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Aims

The aim of this research is to investigate whether there is a link between how active a British MP is and their majority at the previous election. To do this, we have chosen six MPs: three of them with large majorities at the 2001 General Election, three of them with small majorities, and we will conduct a variety of analyses on their behaviour in the years leading up to the 2005 General Election. To do this, we will look at three separate areas: how the MP behaves in the local and national media, how the MP uses the Internet, and how the MP uses traditional channels such as Parliament.

Methodology

We selected six MPs for this study, three of them needed to be of a small majority, and three of them with large majorities (See Appendix 1 for full selection procedure). The process we used gave us the following six MPs, with their local newspaper and majority included in this list. They are:

Name	Constituency	Majority	Local newspaper
Kevan Jones (KJ)	North Durham	18,683	<i>The Northern Echo</i>
Hywel Francis (HF)	Aberavon	16,108	<i>S. Wales Evening Post</i>
John Battle (JB)	Leeds West	14,935	<i>Yorkshire Post</i>
Norman Lamb (NL)	North Norfolk	483	<i>Eastern Daily Press</i>
Annette Brooke (AB)	Mid Dorset & Poole North	384	<i>Dorset Echo</i>
Jim Knight (JK)	Dorset South	153	<i>Dorset Echo</i>

Using LexisNexis, we searched between the dates 5/5/03 and 5/5/05 for the name of the MP in their local newspaper and the three national newspapers we have chosen, *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph* and the *Guardian*. This produced two years of articles for each one, which we collated into separate files. Each article was then coded into one of eight separate categories according to our coding frame (see Appendix 2). From there, the resultant data was inputted into SPSS for analysis. Then, using Hansard, TheyWorkForYou.com and publicwhip.org.uk, we searched for as many references to our MPs as possible, collating the data on questions asked and debates entered during the 2001-05 Parliament. Finally, we visited each of the six MPs websites and took notes on the contents, how often it was updated, and how effectively the information was communicated.

Criticisms of methodology

With the analyses of parliamentary activity and website data being relatively straightforward, the only, yet vital, remaining factor was how to assess the press articles. We decided to code each article based on what the article said the MP was doing, and so produced a coding frame to reflect that. We then read each of the 1,023 articles and categorised them accordingly. This in itself is an inherently subjective process, since there would be times when an article was blatantly a carbon copy of an MP's press release to their local media; however, the question then arose as to whether or not to include these in the higher category of the coding frame, or whether to reduce their status on the belief that MPs activity itself should be noteworthy, and that they should not gain credit if they, essentially, tell the local paper to cover the story. Distinguishing these for certain was not easy and, on the whole, we gave MPs

the benefit of the doubt. This may have skewed the statistics in favour of MPs who had good relationships with their local media, for example.

There were also a number of articles which could have gone into more than one category. We tried to design a coding frame so that the categories for each article were mutually exclusive, however, some articles were broad and included many references to the MP. Indeed, some articles were written by the MP themselves, or some articles were a profile or case study of the MP in question. Again, we preferred to give the MP the benefit of the doubt in these cases. If an article could have justifiably gone in two or more categories, then we gave it the higher rating of the options. This uncertainty in a handful of cases could have had a small effect on the results.

There was also another consideration, in that the degrees from 1 to 8 of the coding frame may themselves have been inappropriate. They could undoubtedly have been split in different ways, and there is no guarantee that if we designed another coding frame from scratch that we would have produced the same one. It is also possible that we could have analysed the articles without coding, for example, taking a sample of each MP's articles and doing open text analysis on them in an attempt to establish any relationships that way. This may have produced different results. This may have also retained some qualitative information that has been lost in this quantitative study. To balance this, we took notes of anything that appeared important or was appearing on a regular basis for each MP, to preserve some qualitative data, but it can no way match the amount that could have been gained by open text analysis.

Broadly speaking, however, the research proceeded well and the results that follow and the resultant analyses appear to be logical and accurate.

Press Analysis

To consider this aspect of the data, we will first examine, by the type of coverage received by the MP, the articles that mentioned them in purely quantitative terms. Then we will briefly look qualitatively at the type of activity that an MP most often got involved in. For more detail into what each degree of activity means, see Appendix 2.

