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When politicians talk about AI, is anyone listening?

Innovation and regulation in the UK

Introduction and methodology

Six months after assuming leadership of the country, Prime Minister Keir Starmer staked a claim for the UK to play a leading role in the global AI race.

This political push for the country to become an AI 'superpower' through integration and regulation has been positioned by Labour as a positive for UK industry. But how has this been received by the public, covered by the UK media, and discussed by MPs in Parliament?

What does this mean for UK industry at large? And exactly how influential will this focus from politicians be in the adoption of AI?

Using **Vuelio Media Monitoring**, **Political Monitoring**, the **Journalist Enquiry Service**, and **Pulsar TRAC and Narratives**, this report unpacks:

→ How the AI conversation has grown across the UK press and on social media alongside the increased focus in UK politics

→ What journalists and broadcasters covering AI are most interested in reporting

→ What the key concerns are for the press and public regarding the integration of this new technology in times of fast change.

Approach
Data Collection Period: 1 March 2024 – 28 February 2025

- ⚡ Online News
- 📺 TV
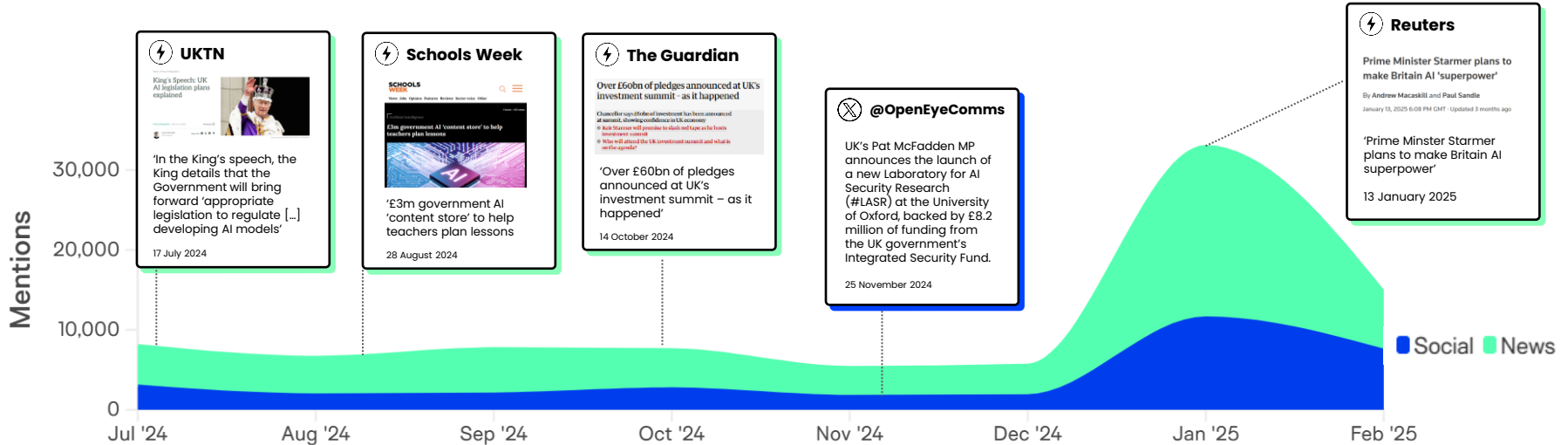- 📻 Radio
- 🎙 Podcast
- 💬 Forums
- ✍ Blogs
- 𝕏 X
- 🔴 Reddit

Channels: Markets/Languages: UK data collection. Analysis in English language.

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Media and public increasingly link AI to politics

Tracking the rise in public and press interest in politics and AI since the 2024 UK General Election highlights the huge impact of Westminster on this particular news cycle. With AI mentioned by former Chancellor Jeremy Hunt as a key area for investment in his 2024 Spring Budget, the AI baton has since been taken up by the Labour Government with great zeal. PM Starmer's focus on regulation, and his positioning of the UK as a future AI 'superpower', has driven public conversation and media coverage since the start of the year, reaching a zenith in January 2025 with the announcement of a consultation into AI and the creative industries – fiercely reported on by journalists with a dog in the fight.

