

THE MORE IN COMMON X PURPOSE UNION FORECAST POLITICS, PUBLIC OPINION AND PREDICTIONS FOR 2026



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2026, British politics is shaped less by individual policies and more by how people experience everyday life. Global instability, cost-of-living pressures and social division are driving a volatile public mood marked by anxiety, scepticism and a sense that “nothing is working for people like me”.

This paper is a read-out from a joint event hosted by Purpose Union and More in Common on 29th January 2026. We explored how public opinion is shifting and how global events are reshaping domestic politics. While views differed on whether the world has fundamentally “ruptured” or simply accelerated, there was clear consensus that delivery without narrative is no longer enough - progress that can’t be seen or explained risks being politically meaningless.

Trust has also shifted. Politicians are no longer the most credible messengers; civil society, charities and businesses increasingly carry greater public confidence - and with it, greater responsibility.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Cost of living is the anchor issue

Affordability frames almost every other political concern, from immigration to crime to climate. The public’s core question remains: “How will this make my life feel better?”

We are in a new battle of persuasion

Arguments once perhaps taken for granted - on climate action, diversity, democratic norms - must now be actively made and remade. Laws and policies do not equal public consent.

Narrative matters as much as delivery

Governments committed to long-term “deliverism” struggle without a compelling story. Without an emotional throughline, progress feels invisible.

Trust has migrated

Politicians are widely distrusted. Charities, community organisations and businesses are often more trusted - creating an opportunity, and obligation, for non-political actors to lead.

Risk-taking is rising

A growing “nothing left to lose” mentality is making voters more open to populist and anti-system choices.



DISCUSSION SUMMARY

1. GLOBAL TURBULENCE VS DOMESTIC CONTROL

Global events increasingly shape domestic priorities, requiring political leaders to spend more time abroad and manage forces beyond their control. During the discussion, there was sympathy for perceptions of leaders like Keir Starmer as “never here”, given the extent to which international crises now affect life at home. However, panellists differed on whether this represents a fundamentally new world order.

- Does the scale and speed of global disruption feel unprecedented - overwhelming domestic policy wins and fuelling public anxiety?
- **OR** does history show that sovereignty has always been constrained by power dynamics, meaning today's moment is better understood as acceleration rather than rupture?

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“This doesn't feel like a rupture so much as a more realistic view of how power has always worked.”

Mhari Aurora – Sky News

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What was agreed: Global shocks now routinely drown out incremental domestic progress, making governments appear ineffective even when delivery is happening.

2. PUBLIC OPINION, PERSUASION AND POLITICAL RISK

Public opinion emerged as a central theme, particularly the widening gap between political action and public consent. Panellists agreed that legislation, polling and expert consensus do not guarantee public buy-in, especially on issues such as climate change, immigration and social cohesion. There was debate about the root cause of this disconnect.

- Has politics allowed once-settled arguments to drift - assuming agreement where it no longer exists and opening space for populist reframing?
- **OR** is the challenge primarily one of trust, where even strong arguments struggle to land because faith in institutions has eroded?

What was agreed: Public opinion must be treated as the starting point for politics, not the end point and failing to actively persuade increases political risk.



3. NARRATIVE, TRUST AND WHO CAN LEAD

The absence of a clear, unifying narrative for the country was raised repeatedly. While governments focus on delivery, many people struggle to understand what Britain is trying to build or where it is heading, particularly in the post-Brexit context.

- Should defining national direction remain the responsibility of elected politicians, who hold democratic authority?
- **OR** has the shift in public trust created space for civil society, charities and businesses to play a leading role in articulating a shared and credible vision?

What was agreed: Rebuilding confidence will require trusted messengers and collaboration - no single institution can restore belief on its own.

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“Arguments we once took for granted now have to be actively made again - and made well.”

Lewis Iwu – Purpose Union

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CASE STUDIES: PURPOSE UNION & MORE IN COMMON

1. Driving inclusion through football and community

Purpose Union and More in Common worked together with Kick It Out and Guinness 0.0 to support the launch of a new three-year partnership using football to bring communities together.

Purpose Union led narrative development for the partnership, while working with More in Common to run focus groups and polling to understand how fans experience inclusion in pub environments, helping partners align around a shared purpose and design more inclusive spaces.

2. Building a shared narrative to end No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

Purpose Union and More in Common worked together to help the NRPF Partnership research, test and build a more effective public narrative on No Recourse to Public Funds, supporting strategic shifts and stronger collaboration across the migrant rights sector.

These case studies demonstrate the value of combining strategic narrative development with rigorous public opinion research - enabling organisations to align around shared goals, communicate with confidence, and turn insight into coordinated action.

FINAL REMARKS

The challenge ahead is not simply to govern or communicate - but to rebuild belief. For organisations, this moment presents a choice to stand back as trust fragments further; or to step forward as credible voices that help shape a shared sense of direction. Organisations with purpose, reach and legitimacy have the opportunity to:

> Host spaces for disagreement that build understanding

> Reframe complex issues like climate and migration in human terms

> Help articulate a positive, unifying vision for Britain's future

PURPOSE UNION x MORE IN COMMON

In a crowded and polarised media landscape, facts alone are not enough - but without them, narratives fail. Public opinion is shifting fast, trust is fragile, and assumptions about “what people think” are often wrong.

Purpose Union and More in Common collaborate to respond to this challenge, combining deep public opinion insight with strategic narrative development to create campaigns that resonate and endure.

More in Common is a leading public opinion research agency and think tank, uncovering the values, concerns and shared starting points that shape how people see the world. Their polling and qualitative research put overlooked voices at the centre of public debate and reveal what really resonates with the public.

Purpose Union uses these insights to build powerful, audience-validated narratives. We translate evidence into stories that connect emotionally, challenge misconceptions and support long-term shifts in public attitudes.

Together, we combine rigorous polling with strategic narrative development to create campaigns that are rooted in lived experience and designed to change minds - not just win headlines.



The logo for Purpose Union consists of the words "PURPOSE" and "UNION" stacked vertically in a bold, white, sans-serif font, enclosed within a white square.