# Edge Hill logo and crest

# Paula Keaveney’s Political Week – Episode 3

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Hot summer, that were experiencing at the moment. So, Paula we haven't talked for a couple of weeks. Can you fill us in on what's been going on? Well, summer is meant to be the time when a lot of the, the sort of elite movers and shakers, take to their holiday Villas, you know, Tuscany is, of course, full of people at this time of year and I'm talking not just about politicians but journalists as well. So we expect, generally, summer to be quiet

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and short of political news. But increasingly, this is this is not the case. You may remember that last year the Afghanistan crisis erupted in the middle of the summer and of course this summer we're seeing, you know, a series of political events and crises going on. Top of everybody's mind of course is the cost of living crisis linking to a number of things including the ongoing war in Ukraine. But running alongside this we have the

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contest for the leadership of the conservative party and therefore, the next Prime Minister. So there is a sense from some that everything's in a Hiatus but actually lots of things are happening at the same time. And as parliament's not sitting, you often get a news vacuum when parliament's not sitting and vacuums have to be filled in the media, which means that journalists are increasingly chasing stories of division and stories

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of problems. And the cost of living crisis is filling that news vacuum, very effectively. So we have a situation in which some people are still away. And yet, there are increasing calls for political action at different levels. How are the various players in the contest approaching this? Because, you know, they're talking about tax cuts and things like that. Which appeal to the Tory members, whereas your average person on the street is

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starting to fret a little about the impending price rises in their energy bills. Yeah, so the immediate problem that the two conservative leadership candidates have is that in the contest, they're obliged to speak to a very specific audience and that very specific audience is members of the conservative party who have a vote. But meanwhile there is a larger audience which one of them will need to address as Prime Minister. So we

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have quite a bizarre situation where many of the communications coming out are about quite targeted issues of interest to sections of the conservative party and no doubt these are hotly debated within the audience, but the vast majority of people are not members of the conservative party. So, don't have a vote in the contest and are more interested in the broader issues about cost of living,

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about war in Ukraine, about fuel, about employment. So you almost have two conversations going on and the problem that the conservative leadership contestants have is that in order to win what they want to win, they need to speak to audience A but actually audience B is saying, well, why are you not talking to us? And this is going to be difficult because when one of them swaps from leadership contender to actual leader and Prime

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Minster they will suddenly have to deal with much broader problems and an audience, which is the whole of the country, and that's quite a difficult transition to make. If you've been focused on quite Niche, political issues for a while. There has been talk of things like zombie governments and calls for recalls of parliament, what does that actually mean in practice. Yeah so it's important to remember that even when parliament's

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not sitting there is a government, which is doing things, you know, that there are senior civil servants in post doing things, there are government ministers doing things there is a rotor for who does what? So things are going on. I think the issue here is that there's doing things and then there's being seen to do things and we don't know what they're doing because we don't see them doing things. So this has led to calls for you know more visible action.

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So, it might be cause for action or it might be cause for more visible action and one of the ways this has been called for is by some people asking for Parliament to be recalled. So, when parliament's not sitting, it is sometimes recalled and this is sometimes on a Saturday. So I remember it being recalled for the Falklands War. It was recalled to talk about the 2011 riots. There was a recall to talk about whether or not to have air strikes in

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In Syria. But there's also been recalls to talk about for example, Prince Philip's death, Joe Cox’s death and the way the recall works is that the people with the power to do it are the government. So they decide whether it's in the public interest and if they think it is they go to the speaker who then says yes or no. And then normally the actual event is a couple of days later not all these recalls involve votes. In fact, a lot of them don't some of them are just debates.