UKTN

King's Speech: UK AI legislation plans explained

'In the King's speech, the King details that the Government will bring forward 'appropriate legislation to regulate [...] developing AI models'

17 July 2024

Schools Week

£3m government AI 'content store' to help teachers plan lessons

'£3m government AI 'content store' to help teachers plan lessons

28 August 2024

The Guardian

Over £60bn of pledges announced at UK's investment summit - as it happened

Chancellor says £60bn of investment has been announced at summit, showing confidence in UK economy
• Keir Starmer will promise to slash red tape as he hosts investment summit
• Who will attend the UK investment summit and what is on the agenda?

'Over £60bn of pledges announced at UK's investment summit – as it happened'

14 October 2024

@OpenEyeComms

UK's Pat McFadden MP announces the launch of a new Laboratory for AI Security Research (#LASR) at the University of Oxford, backed by £8.2 million of funding from the UK government's Integrated Security Fund.

25 November 2024

Reuters

Prime Minister Starmer plans to make Britain AI 'superpower'

By Andrew Macaskill and Paul Sandle

January 13, 2025 6:08 PM GMT · Updated 3 months ago

'Prime Minster Starmer plans to make Britain AI superpower'
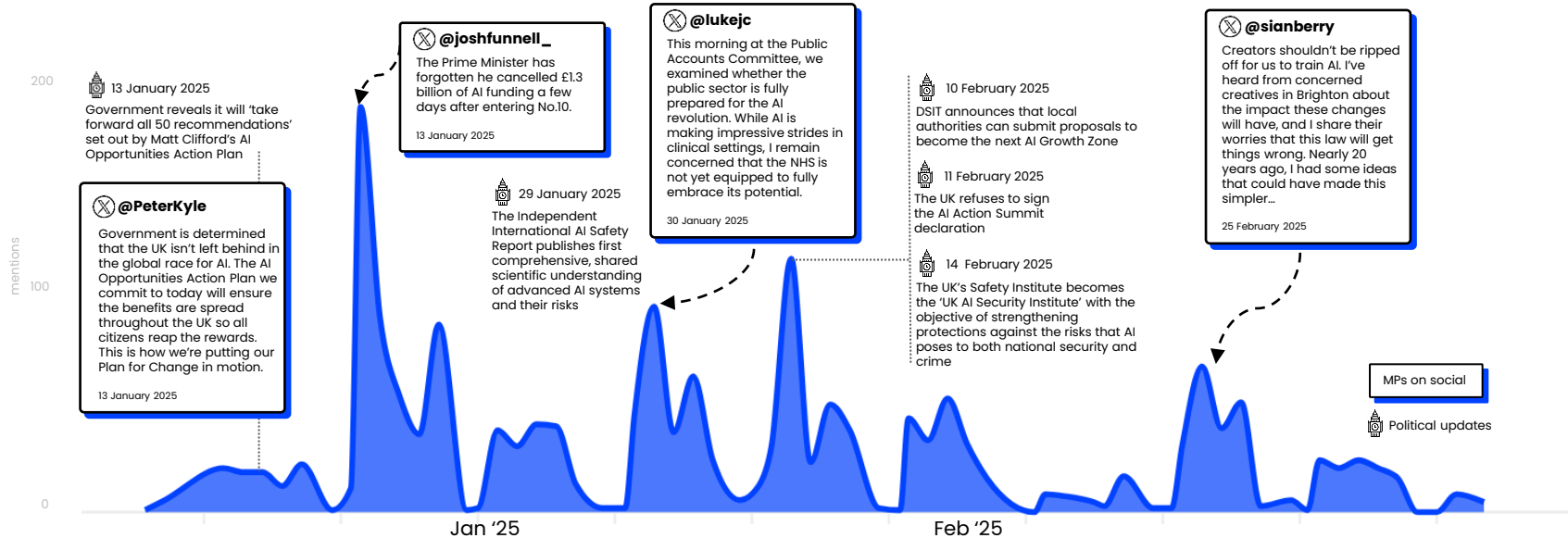
13 January 2025

Mentions of AI and UK politics between 1 July 2024 and 28 February 2025 across Online News, Podcasts, TV, and Radio, X, and Reddit. Source: Vuelio Media Monitoring and Pulsar TRAC.