			How did the MP feature in the article; what were they doing?						Total	
			Independently active	Progress or delivery report	Promise to act	Comment on subject of article	Passively mentioned by article	Uncertain response		A critique by the article
The type of the MP's majority: large or small?	Large	Frequency %	20 6.1%	64 19.5%	22 6.7%	78 23.7%	110 33.4%	5 1.5%	30 9.1%	329 100.0%
	Small	Frequency %	26 4.3%	162 27.0%	59 9.8%	226 37.6%	105 17.5%	7 1.2%	16 2.7%	601 100.0%
Total		Frequency %	46 4.9%	226 24.3%	81 8.7%	304 32.7%	215 23.1%	12 1.3%	46 4.9%	930 100.0%

Table 1

This table provides us with a summary of the 930 articles that were categorised. It combines the three MPs with small majorities and three MPs with large majorities, and compares them against each other in terms of each type of coverage. Although we originally started with 1,023, the remaining 93 articles were not included as they only contained data which were not relevant to the MP personally, for example, they were lists of how MPs voted in parliamentary divisions. Refer to Appendix 2 throughout this section for the definitions of our variables. Throughout each variable, we also include a “league table”, ranking our MPs in terms of how many, in percentage terms, articles about them fell into this category.

“Independently active”

By its very nature, this is a difficult category for an MP to achieve recognition in, and so any success in raising an issue for which there was no original demand

deserves to be noted. There was no apparent association between level of majority and degree of independent activity, with 6.1% of these articles for MPs with a large majority against 4.3% for MPs with a small majority. The measure of association for a Phi test is -0.039 with a significance of .238 (see Appendix 3 for full data). These are so small and close to zero as to be irrelevant, despite the fact that, on the face of it, MPs with a large majority may be more successful at achieving this degree of press coverage.

MP	%
AB (S)	8.2
HF (L)	8.2
KJ (L)	6.0
JB (L)	4.4
NL (S)	4.0
JK (S)	3.0
L = Large majority	
S = Small majority	

Table 2

This may have some degree of truth to it. If one considers that MPs with large majorities do not have to worry so much about keeping the electorate happy, then it would imply that they have a freer reign in their choice of activity, not tied to their constituents interests as much, and so can afford to raise more issues based on their own interests in order to achieve recognition. It is interesting that the bottom two MPs in Table 2, Norman Lamb and Jim Knight, are MPs with small majorities. With more data, this could be investigated more fully, but for our purposes there is not enough of a link to form a firm conclusion.

“Progress / Delivery”

It is in categories such as this that one would expect MPs with small majorities to be more active in seeking publicity. Success in achieving coverage here is likely to be very positive for the MP in question; they receive positive headlines for achieving something, or making progress towards a goal. However, the statistics did not reflect this as much as expected. Again, there was no apparent association between the size of majority and this type of activity,

MP	%
NL (S)	29.4
AB (S)	27.6
KJ (L)	26.2
JK (S)	23.0
JB (L)	18.5
HF (L)	15.5
L = Large majority	
S = Small majority	

Table 3

with a Phi test measure of association of 0.084, with significance 0.11 (see Appendix 3 for full data). The underlying statistics show that MPs with large majorities achieved this kind of coverage 19.5% of the time, while MPs with small majorities received 27.0%. This difference would imply that there may be some degree of truth in this variable. Referring to Table 3, it is possible that Kevan Jones, with 26.2% of the result, is an unusually active and successful MP for someone with a large majority, especially as he was also the third most independently active in Table 2. If he was closer to the average of the two other MPs with large majorities (JB and HF), then it may have given us a basic link that, again, could have been investigated with more data.

“Promise”

One of the surprise results of this project was the fact that MPs in general were almost three times more likely to achieve progress (as per the previous variable) as they were to promise to act (24.3% against 8.6%). Given that ‘levels of trust in government and confidence in the political system’ (Bromley, et al., 2004: 20; cited in Lusoli, et al., 2006: 25) are lower now than a decade ago, and there is also a general perception that MPs promise much but deliver little, this is an intriguing result. It demonstrates that the perception is not entirely accurate, and that people are, perhaps, being unfair to MPs in general, even if they may have more satisfaction with their own MP (Lusoli, et al., 2006: 26).

