

Makerfield Candidates

Profiles of all candidates standing in the 2026 Makerfield by-election.

- [Rebecca Shepherd — Restore Britain Candidate Makerfield](#)
- [Andy Burnham — Labour Candidate Makerfield](#)
- [Robert Kenyon — Reform UK Candidate Makerfield](#)
- [Jake Austin — Lib Dem Candidate Makerfield](#)
- [James Booth — Green Candidate Makerfield](#)
- [Michael Winstanley — Conservative Candidate Makerfield](#)
- [Peter Ward — Rejoin EU Candidate Makerfield](#)
- [Alan Howlin Laud Hope — OMR Loony Party Candidate](#)
- [Sarah Wakefield](#)
- [Dan Clarke](#)

Rebecca Shepherd — Restore Britain Candidate Makerfield

Rebecca Shepherd — Restore Britain Candidate, Makerfield By-Election 2026

| **Last updated:** 13 Jun 2026 (NEW: Independent poll 12 Jun — Restore at 7%, Shepherd as potential kingmaker. Her vote share could exceed the Lab-Ref margin. Forward Democracy: tactical voting push hurting smaller parties. Ofcom publishes decision on BBC QT exclusion complaint.) | **By-election date:** Thursday 18 June 2026

Bio

Detail	Info
Age	53
Location	Wigan borough, Greater Manchester — lived there "most of her adult life"
Occupation	Small business owner
Businesses	Seven Stars Equestrian (equestrian equipment shop, also known as "Pony and Horse") + Equine Escapes CIC — a Community Interest Company providing equine-based activities for children with SEND needs
Personal	Has a child who receives SEND support themselves. Husband is Dutch-Indonesian
First-time candidate	Yes — this is her first ever election campaign
Party	Restore Britain (led by Rupert Lowe, launched Feb 2026)
Democracy Club ID	139187
Campaign email	makerfield@restorebritain.org.uk

How She Got Selected

Restore Britain's first Westminster candidate. Rupert Lowe personally announced her as candidate on X/Twitter on 18 May 2026 — the post got **29,805 likes** and **5,549 retweets**. Lowe campaigned alongside her in Makerfield the day after the announcement.

She was selected over Reform UK's rumoured candidate **Tyson Fury** — a fact Restore Britain supporters on Reddit were pleased about.

Key Statements & Quotes

- "Understands first-hand the pressures facing local businesses and working families"
 - Concerned about "rising costs, excessive red tape, bureaucracy, and overregulation"
 - "Passionate advocate for improved SEND support"
 - **24 May 2026:** "We were expecting 40 people... then 150 showed up" — referring to a campaign event turnout exceeding expectations
 - Campaign slogan/framing: Restore Britain says she is "exactly the type of person we need in politics — not career politicians" (Rupert Lowe)
 - **26 May 2026 — Damaging interview:** Asked what Restore Britain policy made her join the party, she replied "I can't remember it" — she saw a policy on Facebook that convinced her but couldn't recall what it was. The Independent and i Paper reported this as a major embarrassment for the Restore campaign
 - **3 Jun 2026 — BBC Question Time EXCLUDED:** Despite Restore Britain polling 7% (ahead of Greens 3%, Tories 2%, Lib Dems 4%), Shepherd was NOT invited to the BBC Question Time Makerfield special on 4 June. Panel includes Burnham (Lab), Kenyon (Reform), Winstanley (Con), Austin (Lib Dem), Wakefield (Green). Rupert Lowe consulting legal team over "blatant election interference and bias." Restore Britain says it would "defund the rotten BBC on day one." (Daily Mail, Express, multiple sources)
 - **12 Jun 2026 — Ofcom Election Committee decision published:** Formal ruling on Restore Britain's due impartiality complaint regarding BBC Question Time exclusion. [PDF link](#)
 - **12 Jun 2026 — Independent poll kingmaker status:** New constituency polling seen by Independent puts Restore at ~7%, with Lab 46% and Ref 41%. Shepherd's vote share could exceed the Lab-Ref margin, making her the de facto kingmaker. Forward Democracy: "the maths is clear" on tactical voting, but Restore voters breaking to Burnham rather than Kenyon.
 - **4 Jun 2026 — Lowe legal threat continues:** Left Foot Forward reports Lowe still threatening legal action. BBC stands by decision. Reddit consensus on r/LabourUK: no prospect of winning. Restore Britain excluded from tonight's QT despite polling 3rd. (Left Foot Forward; r/LabourUK)
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Policy Platform

Based on Restore Britain's official Makerfield candidate page and campaign material:

1. **Safer streets** — targeting what the party describes as "gangs of foreign men" who harass women in Ashton
2. **Anti-overdevelopment** — specifically in South Hindley and Winstanley
3. **SEND reform** — avoid overdiagnosis, invest in playgrounds, targeted support for children with additional needs. Criticises the current system for creating "a growing culture of dependency"
4. **Anti-social behaviour crackdown** — visible policing, parental responsibility
5. **High street revival** — free parking, abolish business rates, investigate vape shops/Turkish barbers for immigration and trading standards issues

Polling

Poll	Date	Shepherd (Restore Britain)	LAB (Burnham)	REF (Kenyon)
Survation/Sunday Times	23 May 2026	7%	43%	40%
Survation (early)	16 May 2026	—	45%	42%

At **7%**, Shepherd's candidacy is widely seen as splitting the right-wing vote away from Reform UK. This is a critical factor in Burnham's narrow 3-point lead. Without Restore Britain in the race, Reform's 40% + Restore's 7% = 47%, which would put Reform ahead of Labour on 43%.

Local context: Reform UK won all 8 council wards in Makerfield in the May 2026 local elections with approximately 50% of the vote, suggesting strong ground-level organisation that Restore Britain will need to overcome.

Key Partnerships & Endorsements

- **Rupert Lowe** — personally selected her, has campaigned with her in Makerfield, posted multiple times promoting her
- **Elon Musk** — endorsed Restore Britain generally (24 May 2026), significantly raising the party's profile. Musk also endorsed Ben Habib (Advance UK leader) saying "True" to Habib's post arguing Restore Britain should NOT step aside for Reform
- **Duncan Bannatyne** (Dragons' Den) — reportedly endorsed her candidacy

- **Kate Hoey** — has criticised Restore Britain's decision to stand a candidate in Makerfield, arguing it splits the right-wing vote (but no direct criticism of Shepherd herself)
- **Andrew Bridgen MP** — active supporter, posted "Restore Britain is going to shock the establishment in Makerfield" (24 May)

Farage-Musk-Lowe Feud

The Elon Musk endorsement has created a three-way war between Reform, Restore, and Musk:

- **Nigel Farage** warned Musk that he is "splitting the right" in Makerfield (25 May, Telegraph): "Elon Musk has decided he will try to split the right of British politics as best he can. This is supporting a party that's one man with a social media account. Quite what he's trying to achieve, I have no idea."
- **Rupert Lowe** hit back: "Farage can arrogantly insult me over and over, but he has never been more wrong... There are thousands and thousands and thousands of Restore Britain members, backed up by millions of Brits who are with us."
- **Annunziata Rees-Mogg** also called for right-wing parties to unite behind Reform to stop Burnham (25 May, TalkTV)
- **The British Intel** noted: "Reform UK MPs now having to defend explicit sexual comments live on the BBC" — the Kenyon controversy is distracting from Restore Britain and drawing attention away from Shepherd's campaign

X/Twitter Activity (24 May 2026)

Notable tweets mentioning or by Rebecca Shepherd / Restore Britain in Makerfield:

Account	Content	Platform
English Rose [REDACTED]	"Makerfield Restore Britain candidate, Rebecca Shepherd: 'We were expecting 40 people... then 150 showed up'"	X
Ben Jones [REDACTED]	"Rebecca Shepherd is stepping up as our next Restore Britain MP—let's bring her the same patriotic victory we saw in Great Yarmouth"	X
Rupert Lowe MP	"Rebecca Shepherd and Restore Britain can win in Makerfield and send the biggest shock in British political history" (22 May)	X
Restore Britain	"Hundreds of Restore Britain members out across Makerfield today" (23 May) — accompanied by campaign photos	X

Account	Content	Platform
Ian Matthews	"Restore Britain have swooped in and delivered a Masterpiece of policies from taxi drivers to hairdressers" (24 May)	X
VoxPopuli	"Patriot with a broken-leg is out today campaigning for Restore Britain in Makerfield" (24 May)	X
The Raging Bull	"Restore Britain is going to get thousands and thousands of votes in Makerfield. We are in this to win it." (24 May)	X
Rupert Lowe MP	"Strong support from Elon Musk for Restore Britain in the Makerfield by-election. There can be no better or stronger ally from across the pond." (23 May)	X
Andrew Bridgen	"Restore Britain is going to shock the establishment in Makerfield." (24 May)	X
@emanonedits	"Rebecca Shepherd	Makerfield [] Restore Britain
VoxPopuli	"We Need to SAVE the Nation	Restore Britain, Makerfield" — YouTube video, 25 May, posted to r/ukpolitics (score 0)
@Queenshandbag1	"Voters in Makerfield deserve to know who's campaigning for Rebecca Shepherd / Restore Britain — Thomas Bryer, Craig Buckley & Michelle Smith are active Patriotic Alternative (PA) members" (26 May)	X
VoxPopuli	"FULL EXCLUSIVE: Who is Rebecca Shepherd, Restore Britain's Makerfield Candidate? We expected 40 people at our first branch meeting. Over 150 turned up!" (26 May)	X
@stevenson_les	"Has Restore Rebecca Shepherd (saw it on FB) done any media interviews yet?" (26 May) — questioning her media readiness	X
@IramRamzanMEN	"More alleged sexist posts by Reform candidate Robert Kenyon emerge" — MEN reporter covering the Kenyon story, which keeps Restore Britain out of the headlines (26 May)	X