Social **News**

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MPs advance UK's AI role in Westminster and online

Tracking the discussion within Parliament, and MP posts on X, from January to the end of February highlights which announcements attracted the most engagement in political circles. Key were the Government's 'Plan for Change' (and reaction from the opposition); The Public Accounts Committee's examination of public sector readiness for the 'AI revolution' on 30 January; the US and UK's refusal to sign a declaration on 'inclusive' AI in Paris on 11 February; and a 25 February Parliament discussion sparked in part by a protest album concerning potential impacts of AI on the music industry. A key thread running throughout – the Government's Copyright and Artificial Intelligence consultation, the ramifications of which would be of particular interest to creatives in boroughs across the UK, and – of course – the media.

@joshfunnell_
The Prime Minister has forgotten he cancelled £1.3 billion of AI funding a few days after entering No.10.

13 January 2025

@lukejc
This morning at the Public Accounts Committee, we examined whether the public sector is fully prepared for the AI revolution. While AI is making impressive strides in clinical settings, I remain concerned that the NHS is not yet equipped to fully embrace its potential.

30 January 2025

@sianberry
Creators shouldn't be ripped off for us to train AI. I've heard from concerned creatives in Brighton about the impact these changes will have, and I share their worries that this law will get things wrong. Nearly 20 years ago, I had some ideas that could have made this simpler...

25 February 2025

13 January 2025
Government reveals it will 'take forward all 50 recommendations' set out by Matt Clifford's AI Opportunities Action Plan

@PeterKyle
Government is determined that the UK isn't left behind in the global race for AI. The AI Opportunities Action Plan we commit to today will ensure the benefits are spread throughout the UK so all citizens reap the rewards. This is how we're putting our Plan for Change in motion.

13 January 2025

29 January 2025
The Independent International AI Safety Report publishes first comprehensive, shared scientific understanding of advanced AI systems and their risks

10 February 2025
DSIT announces that local authorities can submit proposals to become the next AI Growth Zone

11 February 2025
The UK refuses to sign the AI Action Summit declaration

14 February 2025
The UK's Safety Institute becomes the 'UK AI Security Institute' with the objective of strengthening protections against the risks that AI poses to both national security and crime

MPs on social

Political updates

mentions

200

100

0

Jan '25

Feb '25

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AI and UK politics mentions from Parliament and on social media from UK MPs between 1 Jan 2024 and 28 February 2025. Source: Vuelio Political Monitoring.
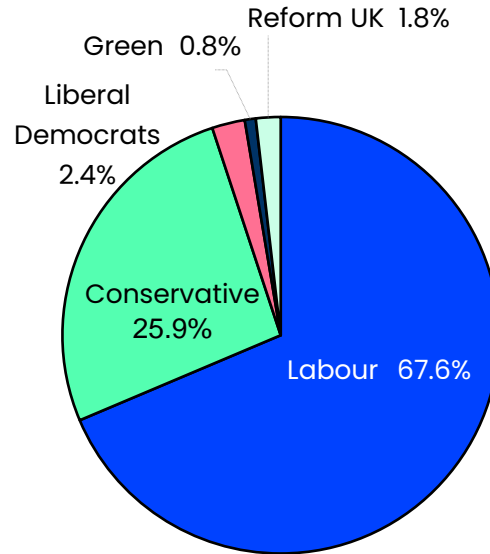
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Which parties & politicians attract greatest share of voice?