MP	%
JK (S)	10.5
AB (S)	10.2
JB (L)	9.6
NL (S)	9.2
KJ (L)	4.8
HF (L)	3.6
L = Large majority	
S = Small majority	

Table 4

However, in terms of whether or not an MP with a small majority was more likely to promise action than one with a large majority, our data is far from convincing. 9.8% of articles were promises to act by MPs with small majorities, against 6.4% by

MPs with large majorities, producing a Phi measure of association value of 0.059, with significance 0.074 (see Appendix 3 for full data). The underlying percentages are not convincing either, and given the possibly false perception of the public that MPs' promises are not worth anything, it is perhaps not surprising after all that MPs wish to avoid making too many promises and would rather get coverage for any achievements instead. Table 4 shows that small majority MPs are more likely to promise action than their large majority counterparts, and this may reflect the fact that they anticipate they need to demonstrate they want to take action on a much wider variety of topics in order to keep the favour of the local electorate.

“Comment”

On most issues of local concern, it is rare that MPs are not asked for their opinion, and if not asked, they are more than likely to try to get involved in some small way. The question now is that do MPs with smaller majorities tend to comment on goings on, in both the local and national sphere, more than their large majority counterparts? There was some indication from our study that that was the case.

MP	%
NL (S)	41.6
AB (S)	40.8
JK (S)	30.0
KJ (L)	27.4
JB (L)	26.7
HF (L)	17.3
L = Large majority	
S = Small majority	

Table 5

According to Table 5, this is the first occurrence in this study that the MPs have clustered together in terms of their majority, with Norman Lamb and Annette Brooke being far ahead of the field in the number of times their comment was featured in an article on any particular subject. More often than not, comments were expressions of support for certain campaigns, such as supporting a residents' group in their drive to cut crime on their estate, or a petition to stop a local post office closing, for example. As such it is not surprising that an MP would not miss the opportunity of free, easy

publicity, by offering their backing to an existing project. Such support is unlikely to intrude on party politics, and so it is relatively uncontroversial to act in such a way. Since MPs with smaller majorities are more likely to benefit from such positive coverage, it is not surprising that they seem to go out of their way to achieve it.

There is also another point that comments from an MP in the media may represent that the MP already has some degree of form on the issue in question, or that they have a strong enough profile in the local area to encourage the newspaper to contact the MP for their views before publishing. This data, then, may also represent the fact that MPs with small majorities have often been working hard for long periods of time to secure a positive media profile, and so will often be the first call for comment from a journalist.

In terms of the statistics, however, there was no definite link from our data. MPs with small majorities had their comments printed in 37.6% of articles, against 23.7% for those MPs with large majorities. This produced a Phi measure of association result of 0.142 with significance 0 (see Appendix 3 for full data). Given the significance this result may have, it would certainly be worth investigating over a wider variety of MPs with more data.

“Passive / Mention”

This was the variable that produced the strongest statistical result in the study, even if it still was not significant enough to form a firm conclusion. Out of all the articles, MPs with small majorities were passively mentioned in 17.5% of cases, against 33.4% of passive mentions for their large majority counterparts. This produced a Phi measure of association value of -0.181 with

MP	%
HF (L)	37.3
KJ (L)	33.3
JB (L)	30.4
JK (S)	24.0
NL (S)	15.2
AB (S)	11.2
L = Large majority	
S = Small majority	

Table 6

approximate significance of 0 (see Appendix 3 for full details). This does imply a negative relationship, saying that MPs with large majorities are often only featured, in essence, to remind everyone that they do exist! Table 6, like Table 5, also displays similar clustering of like-majority MPs, again suggesting that there is an elementary relationship, at least. The conclusion from this variable is that small majority MPs are slightly better at avoiding this kind of neutral or negative mention in their local media, and instead manage to achieve more of those discussed previously – and those mentions are likely to be more beneficial to their quest for success through a higher profile when it comes to re-election.

Other Variables

The results for “Response uncertain” were too small to ascertain any clear relationship from. However, the final variable of “Critique” had slightly more significance. These articles were generally negative, and were often letters written to a local newspaper by a constituents complaining about an MP’s lack of action. Some of them were positive, however, and so it makes it difficult to form a firm conclusion based on this variable. Small majority MPs received 2.7% of articles in this category, while large majority MPs achieved 9.1%, a -0.142 result on a Phi measure of association with 0 significance (see Appendix 3 for full data). It gives another basic relationship that large majority MPs were more likely to be analysed by constituents or journalists, and given that the most of the articles in this category were critical, it perhaps suggests that constituents are more likely to be pleased with the activities of their small-majority MP than the constituents of a large-majority MP. However, again, the data is not complete and would need more investigation.