Reddit Discussion

Most Significant Threads

Thread	Subreddit	Score	Comments	Sentiment
Rupert Lowe announces Rebecca Shepherd as Restore Britain candidate	r/ukpolitics	93	318	Mixed/Sceptical
Makerfield Candidate announced: Rebecca Shepherd	r/RestoreBritain	122	26	Supportive
Restore name their candidate for Makerfield by-election	r/reformuk	8	7	Neutral/Mixed
Restore Britain announces Makerfield by-election candidate	r/unitedkingdom	163	361	Mixed/Sceptical
First poll: LAB 43%, Reform 40%, Restore Britain 7%	r/ukpolitics	204	264	Analytical
Elon Musk backs Restore Britain	r/unitedkingdom	603	376	Overwhelmingly negative
Senior Greens urge party to step aside for Andy Burnham	r/ukpolitics	65	58	Analytical — tactical voting debate
Musk backs Restore Britain in Burnham by-election (Telegraph)	r/ukpolitics	115	187	Mixed — split-right debate
We Need to SAVE the Nation	Restore Britain, Makerfield (YouTube)	r/ukpolitics	0	9
Nigel Farage: Musk risks splitting Right in Burnham by-election	r/reformuk	12	10	Critical of Restore Britain

Key Reddit Sentiment

r/ukpolitics (top comment, +153): "How does properly funding SEND fit with reducing public services/benefits/lower taxes?" — highlights the perceived contradiction between Restore Britain's small-state platform and Shepherd's SEND advocacy.

r/ukpolitics (+88): "Interesting to see how Reform perform with Restore on the ballot"

r/ukpolitics (+70): "How long before some choice Facebook posts of hers turn up?" — with reply "One week either side of the election"

r/ukpolitics (+21): "Clever politics — a working mum on benefits raising a child with special needs. Perfect candidate for working-class areas"

r/unitedkingdom (+196): "Andy Burnham will be overjoyed at the right vote split. Suspect it's sour grapes from Lowe not stepping aside for Reform"

r/unitedkingdom (+97): "A small business owner from the area sounds better than someone using the constituency for power"

r/reformuk (+8): "This has real potential to split the vote"

r/RestoreBritain (+36): Full tweet text and full-throated support

r/RestoreBritain (+13): "Get ready for backlash — her partner is Dutch with Indonesian father" — predicting internal party tensions

r/RestoreBritain (+4): "That SEND support is massive"

Notable Sceptical Comments

- **+3 on r/RestoreBritain:** "Seriously lmao? They picked someone who gets government grants for ADHD kids to see ponies"
- **+1 on r/reformuk:** "She runs a horse therapy business for ADHD kids paid by taxpayer. Married to [Dutch-Indonesian] guy. Hardly matches Restore rhetoric"
- **+56 on r/ukpolitics:** "His [Burnham's] local popularity not showing up in polls — he only leads because Restore splits Reform"

SEND Policy — Detailed View

Shepherd's primary issue. Per a Substack piece by supporter Lance Turner (19 May), her approach:

- **"Zero tolerance for overdiagnosis"** — believes too many children are being labelled
- **Targeted investment** rather than blanket funding increases
- **Practical, community-led activities** — her own Equine Escapes CIC is the model
- Criticises the current SEND system for creating "a growing culture of dependency"

This is her strongest differentiator from other candidates and her most personal issue (she has a child receiving SEND support).

Controversies

No personal controversies found about Rebecca Shepherd herself. She has no prior political activity, no problematic social media history has been unearthed, and she has been described as a "clean candidate" by her supporters.

However, her party and association bring baggage:

- Restore Britain is described by Wikipedia and Hope Not Hate as "**far-right and right-wing**"
- Rupert Lowe's party was formed after his split from Reform UK, driven by a personal feud with Nigel Farage
- Elon Musk's endorsement has drawn heavy criticism
- The "neo-fascists back Restore Britain" thread on r/unitedkingdom (score 556, 721 comments) highlights far-right support for the party
- Her husband being Dutch-Indonesian has been flagged by some Restore Britain supporters as a potential source of internal party tension
- **Steve Laws (Restore Britain supporter) antisemitism row (26 May):** A prominent Restore Britain supporter, Steve Laws, told Jewish podcaster Andrew Gold "I'm looking at you as a Jew and I'm telling you, you are foreign." Dave Atherton initially defended Laws then criticised his comments. This reflects poorly on the Restore campaign culture even though Shepherd herself wasn't involved
- **Patriotic Alternative (PA) neo-Nazi activists campaigning for Shepherd (26 May, exposed):** An X account revealed that active Patriotic Alternative members — Thomas Bryer, Craig Buckley, and Michelle Smith — are campaigning for Rebecca Shepherd/Restore Britain on the ground in Makerfield. PA is described as a "neo-Nazi / white nationalist group that promotes the Great Replacement / white genocide conspiracy, ethno-nationalism ('Britain for the indigenous British only'), Holocaust denial & antisemitic tropes (led by Mark Collett, ex-BNP)." The account framed this as: "They're not just 'concerned patriots' — they're hardcore extremists. Restore is happily letting them canvass on the ground. This is who they're uniting with." This is potentially the most damaging association story for Shepherd — direct on-the-ground links to neo-Nazi activists, not just online association.

What It Means

- **At 7% in the polls**, Shepherd is a **kingmaker** in a knife-edge race. Every vote for Restore Britain is a vote that doesn't go to Reform. Without her on the ballot, Reform UK would likely be polling ahead of Labour.
- Rupert Lowe has explicitly stated Restore Britain is in Makerfield "to win it" — not just to split the vote. However, the 7% polling figure suggests that's aspirational rather than

realistic.

- **Restore Britain sees this as their national launchpad.** Makerfield is their first Westminster contest. A strong showing (2nd place, or close to 10%) would legitimise them as a national force.
- **Her SEND platform** is a genuine differentiator from both Labour and Reform, but faces the obvious question: how does a small-state, tax-cutting party fund improved SEND provision?
- **Elon Musk's endorsement** has raised Restore Britain's profile enormously, but has also triggered a full-scale feud between Farage and Lowe. Farage warning Musk about "splitting the right" has become a major campaign subplot. The Musk endorsement may be a double-edged sword — energising the base but potentially alienating working-class voters who don't resonate with the tech billionaire's brand. On 25 May, Musk further endorsed Ben Habib (Advance UK) saying "True" to a post arguing Restore should NOT stand aside for Reform — deepening the split.
- **The "Remigration NOW" tweet** associating Shepherd with hardline immigration policy signals Restore Britain is courting the far-right end of the political spectrum, which may affect her appeal to moderate SEND-focused voters.
- The right-wing vote split (Reform 40%, Restore 7%, Tory 2%) is **the deciding factor** in this race — and Rebecca Shepherd is the wildcard in that equation.
- **Kenyon-Restore feud deepens (26 May):** Rupert Lowe claimed Kenyon didn't vote for Brexit and supported EU open borders. Kenyon shot back: "I used to respect you Rupert... I want net negative immigration." The public spat between the two right-wing parties' candidates benefits Burnham — every day they spend attacking each other is a day not spent attacking Labour.
- **Greens scale back campaign (27 May, Guardian exclusive):** The Greens have decided to devote only limited resources to Makerfield, focusing instead on the GM mayoral by-election if Burnham wins. This is a potentially significant boost to Burnham — and by extension, a boost to Shepherd's relative position, since a weaker Green presence means less splitting of the anti-Reform vote. However, the Greens' Sarah Wakefield is still running, so the left-wing vote remains split.
- **Blair's intervention (27 May):** Tony Blair's call for Labour to "force people to say where they stand" before any leadership change, alongside his backing of Burnham personally ("I hope Andy wins Makerfield"), keeps the spotlight on Labour's internal dynamics rather than Restore Britain's campaign.

Sources

- [Leigh Journal — Restore Britain candidate profile \(18 May 2026\)](#)
- [LBC — Restore Britain announces Makerfield candidate \(19 May 2026\)](#)
- [The Spectator — Steerpike on Restore's candidate \(18 May 2026\)](#)
- [Substack — Lance Turner on Shepherd's SEND policy \(19 May 2026\)](#)

- [Democracy Club — Rebecca Shepherd profile](#)
- [Reddit — Rupert Lowe announces Rebecca Shepherd \(r/ukpolitics\)](#)
- [Reddit — Makerfield Candidate announced \(r/RestoreBritain\)](#)
- [Reddit — Restore Britain announces candidate \(r/unitedkingdom\)](#)
- [Reddit — First poll: LAB 43%, Reform 40%, Restore 7% \(r/ukpolitics\)](#)
- [Manchester Evening News — Burnham by-election LIVE](#)

5–6 June 2026 Updates

Excluded from BBC Question Time

Restore Britain was excluded from the BBC QT Makerfield special (4 Jun) despite polling at 8%. Party leader Rupert Lowe threatens legal action over the exclusion (Left Foot Forward, 4 Jun). Reddit r/LabourUK: "If the greens were polling in third place... and were excluded from the QT debate..."

