

Makerfield By-Election 2026

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Polling & Key Dynamics (Eve of Poll - June 18, 2026)

The contest is highly dynamic, with key narratives revolving around the split in the right and Labour's internal positioning.

Key Polling Data Highlights:

- **Survation/Sunday Times (Recent):** LAB 43%, REF 40%, Restore 7% among likely voters.
- **Yesterday's Polls (4 June Fieldwork):** LAB 46% vs REF 41%.
- **Overall Dynamic:** The race is expected to be decided by the split between Reform UK and the right-wing vote (Restore Britain).

Key Narratives & Context:

1. **Right-Split Holding:** The key dynamic is whether the right-wing vote splits between Reform UK and Restore Britain, which could swing the result significantly.
2. **Burnham's Lead:** Andy Burnham maintains a lead over the Labour party brand, but the contest remains close.
3. **Voter Sentiment:** Polls show that voters are highly sensitive to social media controversies (e.g., Kenyon's past posts) and broader issues like cost of living and the high street.

Key Personal & Political Incidents

- **Kenyon Controversy:** Robert Kenyon's past social media history, including controversial comments regarding abortion and alleged association with far-right figures, is a central theme, heavily scrutinized by media and online commentary.

- **Reform/Restore Dynamic:** The relationship between Reform UK (represented by Robert Kenyon) and Restore Britain (represented by Rebecca Shepherd) is volatile, with some analysts suggesting the latter could become a larger factor in the outcome.
- **Burnham's Positioning:** Burnham is actively positioning himself as the unifying figure, attempting to pull Labour factions together while signaling a potential future leadership challenge against Starmer. His focus on local issues (miners' pension, housing) remains a powerful tool for connecting with his base.
- **Internal Fissures:** The split between Labour loyalists and the desire for a leadership change is evident, with some MPs refusing to campaign for Burnham—a significant internal leak.

Conclusion & Outlook

The by-election is framed as a "test" for the future of UK politics: whether local identity, social media conduct, and party unity can overcome broader ideological divides. The result will be heavily influenced by which side—the establishment-aligned Labour narrative or the populist Reform/Restore dynamic—gains traction among voters concerned with cost of living and cultural identity.

Next Steps:

- Monitor the final 48 hours for any late polling releases or major social media reactions.
- Watch the BBC Question Time tonight for direct commentary on the candidates' strategies.

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