Types of coverage

As well as categorising articles, we also noted certain common themes that the MPs we studied were more likely to raise. Each MP seemed to have one particular issue they covered a lot over the two years of the study. Annette Brooke had a long-running campaign to save an asylum seeker from deportation, while Hywel Francis had a successful Private Member's Bill to allow for equal opportunity for carers, which featured highly on a long basis. However, there were certain broad generalisations that could be made between the issues MPs with small majorities had, compared with those with large majorities.

Jim Knight, Annette Brooke and Norman Lamb (MPs with small majorities) often featured on a regular basis over what we term *ultra-local issues*. These tended to involve local post offices, or local bus routes: matters which do not particularly concern the approximately 70,000 members of the electorate, but would have a significant impact on no more than tens of people. In all cases, however, these MPs used their position effectively to defend local interests. They were not always successful, however, the positive impression that they gained from the heightened media coverage was undeniable. Jim Knight was also successful in achieving visits from high profile Labour cabinet ministers, including one from John Reid during the 2005 General Election. Norman Lamb also appeared on a regular basis in his local newspaper, and most articles finished with him assuring constituents that he would write to the offending body in order to resolve a problem for them.

Kevan Jones, Hywel Francis and John Battle, however, seemed to have different approaches. They did not feature so often on ultra-local issues. Instead, they tended to attain newspaper coverage for issues that may well have been relevant to their constituency but also had much wider implications. Hywel Francis had a Private

Member's Bill as previously stated, but so did Kevan Jones, whose Christmas Day (Trading) Bill was equally successful, not just in becoming an Act of Parliament, but in generating positive publicity for him. John Battle, meanwhile, orchestrated a large campaign against loan sharks during the 2001-2005 Parliament. These were just as successful in generating headlines as the ultra-local politics of the small majority MPs, however, they do have a degree of difference to their strategies, and highlight the fact again that large majority MPs can afford to cover much broader issues of national significance without worrying that their seat will be in jeopardy if they don't pay close attention to the concerns of constituents; whereas the small majority MPs have no choice. Indeed, when we come to look at what happened in the 2005 General Election in terms of their new majorities after they were all re-elected in the conclusions of this report, we will consider this as a factor which may have contributed to the successful campaigns of all of our small-majority MPs.

Website Analysis

Refer to Appendix 3 for the data from our assessment of each MP's website.

It is very interesting to note the distinction between the ways in which the MPs in our study use their websites. There was certainly a clear distinction in the quality of the websites between those MPs with a large majority and those with a small majority. Jim Knight's (small majority) website was particularly impressive, using the Internet to engage not just existing politically interested people, but also by attempting to attract people who would not normally contact the MP through ordinary ways (letters, telephone), offering them ways to communicate with him through e-mail. His FAQs section is an example of a simple, yet innovative use of the internet, publishing answers to questions that many people may ask on topical issues, but also providing a public answer to all of those who would never even consider contacting their MP for their view on a subject. It is a useful way of demonstrating to his constituents that he is accountable to them, and wants to represent their views – indicative of an MP who is aware of his small majority and being more active accordingly. Annette Brooke also used her site in an effective way, with a survey asking constituents for their views and priorities, which would doubtless generate large amounts of extremely useful data – something that could prove very effective for an MP with a small majority. Meanwhile, although Norman Lamb's site was not very attractive, it was not the worst in the study and did provide lots of information to constituents about what he was doing, and actively solicited local opinion.

The remarkable thing about our MPs' websites is that, even though Norman Lamb's and Annette Brooke's were not the best in our study, they were far better in terms of providing data effectively and regularly, and often better in design, than the three MPs with small majorities, with Jim Knight's website being far superior to any

of the others in the study. Given that MPs like Hywel Francis can ignore his website for more than a year, and John Battle did not see the need to provide much information on a regular basis, it would seem that we have highlighted a clear difference in the quality of the websites between MPs with a small and MPs with a big majority. There was simply very little evidence that our three MPs with small majorities wanted to use the internet to engage with their constituents; their websites seemed to be more of a token presence in order to appear on the internet for the sake of it, while the small majority MPs seemed to want to make use of their sites to enhance their image. Websites are clearly an important part of their media profile, and there is definitely a link between low majority and enhanced usage of them.

