government's devolution and growth agenda



LEE CORDEN

Director,
PLMR Midlands

Last year was marked by major political shifts that rippled across the UK, including in the West Midlands where a tightly contested mayoral election was won by Labour's Richard Parker—a result that set a precedent for what was to come during the General Election.

Now, a year on from his election as Mayor, there is plenty to be positive about in 2025. The Midlands has long been a battleground for policy innovation and, under Parker's leadership, the region is becoming a key test case for Labour's commitment to empowering local authorities.

Since securing control, the Labour government has made clear its ambition to accelerate regional growth, with the announcement of new combined authorities and a flurry of devolution deals which are giving regions greater control over areas such as transport, housing, and economic development.

In the West Midlands—a trailblazer for the strategy already—this is playing out with new funding agreements, a renewed focus on skills and apprenticeships, and more strategic investment in infrastructure.

Parker's administration has sought to use this to reposition the West Midlands as a leader in green industries, advanced manufacturing, and transport innovation. The funding for investment zones and infrastructure projects which has been secured will be critical in determining whether the region can attract the necessary private sector backing to drive growth.

However, there is always more to be done to capitalise on the opportunity to cement the Midlands' position as the key region for the future of the UK – translating the wide range of opportunities into more tangible results and leading by example when it comes to regional growth.

To achieve this will require Richard Parker to navigate financial and political subjects carefully. For example, one of the most pressing issues remains Birmingham City Council's financial crisis.

Since declaring itself effectively bankrupt in 2023, the Labour-run council's struggles have cast a long shadow over the city. Yet, Parker needs to ensure that the region's largest city remains a driver of economic growth, rather than a cautionary tale.

Centring the West Midlands in the Government's devolution and growth agenda



LEE CORDEN

Director,
PLMR Midlands

Contrary to some beliefs, it remains a hotbed of private investment and opportunity. For example, in Digbeth, Birmingham, the approval of plans for the £1.9bn Smithfield regeneration masterplan, and the BBC's multi-million-pound commitment to the area, with the launch of its new HQ at the Tea Factory and connected ventures which is set to bring £282m to the region by 2031.

Additionally, the discourse around HS2's curtailment has left lingering questions about connectivity and regional development—areas Parker will need to navigate carefully, while still recognising the positive impact of this project in the region—with the £3.2bn Arden Cross opportunity which is facilitated by the HS2 Interchange Station a prime example.

Finally, Parker will need to continue to effectively navigate the national political landscape to keep the Government focused on the ambitions and opportunity the region holds. In 2025, the West Midlands can and should be a key indicator of how successfully power can be transferred away from Whitehall. However, Parker's leadership over the next year will be pivotal in shaping that narrative and keeping the West Midlands at the forefront of national discussion.

According to PLMR's MRP poll conducted with Electoral Calculus, Labour is predicted to face substantial losses at the next election, the Conservatives look set to recover lost ground, and Reform is poised to become the largest party in the region.



About PLMR

We are PLMR

Working with multinationals, FTSEs, public sector, charities, trade bodies, SMEs and disruptor start-ups, PLMR delivers results which make an impact. From our successful campaign to save early years education funding, to our work to secure the funding for the extension of London City Airport, we are experts in understanding commercial priorities and aligning these to a bespoke communications programme.

PLMR Policy Hub at Labour Conference 2025

PLMR is delighted to be bringing the PLMR Policy Hub back to Labour Party Conference for 2025.

Taking place in Liverpool between Sunday 28th September and Wednesday 1st October 2025 Conference will provide a vital opportunity to engage with members of the new government along with incoming MPs and policymakers, at a time of potential significant political change for the UK.

Our PLMR policy hub, at the heart of the conference and within the secure zone, will host a range of panels and receptions throughout the duration of Labour's time in Liverpool. Last year we were pleased to welcome a range of ministers, senior MPs, business leaders and senior policymakers to our hub for a discussion about key issues including skills, energy, housing and health.

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