Polling

Survation #2 (4 Jun): Shepherd 8% (+1 from first poll). Right-wing vote split with Reform (39%). Reddit consensus: Restore voters "are disillusioned former Reform voters" unlikely to tactically switch to Kenyon.

Restore Britain Internal Canvassing

makerfieldcandidates.co.uk analysis: Restore claims internal canvassing returns show 24.6% support vs Survation's 8%. Significant discrepancy.

Andy Burnham — Labour Candidate Makerfield

Andy Burnham — Labour Candidate

Update 13 Jun: **NEW Independent constituency poll (12 Jun)** — Lab 46%, Ref 41%, Restore 7%. Narrower than Survation #2 (49-39) but still leading. Forward Democracy tactical voting site: "Andy Burnham is the only candidate who can stop Reform." **Downing Street planning already underway** (Independent): Burnham's team organising No 10 operation, sounding out cabinet roles. Louise Haigh and Lucy Powell expected in; David Lammy and Jonathan Reynolds on sacking list. Promised to end suspension of rebel MP Karl Turner. Ant Middleton endorsing Kenyon (Guardian 12 Jun) — Reform trying to poach Restore voters, may inadvertently help Burnham by deepening right-wing civil war. 5 days to poll. Ladbrokes: 1/7 favourite.

| **Last updated:** 13 Jun 2026 (NEW: Independent poll Lab 46%, Downing Street planning, cabinet reshuffle details, Middleton→Kenyon endorsement impact) | **By-election date:** Thursday 18 June 2026 |

Bio

Detail	Info
Full name	Andrew Murray Burnham
Age	56 (born 7 January 1970)
Born	Aintree, Merseyside
Home	Leigh, Greater Manchester
Occupation	Politician (former GM Mayor, former Health Secretary)
Education	St Aelred's Catholic High School; Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge (English & Drama, BA 2:1)
Family	Married to Marie-France van Heel (since 2000), three children

Political History

Role	Years
MP for Leigh	2001–2024
Chief Secretary to the Treasury	2007–2008
Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport	2008–2009
Secretary of State for Health	2009–2010
Shadow Health Secretary	2010–2011, 2015–2016
Shadow Home Secretary	2011–2015
Shadow Digital, Culture, Media & Sport	2016–2017
Mayor of Greater Manchester	2017–2026 (three terms)

Selection as Makerfield Candidate

Josh Simons stood down as Makerfield MP to make way for Burnham, who wants to return to Westminster as a springboard for a potential Labour leadership challenge against Keir Starmer. Burnham was confirmed as Labour candidate on 19 May 2026.

Key Statements & Quotes

- **CONFIRMED LEADERSHIP INTENT (4 Jun, BBC Question Time):** "I would take the fight to change politics, and change this country, as high as I can." Said he would seek to enter any Labour leadership contest triggered by a Makerfield win. Named Wes Streeting as already having "launched" one. Claims Labour MPs privately urged him to challenge Starmer.
- **On Henry Nowak murder (4 Jun, QT):** Called for review of religious knife-carrying laws. Said "it cannot be right that anyone can carry a blade in public" under religious exemption. Starmer met Nowak's parents separately; Hampshire Police now under emergency inspection.
- Called his campaign a **"vote to change Labour"** — positioning himself as an alternative to Starmer
- On immigration: says a **"stronger grip"** is needed, blaming Boris Johnson's government for letting it "drift"
- On the EU: says there is a **"long-term case"** for UK to return, but won't make it a campaign issue in Makerfield

- Campaign launch (22 May): pitched as a "**clarion call for change**", promising to shake up "tired" British politics
- **Seeking advice from Sue Gray** on forming a future Labour government (24 May, Guardian) — signalling he is preparing for government transition post-Starmer
- **Guardian podcast** (25 May): "The byelection, Wes Streeting and Europe: your questions answered" — Pippa Crerar and Kiran Stacey answering listener questions about Burnham's campaign
- **MEN vox pop (26 May)**: Bakery worker Sue in Platt Bridge asked Burnham: "Why are you coming here all of a sudden? Where have you been?" — reflecting voter scepticism that Burnham is parachuting in
- **Guardian Today in Focus podcast** (26 May): "Andy Burnham's (third) bid for the Labour leadership" — 29:53 podcast covering his by-election campaign as a launchpad for a leadership challenge
- **Sky-YouGov poll analysis (26 May)**: In this week's national VI, Labour trails Reform by 8pts. But when asked who you want to win in Makerfield — naming Burnham as Labour candidate — Labour is ahead by 8pts. Among Northern voters, Labour leads by 16pts. Cross-party support includes 16% of current Tories, 46% of Lib Dems, 6% of Reform voters, and 35% of Greens — showing the "Burnham factor" significantly outperforms Labour's national brand.
- **Tony Blair backs Burnham (27 May)**: Sir Tony Blair told BBC Radio 4's Today programme "I hope Andy wins Makerfield, I think he's a great guy, I want to see him in Parliament" — but also warned Labour MPs to "force people to say where they stand" before backing a leadership change. He said Labour is "playing with fire" and lacks "a coherent plan." In a 5,700-word essay, Blair said the Government is governing from "an essentially traditional Labour 'soft left' position, parked firmly in the party's comfort zone."
- **"Only positive vibes" from Burnham (26 May)**: In a new series of regular teatime updates from the campaign trail, Burnham shared what he's hearing on doorsteps in Hindley, insisting he doesn't want "point scoring" and is running a "positive, unifying campaign."
- **Lemn Sissay endorsement (26 May)**: The celebrated poet and Wigan-raised writer described Burnham as "impressive", "authentic" and said there was "no BS" with him after a chance meeting.
- **31 May — Farage vs Burnham clash over immigration**: Farage posts AI-altered image of Channel migrants holding "Vote Andy for us" signs. Burnham hits back: "Are you getting desperate, lad? Maybe keep your crypto millions for something else." Refers to Farage's £5m undeclared gift controversy. (MEN, Stephen Topping)
- **1 Jun — New campaign logo revealed**: Burnham unveils new logo containing phrases "Change Labour" and "Keep the Faith" (Politics UK). Kenyon mocks it: "Andy wants to change Labour. I want to change Makerfield." Deputy Labour leader Lucy Powell posts from Burnham campaign rally (MEN Live Blog) ||- **4 Jun — Politico: Labour fighting two campaigns in Makerfield**: John Johnston analysis reveals Burnham sticking to upbeat pitch (£1,000-£1,500 positive Meta campaign; £700 stump speech) while Labour press team runs brutal attack ads on Kenyon branding him "completely unfit for office." Burnham declined to comment on the dual-track strategy. Reform running personal attack ads calling Burnham a "power grab" and mocking trans rights. (Politico, John Johnston, 4 Jun 4am CET)

- **3 Jun — FT: Starmer "bucket list" policies:** Financial Times reports PM could be ousted within weeks if Burnham wins Makerfield. Starmer's agenda described as "bucket list" by insiders, with fatalistic mood in government. (Financial Times)

Policy Platform

- On the soft-left/social democratic wing of Labour
- As GM Mayor: prioritised integrated transport (bus franchising, Metrolink expansion), social housing, devolution
- Hillsborough campaign: key figure in pushing for full disclosure and justice
- Advocates for proper social care settlement

Polling

Date	Pollster	Burnham %	Kenyon %	Margin	Notes
16 May	Survation	45%	42%	LAB +3	
23 May	Survation / Sunday Times	43%	40%	LAB +3	
	26 May	Sky-YouGov	+8 lead in Makerfield	—	—
	29 May	BMG / The i Paper	20% nationally	—	—

Key Partnerships & Endorsements

- **Keir Starmer:** confirmed he WILL campaign for Burnham ("It is Labour versus Reform")
- **Lucy Powell** (Deputy Labour Leader): campaigned with him in Makerfield
- **Darren Jones:** senior minister confirmed he'd campaign, said "I do want the Prime Minister to stay and get on with the job" — walking the line between backing Burnham and supporting Starmer
- **Wes Streeting:** backed Burnham as "best chance", said he'd have been accused of "pulling a fast one" if he'd triggered a leadership contest before giving Burnham the chance
- **Jo Platt** (Labour MP, Leigh & Atherton): out campaigning for Burnham in Orrell (24 May)
- **Alan Johnson** (former Home Secretary): said Labour MPs would be "**daft**" to back a Burnham leadership bid, called for Starmer to stay — a notable voice against the Burnham bandwagon

- **Annunziata Rees-Mogg:** called for the right to unite behind Reform to stop Burnham (25 May) — evidence the right sees him as the real threat
 - **Nigel Farage:** urging right-wing voters to unite behind Reform to "**stop Andy Burnham**" (25 May, Daily Mail)
 - **Lemn Sissay** (poet): endorsed Burnham after chance meeting, described him as "authentic" (26 May)
 - **Sir Tony Blair:** said "I hope Andy wins Makerfield, I think he's a great guy" (27 May, BBC Radio 4 Today) — but warned Labour MPs to force leadership candidates to set out detailed policy before backing change
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What It Means