Labour and Starmer are naturally driving and dominating the press and public conversation – but which other parties (so to speak) are getting significant attention, and why?
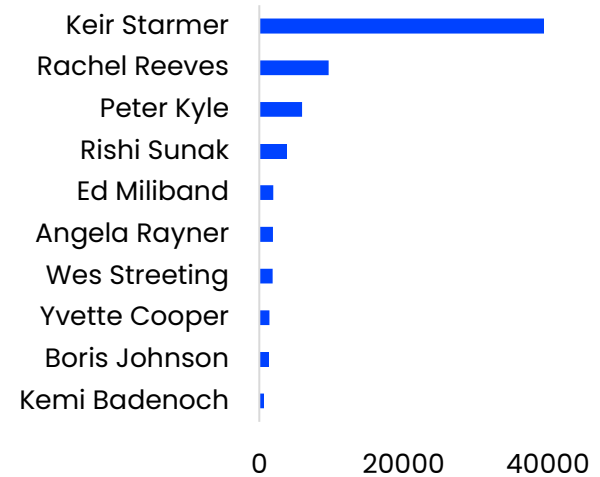
Oppositional criticism of Labour's approach from the former leadership party gifts the Conservatives a significant volume of attention, as to be expected, as is Technology Secretary Peter Kyle's high placement… but former PM Boris Johnson eclipses current Tory leader Kemi Badenoch in the line-up. Could this be due to a failure to capture the attention of the media and public from Badenoch; a carry over from Johnson's own AI push in leadership; or a sign that the long-established headline grabber continues to be incredibly quotable?

The following party line-up has the SNP gaining more oxygen than the Green Party – partly due to a positive take on use of emerging tech, with MP Graham Leadbetter writing an Op Ed for The National regarding his use of AI tools to help with speeches.

As the media plumb the House of Commons for news cycle grist, politicians, in turn, utilise the media to push their own narratives around AI.

Reform UK 1.8%
Green 0.8%
Liberal Democrats 2.4%
Conservative 25.9%
Labour 67.6%

AI political conversation across Online News, Podcast, Radio, TV, X, and Reddit split by UK party between 1 July 2024 – 28 Feb 2025. Source: Vuelio Media Monitoring and Pulsar TRAC.

Keir Starmer
Rachel Reeves
Peter Kyle
Rishi Sunak
Ed Miliband
Angela Rayner
Wes Streeting
Yvette Cooper
Boris Johnson
Kemi Badenoch

0   20000   40000

UK MPs in the AI conversation across Online News, Podcast, Radio, TV, X, and Reddit between 1 July 2024 – 28 Feb 2025. Source: Vuelio Media Monitoring and Pulsar TRAC.

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Troubleshooting on AI: What are the main concerns?

Despite the clear link between both news coverage and social conversation with what's happening in the UK political sphere, topics of concern differ for the press and general public.

Media reporting on AI is mostly focused on the possible economical impacts – highlighted with February's [Make It Fair campaign](#), which took over the front pages of every UK national newspaper, from the Daily Mail to The Guardian. The public, however, were posting and sharing on governance and regulation, questioning incoming legislation and parameters for the use of AI technology.

Two major differences in focus for the UK press and the people reading, watching, and listening to reports – international relations and national security. Both topics were centred by the media in its coverage, but piqued less interest from the public; chiefly concerned, instead, with how AI will impact their day-to-day lives.
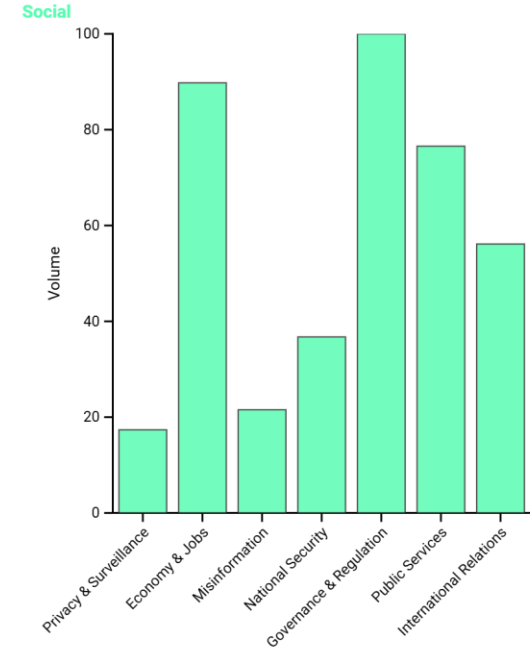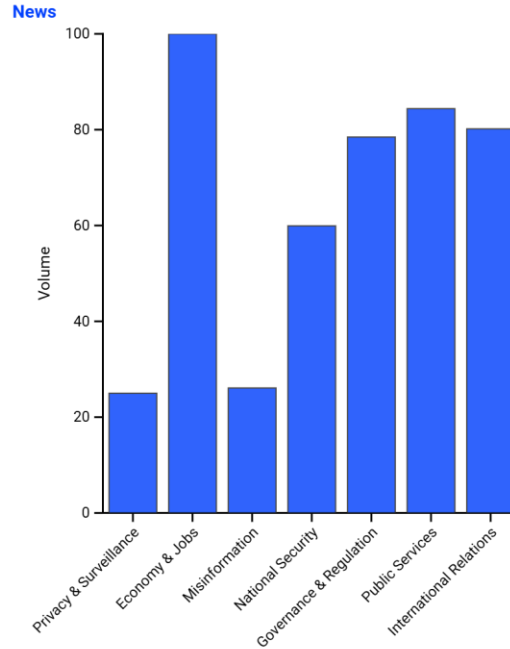
The dominant UK narratives about AI and UK politics across Online News, Podcasts, TV, Radio, X, and Reddit, 1 July 2024 – 28 February 2025.
Source: Vuelio Media Monitoring and Pulsar TRAC.