Parliamentary Activity

Following on from our findings so far that small majority MPs are more likely to engage positively with their local media, and use their website more effectively, one would then expect that these same MPs would use the parliamentary tools available to them in the form of questions, speeches, motions in debates, select committees, etc. more often than those MPs with small majorities. In fact, from our examination of this data in Appendix 5, our conclusion is that there was no correlation whatsoever. For the six MPs in our study, level of majority seems to have no relationship with activity in Parliament. Indeed, their use of these channels is more likely to come from the MPs' motivations and willingness to use them in the first place. If many issues can be resolved at local level by applying publicity pressure to a local council, for example, then Parliamentary questions are probably not necessary. By ruling out this as a significant factor, it adds a considerable degree of weight to our suggestion that media profile is a very important and useful goal for MPs with a small majority to ensure

their re-election, and so it should not surprise us that small majority MPs would seek to be as active as possible in order to achieve this.

Conclusions

From this report, we have established that there may be a link between how an MP performs in both national and local media, and on their websites, and how small/large their majority was at the last election. It is not a quantitative difference, as we have no real evidence of that in this study. However, there is clearly a difference between how MPs go out to use their local media. We have identified that there is, at least, a slight link between how small an MP's majority is, and how often they ensure they are in the local media for comments – and not just to be passively mentioned – for promises and for reporting back any progress they may have made. The difference was even more striking when it came to looking at their websites, with the small majority MPs much more effective in using their internet presence to communicate and be communicated with by constituents. The fact is that all three of our small majority MPs were re-elected at the 2005 Election: Norman Lamb increasing his majority from 483 to 10,606, Annette Brooke increasing hers from 384 to 5,482, and Jim Knight, a Labour minister in a close contest with the Conservatives in his seat, managed to increase his majority from 153 to a respectable 1,812 – completely against the national swing at the election. Meanwhile, all three safe MPs lost small amounts of their majorities, around 2,000 each. There is clearly something operating here that could explain why the safe MPs lost some ground, and the marginal MPs managed to win, in some cases substantially. Given the slight links we have discovered, why would MPs with small majorities spend so long trying to use all the media available to them in a positive way if they did not think it would bring them any electoral benefit?

There was also, in our qualitative findings, evidence that small majority MPs spend longer on much more local and ultra-local issues, and this may well have made a contribution to the successful re-election of the marginal MPs.

However, we must still sound a note of caution on our findings. Given that we have used five different local newspapers in our study, we cannot make any assurances that the newspapers use the same editorial guidelines in terms of when they deem a story to be newsworthy, and so some MPs may feature more heavily in a newspaper than others simply because of their local newspaper's editorial position. There is also a question that some of the newspapers in our study, like the *Dorset Echo* and the *Eastern Daily Press* cover a smaller number of constituencies than the *South Wales Evening Post* and the *Northern Echo*. This may have made it more difficult for us to have a fair comparison. There is also another question that the MPs in our study, four Labour MPs and two Liberal Democrats, are not representative of British politics, and so we cannot extrapolate this data beyond this study. It is accepted wisdom in British politics that Liberal Democrat MPs tend to focus on ultra-local issues, the so-called "pavement politics", and that more and more MPs are being forced into this kind of localism in order to defend their seats, particularly in the marginals (House of Commons, Hansard (1999-00), columns 516-517). This is borne out from the two Liberal Democrat MPs in our study. The success of this strategy in the past may well be why Jim Knight also seems to have adopted it. However, being a Labour MP, and PPS to a government minister, his ability to criticise his own party was limited, since such criticism would be against his own government. Nevertheless, the activities of Jim Knight have been acknowledged by journalists when he was awarded the House Magazine's "Campaigner of the Year" award for 2005 (*The Scotsman*, 08/12/05) – another sign of how much effort a small majority MP has gone

to in order to achieve a positive media profile, with the high level of activity that requires.

Overall, we believe that there is a link between how an MP behaves in terms of their level of activity in establishing a media profile – in both the original media and the new media of the internet – and how small their majority is. We have seen in this study that these links appear to be vital weapons in the armoury of an MP who has a small majority, as such a high media profile can be beneficial as part of defending their seat at the next election. Such an effective media link does not appear to be as necessary for safe MPs, allowing their activity to be qualitatively different, though not necessarily quantitatively. In these days of ultra-local politics, it would be a foolish MP with a small majority who chose to ignore the opportunities and potential benefits available to them by having an established media presence – allowing more comments and action to be reported in the media – and using the power of the internet to engage existing and potential voters in new, different ways.