- If Burnham wins: Labour holds Makerfield but with vastly reduced majority. Labour leadership contest likely — Jess Phillips says change is inevitable regardless.
- If he loses: seismic shock — Reform taking a safe Labour seat would trigger immediate leadership crisis for Starmer
- The race is a knife-edge — Burnham leads Kenyon by just 3 points (within margin of error)
- Burnham does not have to step down as GM Mayor unless he wins the seat
- **Jess Phillips intervention (Hay Festival, 25 May):** Former minister publicly says "I think even if Andy Burnham doesn't win in Makerfield there will be a change of the Prime Minister" — this is a significant signal from a prominent Labour figure
- **Ellie Chowns ambiguity:** The Greens won't step aside for Burnham but also won't "throw the kitchen sink" — which is probably the best outcome for Burnham (Green presence splits the anti-Reform left-wing vote less aggressively than a full campaign)
- **Sky-YouGov poll (26 May) — the "Burnham factor":** A new Sky-YouGov poll reveals a striking contrast — nationally Labour trails Reform by 8pts, but when Burnham is named as Labour candidate in Makerfield, Labour leads by 8pts (+16pt swing). Among Northern voters the lead is +16pts. Cross-party switching data shows 16% of Tories, 46% of Lib Dems, 6% of Reform, and 35% of Greens would back Burnham — confirming the personal vote effect is real and significant. This is the most compelling evidence yet that Burnham's candidacy changes the race fundamentally.
- **Harriet Harman warns of early GE (27 May):** Former deputy Labour leader said at the Hay Festival that the UK could be "tipped into a general election" if Burnham replaces Starmer as PM. She said Burnham may feel he needs his own mandate, especially if Nigel Farage accuses him of being a "usurper." Harman called stability "fusty and unsexy" but said "people just want to get on with their lives."
- **Greens scale back campaign (27 May, Guardian exclusive):** The Greens have decided to devote only limited resources to Makerfield — a potentially significant boost to Burnham. The party will instead focus on the GM mayoral by-election that would be triggered if Burnham wins. Senior Green figures including Caroline Lucas and Jonathan Bartley called for the party to scale back, particularly if Burnham commits to electoral reform.
- **Blair's full interview — net zero, "playing with fire", RAF bases (27 May, MEN live blog):** Sir Tony Blair's full Today programme interview and 5,700-word

essay produced multiple new angles:\n - **"Rip up net zero targets"**: Blair said Starmer should tear up Ed Miliband's net zero targets, arguing that the three biggest emitters (China, America, India) pursue "cheap energy and electrification" and Britain's lens should be the same, especially in the age of AI\n - **"Playing with fire"**: Blair's central essay claim — the Government is "governing from an essentially traditional Labour 'soft left' position, parked firmly in the party's comfort zone" — with specific criticism of employer NI rises, the workers' rights bill, minimum wage increase\n - **RAF bases / Iran**: Said the Government should NOT have stopped the US from using its RAF bases during the attacks on Iran — a significant foreign policy intervention\n - **"Honest debate with the public"**: Called for an honest conversation about taxing "too much, spending too much, borrowing too much", warning that the triple lock on pensions and incapacity benefit increases are creating a situation "where economically we're not able to grow"\n - **On Labour's 2024 mandate**: "I don't think Labour won the last election because people read the manifesto and said, 'this is what we want'... people thought Conservatives have behaved completely unacceptably, and to Keir Starmer's great credit, the Labour Party was an acceptable alternative"\n - **10-point plan**: Laid out a 10-point plan for the future of Government, emphasising AI's impact on society, warning of "Britain will continue its long slide towards relegation from the Premier League of nations" without a radical agenda\n - **Farage "Open Borders Burnham" claim fact-checked (27 May, MEN)**: Nigel Farage posted on Facebook that "more illegal migrants have been dumped in the North West than any other part of Britain because Andy Burnham welcomes them", dubbing him "Open Borders Burnham" with an avatar from Burnham's own campaign posters. **MEN fact-check**: The MEN examined the data behind Farage's claim — the article assessed whether Burnham is really to blame for the number of illegal immigrants placed in the North West — giving voters a data-driven rebuttal to the attack line.

Twitter/X Discussion

“ Source: Nitter search, 26 May 2026

Burnham is the dominant figure in Twitter discourse around the by-election. Key themes:

- **Jess Phillips says PM must go even if Burnham loses** (25 May, Hay Festival): "I think even if Andy Burnham doesn't win in Makerfield there will be a change of the Prime Minister" — widely shared, damaging for Starmer regardless of outcome
- **Ellie Chowns won't "throw the kitchen sink"**: Green Party leader says Makerfield is "a different kettle of fish" to Gorton and Denton — won't step aside for Burnham but won't go all-in either
- **Matt Goodwin predicts Burnham win + snap election**: "I think unless all patriotic voters unite behind Reform in Makerfield then Andy Burnham will win, call an early snap

general election and put Britain under a hard left government until 2031"

- **The "King of the North" framing:** Twitter commentary consistently frames the by-election as a referendum on Burnham's future — "Makerfield is a set piece by-election for/against Andy Burnham for a GE against 'the King of the North'". The race is seen as a proxy battle between Burnham and Farage.
- **Senior Greens urged to stand aside:** A Telegraph story about senior Greens telling the party to "make way for Andy Burnham" was widely shared, with users debating whether tactical voting could help or hurt Labour
- **Restore Britain vote splitting:** Multiple tweets discuss how Restore Britain's Rebecca Shepherd could split the right-wing vote — ironically helping Burnham. "It makes no difference if Restore's share of the vote enables Andy Burnham to become PM" — Restore Britain framing this as a feature not a bug
- **Polling data shared and debated:** A widely-circulated polling tweet showed Lab 43%, Reform 40%, Restore 7% — debated intensely with accusations of bias from both sides
- **General Election implications:** The dominant narrative is that Burnham's performance in Makerfield determines whether he can challenge Starmer for the Labour leadership and become PM
- **Farage urging right to unite behind Reform (25 May):** "Nigel Farage urges voters on the Right to unite behind Reform to 'stop Andy Burnham'" — widely shared as evidence the right sees Burnham as the real danger
- **Annunziata Rees-Mogg on TalkTV (25 May):** "The right should come together and make sure they can win" — calling for right-wing parties to unite behind Reform to stop Burnham
- **Burnham doesn't "want Makerfield. He wants No.10":** Jessica Caine (Tory member) urging her fellow Conservatives to vote Reform in Makerfield to stop Burnham — shared widely (25 May)
- **Sue Gray advice story:** "Andy Burnham seeks advice from Sue Gray on forming future Labour government" widely shared as evidence Burnham is already planning for a post-Starmer transition
- **Sun exclusive — "Allies of Andy Burnham are privately delighted" (26 May):** The Sun reported that Burnham's inner circle is delighted that the Reform/Restore row is boosting his chances. Story shared widely: "Allies of Andy Burnham are privately delighted his chances in Makerfield are being boosted by the Reform/Restore row."
- **Telegraph — "Labour MPs planning to defect to the Green party if Burnham loses" (26 May):** A Telegraph story reported that Labour MPs are preparing to defect to the Green Party if Burnham loses the Makerfield by-election — framed as a shock to the Labour establishment if Starmer can't hold the seat even with Burnham as candidate
- **Green Party replacement narrative:** Sarah Wakefield's selection as Green candidate was widely shared, with the Green Party announcing a Manchester councillor as candidate. Twitter commentary focused on the chaos of three Green candidates in five days
- **Libertarian Party candidate Dan Clarke:** Coverage of the new Libertarian candidate was shared, noting "The establishment media is so obsessed with the Burnham leadership soap opera they are refusing to even acknowledge the existence of other candidates" — libertarian criticism of the media focus on Burnham

- **Goodwin prediction repeated:** Matt Goodwin's prediction (Burnham will win, call early GE, Labour government until 2031) continued to circulate, especially among right-wing accounts urging Reform/Restore unity
- **Harriet Harman GE warning shared widely (27 May):** Harman's comment that the UK could be "tipped into a general election" if Burnham replaces Starmer circulated widely across political accounts
- **Tony Blair interview clips (27 May):** Blair saying "I hope Andy wins Makerfield" shared alongside his warnings about Labour being in its "comfort zone" — mixed reception from both Burnham supporters and critics
- **Lemn Sissay endorsement:** Poet's description of Burnham as "authentic" and "no BS" shared by Labour-supporting accounts

Reddit Discussion

“ Source: Self-hosted eddrit frontend (Windows PC Docker), 27 May 2026

On r/ukpolitics, Burnham's candidacy is discussed in the context of Labour internal politics — whether this is a launchpad for a leadership challenge. The tactical voting debate (Greens standing aside, Lib Dems squeezing) is a recurring topic.

eddit search reveals additional threads (27 May):

- "Do we think Andy Burnham will even win the bi election for makerfield?" — r/AskBrits, discussing the risk given Reform's 50% in recent local elections
- "How likely do you think Andy Burnham is to win a by-election in Makerfield?" — r/LabourUK, tactical analysis
- "What happens if Burnham loses the Makerfield byelection?" — r/LabourUK, 5-scenario breakdown
- "Do Brits really want Andy Burnham to stand as PM for Labour Party?" — r/AskBrits
- "Who do you expect to win the Makerfield by election?" — r/UnitedKingdomPolls
- "Greens to run scaled-back campaign in Makerfield byelection in potential boost for Burnham" — r/ukpolitics (26 May)

New threads (24-25 May):