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What the UK media want from PRs on AI and politics

AI is a topic growing in popularity among UK journalists, broadcasters, and influencers sending requests to PRs via the [ResponseSource Journalist Enquiry Service](#). And UK political interest has only boosted this focus over the last year – a trend that's likely to continue. Journalists researching AI and politics came from outlets including CCN, the Financial Times, World Finance, IT Pro, and The Carer, showing AI's breadth of influence and impact. Angles spanned from the use of AI in the energy sector; the EU's AI Act, investigations at the CMA; consumer trust; and Starmer's supposed push to 'play catch up' after a cautious start.

I am working on a special report on emerging global AI regulation, so looking for relevant quotes from experts.

'The EU has taken a first step with its AI Act, while China and the US are expected to create their own regulatory frameworks. Will EU AI legislation and particularly the EU AI Act shape global standards? Will the AI Act foster or hinder AI innovation in Europe?

'What's your take on the Act's approach to foundation model regulation, particularly the quantitative criterion, based on the computational capacity of AI models?'

Request submitted via the Journalist Enquiry Service, 17 April 2024

'I have been commissioned to write a story about the UK's Competition and Markets Authority's investigations into deals taking place between big tech firms like Microsoft and Google, Mistral, OpenAI and Inflection AI [...]

'All of the competition probes opened by the CMA into these relationships have so far come up short.

'Why has this crusade seemed to have faltered? Is this faltering perhaps due to the UK's, under Rishi Sunak, self-professed light touch approach to AI regulation? Does the new government change anything?'

Request submitted via the Journalist Enquiry Service, 15 November 2024

'Looking for written viewpoints about the switch from Keir Starmer to make the UK an AI leader.

'New plan is a clear pull away from our previously cautious approach. Some experts have applauded it as ambitious, some are concerned about its lack of safety

'In the past, companies such as Google and Meta have claimed the UK risked falling behind the US due to our stringent view on safety.

'Now as Trump plans to deregulate American tech, is this why Starmer is looking to play catch up?'
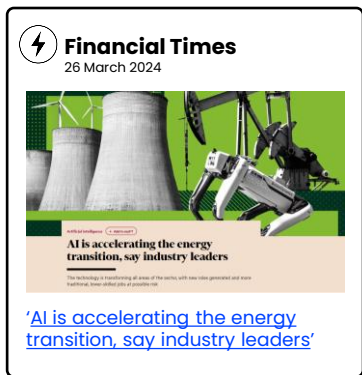
Request submitted via the Journalist Enquiry Service, 13 January 2025