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So quite often when a recalls being requested, it's to voice an opinion or to voice support or to voice protest. So it wouldn't be the case that there'd be a sudden recall of parliament to vote on a very complicated set of measures because actually that takes time to develop but it may be the case that a recall would involve a simple indicative vote on a particular proposition or it might just

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involve MPs voicing their views on something. Okay. So it's interesting that you made the distinction between things being done and things being seen to be done. So talking of which I think Keir Starmer is planning some kind of speech. Yes. So there's at least one speech scheduled and they'll be other initiatives as well. So this is his opportunity to attempt to grab hold of the agenda, you know, as I said

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News vacuums are filled by all sorts of things. And at the moment Gordon Brown's managed to move into that news vacuum quite effectively so Keir Starmer will be looking to recapture that. That's not to say he doesn't agree with Gordon Brown but it is actually the role of the leader of the opposition to lead the opposition. So he'll be looking to establish not just positions but being seen to have positions on the situation we've seen calls for the recall of

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Parliament from other people. As well though, we've seen a day view of the Lib Dems make a call, we’ve seen statements from the Scottish national party, but the reality is that actually many people see that it's Starmer’s role to make these statements and to make these calls. So he'll be looking to establish himself as the sort of leadership figure in all of this. Well, we wait to hear what he has to say with bated breath, of course. So just to round things off a little

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and to again, to get you looking into your crystal ball. Do you see anything really happening between now and the election of the new prime minister? Well, the government keeps saying not and the line from the government is that they won't be actually taking any big moves ahead of that person being elected. I mean, we know they are drawing up proposals because the Chiefs

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Secretary to the treasury said so earlier this week but certainly Boris Johnson and others have repeated that they don't want to take big moves until the new person is in place. So if that's the case, that new person's going to have to move very, very quickly. The ballot closes on the 2nd of September and the results are due, lunchtime on the 5th of September so the in-tray will be massive for that person. So I don’t,

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I don't actually see the government particularly launching any huge initiatives, although it is worth saying that the bosses of the energy companies have been brought in to talk to senior ministers about what they could do. And I rather get the impression that that meeting is going to include some threats of future action. So it may well be that the foundations are being laid

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for action that could be taken by Liz Truss or could be taken by Rishi Sunak. But I don't anticipate a big initiative in the next couple of weeks, just out of interest. When you, when you say action, what do you mean? Do you have any insight on? Yes. So there are some things that the government could, for example announce today, that it is going to introduce measure number two, on this particular date in September. And I would consider

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that as action because it's a clear Declaration of intent and people then start to plan around it. So that's the sort of thing that I would see as action. I understand why there is a feeling that they should wait for the new leader to be in place. Because don't forget that new leader is going to appoint their own cabinet. Many of the people in cabinet roles now, probably won't be there when it comes to the new leader taking

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over, or maybe in different jobs. So it's like, you know, when you leave your job and you put your notice in, you're still working, aren't you? But in the back of your mind is, well, you know what? Next month, I'll be doing something different and this has a psychological impact on people because it makes them slightly wary of kicking off big initiatives because they won't be there to follow it through or there may be a problem. But I would certainly see a big action as making a very definitive announcement that, you know,

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this is going to happen on this date, unless this other thing doesn't happen, and we may get a little bit of that out of the energy companies meeting depending on how open the energy bosses are to accepting. They have a role in dealing with all of this, okay? And when you, when you alluded to threats earlier, you did you mean threats by the government to energy companies?

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Yeah, so it's perfectly possible to say to the energy companies. We want you to do this. However, if there are no signs of you doing this or you refuse to do this, we are going to use the Regulatory and legislative leaders that we have and we will do this. So you could say, for example, we don't want to impose an extra tax on you, but unless you take these measures to help your customers, we will be bringing forward a tax

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and it will be this, you know. So you’re,

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as an incentive, there for the companies to move on I mean, the, the conservatives, you know, on the whole don't like lots of regulation, and they don't like big taxes and they like to see business being as free as possible. So it’s a sort of tightrope act really, but this is best achieved by the threat of something happening in the future.

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Okay, well, we will wait and see what comes out of all this. Thanks again, Paula for another raft of seriously useful insight into the world of politics and until the next time, I'll see you soon. Yeah, pleasure.