Bibliography & Sources

HC Deb (1999-00) 356, col. 516-517

Lusoli, W., Ward, S., Gibson, R., '(Re)connecting Politics? Parliament, the Public and the Internet', *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 59, no 1, 2006, pp.24-42

The Scotsman, 'Parliamentary honour for Robin Cook', 8th December 2005, available online at <http://news.scotsman.com/latest.cfm?id=2374862005>, accessed 16/03/2005

Daily Telegraph / Sunday Telegraph – all articles with any of the terms “Jim Knight”, “Annette Brooke”, “Kevan Jones”, “Norman Lamb”, “Hywel Francis” or “John Battle” all between 5th May 2003 and the 5th May 2005

Dorset Echo – all articles with the terms “Jim Knight” or “Annette Brooke” between 5th May 2003 and the 5th May 2005

Eastern Daily Press – all articles with the term “Norman Lamb” between 5th May 2003 and the 5th May 2005

Guardian / Observer – all articles with any of the terms “Jim Knight”, “Annette Brooke”, “Kevan Jones”, “Norman Lamb”, “Hywel Francis” or “John Battle” all between 5th May 2003 and the 5th May 2005

Northern Echo – all articles with the term “Kevan Jones” between 5th May 2003 and the 5th May 2005

South Wales Evening Post – all articles with the term “Hywel Francis” between 5th May 2003 and the 5th May 2005

Times / Sunday Times – all articles with any of the terms “Jim Knight”, “Annette Brooke”, “Kevan Jones”, “Norman Lamb”, “Hywel Francis” or “John Battle” all between 5th May 2003 and the 5th May 2005

Yorkshire Post – all articles with the term “John Battle” between 5th May 2003 and the 5th May 2005

MPs' Websites:

Annette Brooke - <http://www.annettebrooke.org.uk/>

Norman Lamb - <http://www.normanlamb.org.uk/>

Jim Knight - <http://www.jimknightmp.com/>

John Battle - <http://www.johnbattle-mp.org.uk/>

Hywel Francis - <http://www.epolitix.com/EN/MPWebsites/Hywel+Francis>

Kevan Jones - <http://www.kevanjonesmp.org.uk/main/index.php>

Hansard:

Using the Hansard search engine (see Appendix 5 for its uses), available at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/cgi-bin/semaphoreserver?DB=semukparl&FILE=search> we examined all the parts of Hansard that resulted from our searches between the date range of 7th June 2001 to 5th May 2005.

MPs' voting records:

http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/mp.php?mpn=Annette_Brooke&mpc=Mid+Dorset+%26amp%3B+North+Poole

http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/mp.php?mpn=Norman_Lamb&mpc=North+Norfolk

http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/mp.php?mpn=Jim_Knight&mpc=South+Dorset

http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/mp.php?mpn=John_Battle&mpc=Leeds+West

http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/mp.php?mpn=Hywel_Francis&mpc=Aberavon

http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/mp.php?mpn=Kevan_Jones&mpc=North+Durham

Appendix 1 – Additional methodology*Selecting the MPs*

To begin with, we had to select the six MPs in the study. However, it was not as simple as selecting the top and bottom three from a list of MPs by size of majority. We had to ensure that the MPs selected would have enough data available to ensure that the study could take place. Since we were studying the MPs' local media, we had to select MPs whose local papers were available to us (via *LexisNexis*) to collect the articles that featured them. It was also important that these MPs had websites, and then logically that they were still serving MPs: i.e. they were not defeated at the 2005 General Election. By cross-referencing these records, we produced six MPs whose local newspapers were available on LexisNexis, who were not defeated at the 2005 General Election, and had websites.

Appendix 2 – Press Analysis Coding Frame

Each article for each MP was examined and categorised into one of the following ways, according to these criteria:

Independently active

Where an MP apparently produces an issue out of nowhere and succeeds in getting media coverage for it; the MP's activity encourages coverage by the media. Be wary of what look like press releases repeated verbatim in the media.

Progress / Delivery

Where an MP gives a progress report, claims success in response to concerns raised in the media, or has taken direct action.

Promise

Where an MP promises to do something in response to concerns raised in the media or by constituents.

Comment

Where an MP is merely asked for their opinion, and is not expected to act. Alternatively, gives a comment which may encourage others to act on their own.