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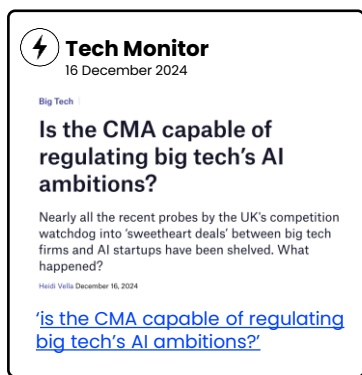# Top news: How the UK press is covering the story

Coverage from the UK media highlights the excitement that comes with innovation, as well as the trepidation. Outlets ranging from national press, trade magazines, as well as UK bureaus for international news organisations, have closely tracked the UK Government's encouragement of AI adoption alongside regulation. But this tracking comes with extra invested interest from the media – hence those 'Make It Fair' cover pages across every major UK newspaper on 25 February. This c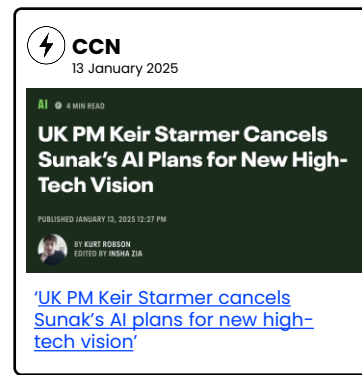all to stop the watering down of copy laws that would enable AI scraping of content without payment, sums up the mixed position of the UK media. Coverage of innovation will come with questions – something politicians and their stakeholders must be ready to answer.
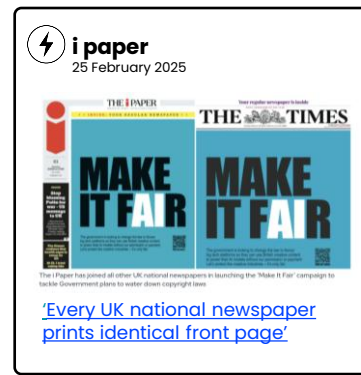

Financial Times
26 March 2024

AI is accelerating the energy transition, say industry leaders

The technology is transforming all areas of the sector, with new value generated and more traditional, lower-skilled jobs at possible risk

'AI is accelerating the energy transition, say industry leaders'

AI acceleration

Tech Monitor
16 December 2024

Big Tech

Is the CMA capable of regulating big tech's AI ambitions?

Nearly all the recent probes by the UK's competition watchdog into 'sweetheart deals' between big tech firms and AI startups have been shelved. What happened?

Heidi Vella December 16, 2024

'is the CMA capable of regulating big tech's AI ambitions?'

Regulation risks

CCN
13 January 2025

AI ⊙ 4 MIN READ

UK PM Keir Starmer Cancels Sunak's AI Plans for New High-Tech Vision

PUBLISHED JANUARY 13, 2025 12:27 PM

BY KURT ROBSON
EDITED BY INSHA ZIA

'UK PM Keir Starmer cancels Sunak's AI plans for new high-tech vision'

Political positioning

i paper
25 February 2025

THE i PAPER   THE TIMES

MAKE IT FAIR   **MAKE IT FAIR**

The i Paper has joined all other UK national newspapers in launching the 'Make It Fair' campaign to tackle Government plans to water down copyright laws

'Every UK national newspaper prints identical front page'

Copyright claims

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How Pulsar Group can help
with your PR strategy and comms

◆ <u>Vuelio Media Monitoring</u>: Prove the effectiveness of your PR and comms tactics and provide a base for future planning through multi-channel media coverage categorised by sentiment, Share of Voice, and bespoke tags.

𝒪 <u>Vuelio Insights</u>: The Vuelio Insights team partners with clients to produce bespoke media analysis reports that identify risks and opportunities, and demonstrate the value of your PR.

✖ <u>Vuelio Political Monitoring</u>: Vuelio gives you full visibility of everything that's happening across Government, Parliament, stakeholder organisations and social media, delivered in a way that works for you.

✳ <u>Pulsar</u>: Apply audience intelligence to your strategy with social listening and audience segmentation. Spot potential crisis ahead with this AI-driven trend detector to plan your strategy.

❖ <u>Journalist Enquiry Service</u>: Get journalist enquiries delivered straight to your inbox so you can connect and secure coverage for your organisation at top UK media outlets.

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