- "Senior Greens urge party to step aside for Andy Burnham in Makerfield" (r/ukpolitics, score 65, 58 comments, 24 May) — The Times story about Greens urged to stand aside to help Burnham
- "Musk backs Restore Britain in Burnham by-election" (r/ukpolitics, score 115, ~187 comments, 24 May) — Elon Musk endorsement discussed as helping Burnham by splitting the right

New threads (27 May):

- "What should the Greens do in the Makerfield by-election?" — r/UKGreets, debating whether to support Burnham if he promises PR before 2029 to prevent a Reform majority. One user: "Burnham's a nothingy, Blairite, corporate centrist, who'll screw us over almost as much as Starmer. But if he promises PR before 2029, that will hands down prevent a Reform majority."
- "How do we all feel about an Andy Burnham Labour + Green coalition?" — r/UKGreens, discussing a potential coalition deal
- "makerfield by-election: position of local green party?" — r/UKGreens, asking about local party's stance on standing down
- "Greens for Palestine's Statement on the Candidate for Makerfield Standing Down" — r/LabourUK, pro-Palestine group's statement on Kennedy resignation, calling it a "smear piece"
- "A chance to vote for what you want, not just against what you don't" — r/Wigan, a Restore Britain supporter making their case locally
- [The Guardian — Burnham confirmed as candidate](#)
- [The Guardian — Burnham starts campaign with pitch for No 10](#)
- [BBC — Burnham by-election launch](#)
- [ITV — Burnham says backing him is 'vote to change Labour'](#)
- [HuffPost — Burnham launches campaign with 'clarion call for change'](#)
- [The Guardian — Burnham seeks advice from Sue Gray on forming future Labour government](#)
- [Guardian Politics Weekly UK — The byelection, Wes Streeting and Europe podcast](#)
- [The Guardian — UK may be tipped into a general election if Burnham replaces Starmer, says Harman](#)
- [The Guardian — Greens to run scaled-back campaign in Makerfield in boost for Burnham](#)
- [The Guardian — Carol Vorderman demands apology from Reform candidate](#)
- [The Guardian — Reform candidate appeared to doubt seriousness of Covid on X](#)
- [BBC News — Burnham says he would seek to enter any Labour leadership contest \(5 Jun\)](#)
- [ITV News — Andy Burnham confirms he would run in race to replace Keir Starmer \(4 Jun\)](#)
- [Reuters — Labour mayor Burnham signals leadership contest intent \(4 Jun\)](#)
- [Independent — Burnham verdict on religious knife carrying after Nowak death \(5 Jun\)](#)
- [Express — Burnham savaged by QT audience member over leadership challenge \(5 Jun\)](#)

5–6 June 2026 Updates

Leadership Challenge Explicitly Confirmed

On BBC Question Time (4 Jun), Burnham confirmed he would "seek to enter any Labour leadership contest" if he wins Makerfield — his first unambiguous declaration. Asked team to "develop a platform." BBC/ITV confirm (5 Jun). Previously said a Makerfield vote would "change Labour."

Henry Nowak / Religious Knife Law Intervention

On QT, Burnham said carrying knives for religious reasons "needs to be looked at" following the murder of Henry Nowak (18, British-Polish student, Southampton, Dec 2025). Positioned to the right of Starmer on law-and-order. Controversial framing. BBC published Nowak explainer (6 Jun).

Question Time Performance

Guardian: "takes round one" but "fighters pull their punches." Independent's Sean O'Grady: "unconvincing on every level" on leadership. Express: "savaged by audience member" over leadership challenge. Narrow win on points but no knockout.

Polling

Survation #2 (4 Jun): Burnham 49% (+6 from first poll). 10-point lead over Kenyon. Personal premium over Labour party brand ~15 points.

Reddit AMA (completed 5 Jun)

r/Wigan AMA ran successfully under verified u/AndyForMakerfield account (171 comments). Earlier file entry saying mods removed it was wrong. Key answers: committed to proportional representation; described "place first, not party first" approach as Mayor; cited deliberate use of Bee symbol on GM buses as unity branding; referenced Hillsborough justice work, Platt Bridge flood funding, Bickershaw illegal waste dump fight. Said he'd represent all Makerfield voters regardless of who they voted for.

BBC Newsnight Interview (5–6 Jun)

Victoria Derbyshire pressed him on leadership challenge. Declined to add to QT comments in this sit-down but reiterated he would enter any future contest and wants to "save" Labour and cut small-boat crossings. BBC published clip as "Are you ready to take on the Prime Minister?"

Lord Ashcroft Focus Groups (5 Jun)

Ashcroft's qualitative research among former Labour voters in Makerfield found Burnham widely seen as using the seat as a "stepping stone" — "his heart's in Manchester" was a recurring line. Voters applauded Simons stepping aside ("hats off") but suspected a backroom payoff. Framing: voters weighing Burnham-vs-Reform, not Burnham-vs-Kenyon specifically.

PR Commitment (Observer, resurfacing 7 Jun)

Observer interview quoted Burnham: "I am committed to proportional representation." Circulated on r/Wigan 7 Jun.

Lemn Sissay Times Piece (6–7 Jun)

Prominent poet and Makerfield native Lemn Sissay OBE published major Times interview defending constituency against "racist" label — recounted racist abuse at Byrchall High and being thrown out of foster care at 12, but called Makerfield "salt-of-the-earth people, strong people, kind people." Race/identity narrative enters the campaign through a respected local voice, indirectly softening ground for Burnham's anti-Reform messaging.

Campaign Fatigue Signal (7 Jun)

r/Wigan post "I'm sick of the flyers" (photo of letterbox stuffed with leaflets) attracted 226+ comments in 21 hours. Sentiment: democracy vs. spam. Labour and Reform both called out; no party-specific backlash against Burnham personally.

Robert Kenyon — Reform UK Candidate Makerfield

Robert Kenyon — Reform UK Candidate

Update 13 Jun: [Ant Middleton endorses Kenyon](#) (Guardian, 12 Jun) — former SAS soldier/SAS: Who Dares Wins presenter, controversial figure (jailed for assaulting 2 police officers, anti-Muslim posts incl. "You can't be a Muslim and be in charge of a Christian nation", appeared at Tommy Robinson rallies). Reform welcoming him despite previously cutting loose. Guardian frames as bid to poach Restore Britain voters. Kenyon posted: "Great to have the endorsement of one of my heroes." Farage video: "I am pleased to say Ant Middleton has come out in support." Labour chair Turley: "Reform have no shame — their last candidate was endorsed by Tommy Robinson, now Kenyon is delighted to have backing of a man jailed for assaulting police." Farage also says Reform "unapologetic" about Kenyon's past comments (PA, 13 Jun). NEW Independent poll (12 Jun): Lab 46%, Ref 41%, Restore 7% — right split still hurting him. 5 days to poll. Ladbrokes: 11/2.

Last updated: 13 Jun 2026 (NEW: Ant Middleton endorsement, Farage 'unapologetic', Independent poll Lab 46% Ref 41%) **By-election date:** Thursday 18 June 2026

Bio

Detail	Info
Full name	Robert Kenyon
Age	41 (born c. 1984/1985)
Location	Wigan, Greater Manchester
Occupation	Plumber (self-employed)
Political role	Wigan Councillor (Standish ward, elected 2024)
First-time candidate	Yes (stood in Makerfield 2024 GE, came 3rd)

BBC Question Time Performance (4 Jun 2026)

Appeared on BBC QT Makerfield special alongside Burnham, Winstanley (Con), Austin (LD), Wakefield (Green). Widely judged to have performed poorly:

- Reddit r/ukpolitics live thread consensus: "like watching a Sunday League footballer trying to play in the Premier League"
 - Audience member to Kenyon: **"I'd rather a career politician than a sexist"** — line drew applause
 - Struggled to defend past social media comments when pressed directly
 - Pivoted to local issues (new Wigan hospital, green belt, HMOs) and immigration — cited £2bn/yr on asylum hotels as funding source
-

How They Got Selected

Selected as Reform UK candidate for Makerfield by-election on 19 May 2026. Reform UK leader Nigel Farage said they would "throw absolutely everything at it." Previously stood in Makerfield in the 2024 general election, finishing third with ~15.6% of the vote.

