

Jake Austin — Lib Dem Candidate Makerfield

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

| **Last updated:** 4 Jun 2026 (08:00 — NEW: BBC QT panel EXCLUDES Shepherd; Restore consulting legal team; Politico Labour two campaigns; BBC QT Makerfield special TONIGHT) **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)
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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
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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
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

Account	Content	Platform
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

Thread	Subreddit	Score	Comments	Sentiment
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.
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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](#)