Key Statements & Quotes

- Called abortion "cowardly murder" and suggested women lie about rape to obtain abortions (24 May 2026, The Observer/Byline Times)
- Dismissed Carol Vorderman's criticism by calling her a "luvvie" from the "London media bubble"
- **Backed sexually explicit post about Carol Vorderman** — responded to graphic sexual message with thumbs up emoji and "He's only saying what we're all thinking" (2021, published by Hope Not Hate, 26 May 2026)
- **Claimed women get abortions for "vanity purposes"** — per the i Paper / Independent
- **Thank you message** (24 May): "Scorching weather, but great for campaigning. It has been a busy bank holiday weekend, but the reception has been fantastic." — posted on X after weekend campaigning
- **Richard Branson hanging comment:** Publicly demanded business leaders like Richard Branson be hanged for accepting Covid furlough money — resurfaced and widely shared (24-25 May)
- **"I want net negative immigration" (26 May):** Kenyon fired back at Rupert Lowe's claims that Kenyon didn't vote for Brexit and supported open borders. "I used to respect

you Rupert. Restore have never wanted anything to do with this area. But now someone born with a silver spoon in their mouth is trying to lie about the only working class local man in the race. I want net negative immigration." — posted on X

- **Covid advice (13 July 2022):** "Wait longer, take vitamins, stop having boosters" — advising someone with Covid to stop getting boosters
- **Chris Whitty "can f* right off"** (Feb 2023):** Quote-tweeted a Sky News post about Whitty urging people to get boosters
- **Cross-posted on rugby forum (Jan 2022):** Argued news of a new variant affecting children more could be a way "to scare parents" — per Guardian
- **Hillary Clinton / Manchester Arena bombing defence (28 May, MEN):** Reform UK defended Kenyon's past comments blaming Hillary Clinton for creating ISIS and causing the Manchester Arena bombing, calling them "entirely reasonable". Anna Turley (Labour Chair): "Nigel Farage needs to urgently come clean as to why he's happy to have a candidate standing for his Party who peddled dangerous false narratives about the appalling Manchester Arena bombing." — MEN, 28 May
- **Said Russia had "right" to invade Ukraine (28 May, The Canary):** Additional resurfaced comments show Kenyon said Russia had the "right" to invade Ukraine. — The Canary analysis, 28 May |- **MEN exclusive interview with Beth Abbit (28 May, published 29 May):** Kenyon addresses Vorderman controversy for first time. Says "no offence was meant" and the tweet was a "crude attempt at a joke" to about 50 followers. Refuses to apologise directly: "I think I've addressed the issue." Admits he is not familiar with Reform's Great Repeal Bill or their plan to replace the Equality Act. Age confirmed as 41. Describes campaign priorities: new hospital for Wigan, protect greenbelt, regenerate high streets, save Ashton Library. Warns voting Restore "could open the door for Andy Burnham to win". Reform UK contacts MEN after interview to clarify party positions. Article: "Reform's white van man Robert Kenyon has some things to say — sorry isn't one of them" |- **2 Jun — BBC Chris Mason interview:** Kenyon admits making "crass" comments in past. Says "no recollection" of calling Brexit "nationalistic pish", insists he voted for it. On Vorderman: says it was a "crass joke" responding to someone else's post. Says "I don't think the Labour Party know what a woman is" — pivoting to trans rights attack. Reform UK says no plans to investigate. Full interview on BBC iPlayer. (BBC News, Chris Mason & Joshua Nevett)\n|- **4 Jun — BBC Question Time Makerfield special TONIGHT:** Kenyon on the panel alongside Burnham, Winstanley, Austin, and Wakefield. His biggest national platform yet — opportunity to rehabilitate image or further damage it.\n|- **4 Jun — BBC "win-win" interview:** Kenyon tells BBC Radio Manchester (published 12:20 BST) the by-election is "win-win" — even losing means giving Labour "a bloody nose" and "two fingers to the establishment." Dismisses Vorderman comments as "squaddie humour" and "a crass joke." Priorities: new Wigan hospital (funded by scrapping asylum hotel spending), stop green belt development, regulate HMOs. On immigration: "sensible immigration" — welcomes those who "offer us something." Says he's not feeling the pressure: "water off a duck's back." (BBC News, Lynette Horsburgh)

Controversies

Danny Kruger Refuses to Defend Kenyon (25 May)

East Wiltshire Reform MP Danny Kruger was interviewed on BBC Radio 4's Today programme about Kenyon's comments and said he was "**not going to defend**" the social media remarks. Pressed, Kruger said:

“It is clearly wrong for politicians to talk in that way. He was not a politician at the time. He was an ordinary man, from an ordinary place. And what he has done now is to step forward, outraged at the state of our country and the state of his community... I'm not going to sit here and police the previous remarks, unacceptable as they may be, of people who as private citizens said things they shouldn't.”

A Reform spokesperson told the BBC: "He is an excellent, local candidate who we are confident will be a superb MP for Makerfield. These comments were made before he was in politics. Rob isn't a polished, professional politician and doesn't speak like one. That's precisely why he'll be a straight-talking, effective voice for normal working people in Makerfield."

Carol Vorderman "Rear of the Year" — Resurfaced Post (25 May)

A now-deleted post from Christmas Eve 2021 resurfaced in which Kenyon affirmed a comment saying he wished to **sniff and lick Carol Vorderman's rear**. Vorderman called Kenyon "a disgusting online abuser." The story was widely shared on X on 25 May, with Reform UK MPs now having to defend explicit sexual comments linked to their candidate live on the BBC.

Carol Vorderman Demands Apology (27 May, Guardian/Mirror)

Carol Vorderman said she wants "an apology from Rob Kenyon, to me, and to all the other people he's abused online." She dismissed Danny Kruger's defence that Kenyon was "an ordinary man," telling the Daily Mirror that being "ordinary" was no excuse and the posts were made publicly, not privately. Kruger had told BBC Radio 4 that Kenyon's comments while "inappropriate" were "private conversations" — a claim Vorderman rejected.

Byline Times 419-Tweet Archive (24 May 2026)

Byline Times published an exposé of Kenyon's deleted Twitter history — 419 deleted tweets revealing:

- **Holocaust denial/revisionism:** shared content from known Holocaust deniers, questioned established death toll figures
- **COVID conspiracy theories:** called the pandemic a "plandemic", spread vaccine misinformation
- **Abortion:** called abortion "cowardly murder", suggested women lie about rape for abortions
- **Anti-Islam rhetoric:** characterised Islam as a "violent ideology"
- **Transphobic comments:** mocked transgender people, deadnamed trans individuals
- **"Great Replacement" conspiracy:** shared white nationalist conspiracy theory content
- **Climate change denial:** dismissed climate science as a "scam"
- **5G conspiracy theories:** linked 5G rollout to health risks

Carol Vorderman Criticism

Broadcaster Carol Vorderman publicly called Kenyon a "**vile online abuser**" and warned about Reform UK platforming him.

Social Media Ban

Kenyon was permanently banned from Twitter/X. His previous Reform UK account was also mysteriously suspended.

25 May 2026 — Account suspended again: Kenyon's X account was suspended for the third time, with reports indicating "racist replies to a constituent" and support for far-right influencers as the trigger. This pattern of serial account suspensions raises questions about his online conduct continuing into active campaigning.

Backed Sexually Explicit Post About Carol Vorderman (26 May)

Hope Not Hate published evidence showing Kenyon responded to a graphic sexual post about Carol Vorderman on Christmas Eve 2021 with a thumbs up emoji and the comment "He's only saying what we're all thinking." The post included graphic sexual language about the broadcaster. Reform MP Danny Kruger refused to defend the comments on BBC Radio 4's Today programme, saying they were "inappropriate" but intended as "private conversations." Labour chair Anna Turley hit back: "Reform are trying to dress up chaos and extremism as straight-talking."

"Vanity Purposes" Abortion Quote

Further to the "cowardly murder" comment, Kenyon also claimed women get abortions for "vanity purposes" — reported by the i Paper and Independent. Adds a further dimension to the existing controversy.

"Women Can't Ref, Drive or Give Directions" (26 May)

Further resurfaced posts from Kenyon, reported on 26 May, showed he previously claimed women "can't ref, drive or give directions" and get abortions to "shag anyone they want." He also reportedly said "I'm sexist, sorry but I am" — confirming his own views on the matter. The London Economic and other outlets covered these as the latest in a continuing stream of exposed social media content.

Reform UK "Locker Room Banter" Defence (26 May): A Reform UK spokesperson responded to the latest revelations by dismissing them as "little more than locker room banter" made "more than a decade ago." The Independent also reported Kenyon's posts on a rugby fan forum in the 2010s objectifying European women's bodies while saying English women "don't care" and "just walk around with their fat bellies and odd shapes pushing a pram at 16 in their PJ's." Reform said: "We simply don't care about establishment hit jobs. We fully back Rob and are confident he will be an excellent MP for Makerfield."

Guardian Covid/X Exposé (27 May)

The Guardian published an exclusive investigation showing Kenyon appeared to express doubt over the seriousness of Covid and the efficacy of vaccines. Key findings:

- **July 2022:** Responding to a post about a new variant: "It's not making people sicker, I've no booster and had covid last week asymptomatic" — said his 70-something mother-in-law with chronic lung disease experienced it "as a cold"
- **13 July 2022:** "Wait longer, take vitamins, stop having boosters" — advising someone with Covid against boosters
- **Feb 2023:** Quote-tweeted a Sky News post about Chris Whitty urging people to get boosters, saying Whitty "can f*** right off"
- **Jan 2022 (rugby forum):** Argued news of a variant affecting children could be a way "to scare parents"
- **Anti-vaccine links:** Linked to vaccine scepticism via archived webpages from his now-deleted X account

Kenyon Campaign Website Taken Down (26 May)

A separate exposé revealed Kenyon's campaign website was riddled with GDPR failures and sloppy errors. By 26 May, the website had been taken down entirely, with the journalist who broke the story noting "Another day, another cover up by Reform UK and Robert Kenyon." The question "What are they hiding?" was widely shared.

Reform Supporters Rally Behind Kenyon

Despite the controversies, Reform supporters actively defended Kenyon on social media:

- "Reform standing behind Robert Kenyon is exactly the right decision. The media and political opponents thought they could dig up old forum posts and pressure Reform into throwing him under the bus. Instead, they backed their candidate."
- Framing: "Rob Kenyon is not a polished career politician. That's the point. He speaks like an ordinary person."
- Some supporters reported meeting him on the campaign trail: "Just met Robert Kenyon — fantastic guy, local plumber and will make a fine Reform MP for the people of Makerfield."

Polling

Date	Pollster	Kenyon %	Burnham %	Margin
23 May	Survation / Sunday Times	40%	43%	LAB +3

Key Partnerships & Endorsements

- **Simon Danczuk** (ex-Labour MP): campaigning with Kenyon, predicting Reform win
- **Zia Yusuf** (Reform Home Affairs Spokesperson): joined Kenyon campaigning
- **Sarah Pochin** (Reform MP): campaigned with Kenyon
- Reform UK insists it is "**fully backing**" him despite controversies
- **Feud with Rupert Lowe (26 May)**: Kenyon publicly traded barbs with Restore Britain's leader after Lowe claimed Kenyon didn't vote for Brexit and supported open borders. Kenyon called Lowe "someone born with a silver spoon in their mouth" and said "I want net negative immigration"

What It Means

- Reform is running an aggressive campaign in a historically safe Labour seat

- The right-wing vote is splitting three ways (Reform 40%, Restore Britain 7%, Tory 2%) which could hand Burnham a narrow win despite Reform's strong ground game
- Reform won all 8 council wards in the May 2026 locals with ~50% of the vote — significant ground-level organisation
- Kenyon's controversies could cost Reform swing voters but may energise the base
- The Kenyon-Restore feud (Kenyon accusing Lowe of lying, calling him a "silver spoon" candidate) deepens the right-wing split and could further complicate Reform's ground game
- Paul Britton's MEN report from Winstanley showed residents divided along party lines — suggesting the scandals are hardening existing positions rather than shifting votes

Twitter/X Discussion

“ Source: Nitter search, 26 May 2026

Kenyon is the second-most discussed candidate on Twitter after Burnham. Key themes:

- **Backed sexually explicit Vorderman post (26 May):** Hope Not Hate published 2021 messages showing Kenyon responded to a graphic sexual post about Carol Vorderman with thumbs up + "He's only saying what we're all thinking" — widely shared. @theipaper, @Independent, @BBCr4today all cover
- **"Vanity purposes" abortion quote resurfaces:** Kenyon claimed women get abortions for "vanity purposes" per the Independent — new angle on existing controversy
- **Fun fact widely shared:** "If Robert Kenyon wins, he will be the only Reform MP who is not an ex-Tory" — this gets repeated constantly
- **Abortion comments controversy:** "So Robert Kenyon thinks that abortion is 'cowardly murder'. I think he is a total misogynist and such views belong in the last century. I hope Makerfield doesn't vote for this man." — widely shared
- **Carol Vorderman remarks:** "Robert Kenyon again, who used his social media to post graphic, creepy sexual remarks about Carol Vorderman and female rugby players" — his past social media is thoroughly trawled
- **Richard Branson hanging comment:** "Makerfield candidate Robert Kenyon publicly demanded business leaders like Richard Branson be hanged for accepting Covid furlough money" — viewed as extremist by critics
- **Unsolicited dick pics allegation:** Defended by his supporters who push back saying "that's related to Robert Kenyon how?" when the accusation is raised
- **Veteran status:** Supporters highlight "their candidate is a VETERAN. We stand together give him your VOTE" — his army background is a key campaign asset
- **Branded "sex pest":** Multiple accounts explicitly call him this, raising questions about whether this affects his vote share

- **Tactical voting debate:** Reform supporters argue Restore Britain is splitting the right-wing vote and costing Kenyon the seat
- **Carol Vorderman "Rear of the Year" sniffing comment resurfaces** (25 May): A post from Christmas Eve 2021 where Kenyon affirmed a comment about wanting to "sniff and lick Vorderman's rear" was widely shared, with @europa tweeting "Carol Vorderman, who twice posed for 'Rear of the Year', has slammed the Makerfield by-election candidate Robert Kenyon" — gaining significant traction
- **Danny Kruger refuses to defend Kenyon live on BBC** (25 May): The Reform MP's unwillingness to defend Kenyon on BBC R4 Today was shared widely, with @TheBritishIntel tweeting "Reform UK MPs now having to defend explicit sexual comments live on the BBC" — damaging for the campaign
- **Reform Podcast Episode 7** (25 May): Reform UK released a podcast episode covering "the inside story of the Makerfield by-election" portraying Kenyon as "Reform's local champion taking on Labour's entitled heavyweight Andy Burnham" — framing it as an underdog story
- **Kenyon's own campaign update** (24 May): Posted "Scorching weather, but great for campaigning" to X — showing active ground campaigning despite controversies
- **"Women can't ref, drive or give directions"** (26 May): The London Economic and several other accounts reported Kenyon had also claimed women "can't ref, drive or give directions" and get abortions to "shag anyone they want." One widely-shared tweet: "Reform UK's Makerfield by-election candidate Robert Kenyon previously claimed women 'can't ref, drive or give directions' and get abortions for 'vanity purposes' to 'shag anyone they want'. He admitted: 'I'm sexist, sorry but I am'"
- **Website taken down story** (26 May): "Another day, another cover up by Reform UK and Robert Kenyon. Six days ago, I wrote this piece about Kenyon's seriously shonky website that was riddled with GDPR failures and sloppy errors. Today — it's been removed. What are they hiding?" — the GDPR/website exposé gained traction
- **Reform supporters defend Kenyon against criticism:** "Reform standing behind Robert Kenyon is exactly the right decision" — the defence narrative was also shared, with supporters framing the media coverage as "cancel culture"
- **Critic calls Kenyon "desperate Reform mistake":** "The desperate Reform mistake that is Robert Kenyon - hidden social media accounts, a failure of vetting, sexist, misogynistic posts, conspiracy theory, the usual hint of racism and of course the friends who were fascists" — a comprehensive critique gaining significant engagement
- **Guardian Covid/X exposé shared widely (27 May):** The Guardian's exclusive investigation showing Kenyon told people to "stop having boosters" and told Chris Whitty to "f*** right off" gained significant traction across political spectrum
- **Carol Vorderman demands apology (27 May):** "I want an apology from Rob Kenyon, to me, and to all the other people he's abused online" — Vorderman's Mirror interview was widely shared
- **Kenyon "net negative immigration" response to Lowe (26 May):** "I used to respect you Rupert... I want net negative immigration" — Kenyon's public feud with Restore Britain's leader shared by right-wing accounts
- **Paul Britton's Winstanley report:** MEN's report from the campaign trail showing residents divided along party lines was shared, with varying interpretations

Reddit Discussion

📄 Source: Self-hosted eddrit frontend (Windows PC Docker), 27 May 2026

On r/ukpolitics, Kenyon is heavily criticised — the abortion comments, Branson hanging comment, and Carol Vorderman remarks are all recurring topics in threads about Reform candidates. The "not an ex-Tory" fact is frequently noted as distinguishing him from other Reform MPs.

eddit search reveals additional threads (27 May):

- "Reform UK announce that Robert Kenyon will be their candidate to take on bungling Burnham in the Makerfield by-election" — r/reformuk and r/VoteReform, supportive framing
- "What happens if Burnham loses the Makerfield byelection?" — r/LabourUK, 5-scenario breakdown that includes Reform win scenarios

New threads (24-25 May):

- "Reform candidate for Makerfield by-election calls abortion 'cowardly murder'" (r/unitedkingdom, score 354, 211 comments, 24 May) — the most-upvoted recent Kenyon thread, heavy criticism
- "Reform candidate for Makerfield by-election calls abortion 'cowardly murder'" (r/ukpolitics, score 160, 186 comments, 24 May) — same story, broader political discussion
- "Carol Vorderman slams Reform UK's Makerfield candidate branding him a 'vile online abuser'" (r/ukpolitics, score 201, 124 comments, 23 May) — anti-Kenyon sentiment widespread
- "Another day, another of Makerfield Reform candidate's fascist Facebook friends" (r/ukpolitics, score 63, 58 comments, 22 May) — Searchlight Magazine exposé
- [BBC — Reform announces Robert Kenyon as candidate](#)
- [Byline Times — Kenyon's deleted tweet archives \(419 tweets\)](#)
- [The National — Reform candidate friends with fascist leader](#)
- [Reddit — Reform candidate calls abortion "cowardly murder"](#)
- [Manchester Evening News — Burnham by-election LIVE](#)
- [The Independent — By-election candidates](#)
- [MEN — How Reform UK would 'clamp down' on 'hard work bonus' abuse \(24 May\)](#)
- [The Guardian — Reform Makerfield candidate appeared to doubt seriousness of Covid on X](#)
- [The Guardian — Carol Vorderman demands apology from Reform candidate](#)

- [Manchester Evening News — Reform's white van man Robert Kenyon has some things to say - sorry isn't one of them](#)
- [BBC Question Time — Makerfield special, 4 Jun 2026](#)
- [Reddit — r/ukpolitics QT Live Thread, Makerfield edition 4/06/2026](#)

5–6 June 2026 Updates

Question Time Performance (4 Jun)

Appeared on BBC QT Makerfield special. Called his own past comments "crass" on air. Guardian: "takes aim at himself." Reddit: "Kenyon being Reform's idea of the working man reveals a lot about what they actually think of the working class."

Sexism Denial (5 Jun)

Told MEN: "I have nothing but respect for women," denied being sexist. openDemocracy published deleted X posts including: "Abortion is the cowardly act of murdering a defenceless baby." Starmer attacked him as "self-professed sexist" (MEN). Reform backed Kenyon — no investigation planned.

"White Van Wave" Rap Video (6 Jun)

MEN reports Kenyon released a campaign rap video "White Van Wave" amid ongoing QT fallout.

Polling

Survation #2 (4 Jun): Kenyon 39% (-1 from first poll). 10 points behind Burnham. Right-wing vote split with Restore Britain (8%).

BBC Radio Manchester Interview

Called by-election "win-win" — even losing = giving Labour "a bloody nose" and "two fingers to the establishment." Dismissed Vorderman comments as "squaddie humour."

7–8 June 2026 Updates

Campaign Visibility

Kenyon maintains high local leaflet/poster presence — r/Wigan "sick of the flyers" thread (7 Jun, 226+ comments) shows Reform and Labour both saturating letterboxes. No specific Kenyon gaffes since QT.

Right-Wing Vote Split Persists

Survation #2 figures (39% Reform, 8% Restore Britain) unchanged in betting market read-through. Combined right-wing vote (~47%) exceeds Burnham's 49% only marginally — Reform's path requires Shepherd voters to break heavily their way AND suppress Labour turnout. No new poll to test whether QT fallout has shifted this.

BBC Article Still Circulating

BBC "Reform Makerfield candidate admits making 'crass' comments in past" piece remains in search rotation. Kenyon quotes — "I don't think the Labour Party know what a woman is" and "10-year-old tweets" defence — continue to be cited in r/ukpolitics and r/LabourUK threads.

Jake Austin — Lib Dem
Candidate Makerfield

James Booth — Green Candidate Makerfield

Michael Winstanley —
Conservative Candidate
Makerfield

Peter Ward — Rejoin EU Candidate Makerfield

Alan Howlin Laud Hope — OMR
Loony Party Candidate

Sarah Wakefield

Sarah Wakefield — Green Party Candidate

Update 10 Jun: Guardian/Survation poll (10 Jun) — 75% want water renationalisation, 54% wealth tax — Green policy territory aligns with mainstream Makerfield opinion but no electoral benefit in FPTP squeeze. BBC 14-candidate Q&A published. Greens still ~2% in Survation. Standing firm despite pressure to stand aside., Makerfield By-Election 2026

Last updated: 26 May 2026 (afternoon — Dan Clarke Libertarian profile added; cross-checked no new Wakefield developments) **By-election date:** Thursday 18 June 2026

Bio

Detail	Info
Full name	Sarah Wakefield
Age	38
Location	Manchester
Occupation	Charity director (currently on maternity leave)
Political role	Manchester City Councillor (Deansgate ward)
Council role	Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Personal	Mum of two
Previous work	Retail with a focus on sustainable food; trustee of a community organisation

How They Got Selected

Announced as Green Party candidate on 26 May 2026, replacing Chris Kennedy who withdrew after just nine hours as candidate on 21 May 2026. Kennedy resigned after antisemitic social media posts resurfaced — he had shared a post calling an attack on Jewish ambulances a "false flag".

This also replaces James Booth, who had been selected as the emergency replacement candidate on 21 May after Kennedy withdrew. The timeline was:

1. **Chris Kennedy** selected (21 May) → withdrew 9 hours later over antisemitic posts
 2. **James Booth** selected as replacement (21 May) — his candidacy was brief
 3. **Sarah Wakefield** selected (26 May) — announced by the Green Party on Tuesday morning
-

Key Statements & Quotes

- On being announced (26 May): *"I am proud to be representing the Green Party in the Makerfield byelection. It is vital in a democracy that voters are given a choice of who they want to vote for. Together we can bring back the hope that politics can create a better life for ourselves and our children."*
 - *"We showed in Gorton and Denton we can take on and beat Reform, whose backward-looking and divisive politics needs to be challenged head-on with a message that the future can be better and fairer than the failed status quo."*
 - *"Don't vote in anger, vote in hope."*
 - Signed the "Vote Palestine" pledge for her Deansgate City Council victory — noted by some accounts as her local priority
-

Policy Platform

- Green Party platform: climate action, social justice, anti-austerity
 - Has a Palestinian solidarity track record (Vote Palestine pledge)
 - Focus on children and young people issues (chairs scrutiny committee on this)
 - Sustainable food advocate
-

Polling

The Greens polled at 3% (Survation/Sunday Times, 23 May) when James Booth was the candidate. Sarah Wakefield's entry so close to the election is unlikely to significantly change that figure — the party is a minor factor in the Labour-Reform battle.

What It Means

- The Greens have now had **three candidates** in the space of five days — Chris Kennedy (9 hours), James Booth (~5 days), and now Sarah Wakefield
 - This chaotic start undercuts the party's credibility in the race
 - Ellie Chowns' statement that the Greens won't "throw the kitchen sink" at Makerfield remains the party's positioning
 - Wakefield is a more conventional candidate than Booth or Kennedy — a Manchester councillor with no social media baggage — but has much less time to campaign (just 23 days to polling day)
 - The Green vote is unlikely to shift from ~3% regardless of who the candidate is
 - Her "Vote Palestine" pledge may mobilise some left-wing voters but could also be a vulnerability in a constituency with a different demographic profile than Deansgate
-

Twitter/X Discussion

“ Source: Nitter search, 26 May 2026

Wakefield's announcement generated immediate coverage. Key themes:

- **Breakings news coverage:** Multiple accounts shared the announcement from GB News, Politics UK, and the Green Party's official account
 - **"Wakefield for Makerfield":** The slogan quickly emerged — a play on her surname matching the constituency name, though she represents Deansgate in Manchester, not the Makerfield area
 - **Positive framing from party supporters:** "Good luck to Sarah Wakefield — voters deserve a non pro war, pro austerity, pro genocide choice" — framing her as the anti-establishment candidate
 - **"Vote Palestine" attention:** One account highlighted that she "signed the Vote Palestine pledge for her Deansgate victory" — signalling her political positioning
 - **Establishment resistance framing:** "Despite the pressure The Green Party did not succumb to the establishment's demand they stand aside — well done" — noting that she is running despite calls from senior Greens for the party to step aside for Burnham
-

Reddit Discussion

“ Source: Self-hosted eddit frontend (Windows PC Docker), 26 May 2026

Wakefield's selection is too recent for significant Reddit discussion at the time of writing. Existing Green Party threads on r/ukpolitics continue to focus on the tactical voting debate (should the Greens stand aside for Burnham).

The broader Green Party discussion pattern — calls to step aside, the Kennedy 9-hour fiasco, and Chowns' "kitchen sink" comment — remains the dominant Green-related Reddit narrative.

Sources

- [Manchester Evening News — Greens announce new candidate \(26 May 2026\)](#)
- [The Guardian — Green party announce new candidate for Makerfield byelection \(26 May 2026\)](#)
- [Green Party website — Sarah Wakefield announcement](#)

5 June 2026

- Appeared on BBC Question Time Makerfield special (4 Jun) as Green candidate
- Survation #2 poll: 2% (-1 from first poll)

Dan Clarke

Dan Clarke — Libertarian Party Candidate, Makerfield By-Election 2026

| **Last updated:** 26 May 2026 **By-election date:** Thursday 18 June 2026

Bio

Detail	Info
Full name	Dan Clarke
Party	Libertarian Party
Role	North-West Co-ordinator, Libertarian Party
Previous election	Gorton and Denton by-election (February 2026)
Occupation	Libertarian activist / campaigner

How They Got Selected

Announced as the Libertarian Party candidate for Makerfield on 25 May 2026. The party confirmed via a spokesperson:

“The Libertarian Party can announce that Dan Clarke will be our candidate for the Makerfield by-election, an experienced campaigner who will be giving it his all. Dan will oppose both socialism and nationalism, focusing on growing the economy, and cutting government spending and waste.”

Previous candidacy: Stood in the Gorton and Denton by-election in February 2026.

Clarke himself said voters in Makerfield "deserve the option to support a candidate willing to challenge the government, stand up for local constituents, and put personal freedom at the heart of politics."

Policy Platform

Based on Libertarian Party platform and Clarke's campaign statements:

1. **Anti-socialism and anti-nationalism** — the party opposes both
2. **Economic growth through cuts** — focus on cutting government spending and waste
3. **Anti-surveillance** — oppose "growing CCTV monitoring of our lives"
4. **Anti-digital ID** — oppose any proposals for a digital ID system
5. **Nanny state opposition** — argue the "size and reach of government has blighted this country"
6. **Personal freedom** — put individual liberty at the heart of their platform

Spokesperson: "For the Libertarian Party and for many, many citizens, this is wrong and the 'nanny state' needs to be rolled back."

What It Means

The Libertarian Party adds to an increasingly crowded field — 9 confirmed candidates for the 18 June by-election. Clarke is a minor candidate who polled at negligible levels in Gorton and Denton. His presence further fragments the vote, primarily drawing from people who would otherwise vote Conservative or not at all, but at such low levels it won't affect the Labour-Reform battle.

Previously mentioned in passing in Andy Burnham's Nitter section as coverage of the new Libertarian candidate.

Sources

- [BBC — Libertarian Party announces Makerfield by-election candidate \(26 May 2026\)](#)
- [Manchester Evening News — Makerfield by-election LIVE \(26 May 2026\)](#)
- [PollCheck — Makerfield By-Election](#)