Passive / Mention

Where an MP's name is mentioned as part of an article. One of the most negative variables. To receive a mention only in passing is better than receiving no mention at all, but the majority of these references in the data were largely related to the *office* of the MP, rather than the incumbent. That is, if the MP was a different person, then it would not matter as they would still only be mentioned in the same way. The goal for an MP should be to avoid these, since they do not show the MP actually doing or saying anything; often, they merely state that they are an MP and may be able to help if contacted.

Response uncertain

Where an MP is asked to act on concerns expressed in the media and either responds in an ambivalent fashion or the response was unknown

Critique

Where an MP is analysed by an article or letter, and is not given right to reply.

Election data / Voting data

Mentions an MP merely for election results, predictions, or to describe what way they voted in a House of Commons division.

Appendix 3**Was the MP independently active?**

			Was the MP independently active?		Total
			No	Yes	
The type of the MP's majority: large or small?	Large	Count	309	20	329
		% of total	93.9%	6.1%	100.0%
	Small	Count	575	26	601
		% of total	95.7%	4.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	884	46	930
		% of total	95.1%	4.9%	100.0%

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	-.039	.238
	Cramer's V	.039	.238
N of Valid Cases		930	

- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Was the MP independently active?

			Was the MP independently active?		Total
			No	Yes	
Name of MP	Annette Brooke	Count	90	8	98
		% of total	91.8%	8.2%	100.0%
	Hywel Francis	Count	101	9	110
		% of total	91.8%	8.2%	100.0%
	John Battle	Count	129	6	135
		% of total	95.6%	4.4%	100.0%
	Jim Knight	Count	194	6	200
		% of total	97.0%	3.0%	100.0%
	Kevan Jones	Count	79	5	84
		% of total	94.0%	6.0%	100.0%
	Norman Lamb	Count	291	12	303
		% of total	96.0%	4.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	884	46	930
		% of total	95.1%	4.9%	100.0%

Was the MP active in response, or did they deliver something?

			Was the MP active in response, or did they deliver something?		Total
			No	Yes	
The type of the MP's majority: large or small?	Large	Count	265	64	329
		% of total	80.5%	19.5%	100.0%
	Small	Count	439	162	601
		% of total	73.0%	27.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	704	226	930
		% of total	75.7%	24.3%	100.0%

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by	Phi	.084	.011
Nominal	Cramer's V	.084	.011
N of Valid Cases		930	

- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Was the MP active in response, or did they deliver something?

			Was the MP active in response, or did they deliver something?		Total
			No	Yes	
Name of MP	Annette Brooke	Count	71	27	98
		% of total	72.4%	27.6%	100.0%
	Hywel Francis	Count	93	17	110
		% of total	84.5%	15.5%	100.0%
	John Battle	Count	110	25	135
		% of total	81.5%	18.5%	100.0%
	Jim Knight	Count	154	46	200
		% of total	77.0%	23.0%	100.0%
	Kevan Jones	Count	62	22	84
		% of total	73.8%	26.2%	100.0%
	Norman Lamb	Count	214	89	303
		% of total	70.6%	29.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	704	226	930
		% of total	75.7%	24.3%	100.0%

Did the MP promise action?

			Did the MP promise action?		Total
			No	Yes	
The type of the MP's majority: large or small?	Large	Count	308	21	329
		% of total	93.6%	6.4%	100.0%
	Small	Count	542	59	601
		% of total	90.2%	9.8%	100.0%
Total	Count	850	80	930	
	% of total	91.4%	8.6%	100.0%	

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.059	.074
	Cramer's V	.059	.074
N of Valid Cases		930	

- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Did the MP promise action?

			Did the MP promise action?		Total
			No	Yes	
Name of MP	Annette Brooke	Count	88	10	98
		% of total	89.8%	10.2%	100.0%
	Hywel Francis	Count	106	4	110
		% of total	96.4%	3.6%	100.0%
	John Battle	Count	122	13	135
		% of total	90.4%	9.6%	100.0%
	Jim Knight	Count	179	21	200
		% of total	89.5%	10.5%	100.0%
	Kevan Jones	Count	80	4	84
		% of total	95.2%	4.8%	100.0%
	Norman Lamb	Count	275	28	303
		% of total	90.8%	9.2%	100.0%
Total	Count	850	80	930	
	% of total	91.4%	8.6%	100.0%	

Did the MP's comment feature in an article?

			Did the MP's comment feature in an article?		Total
			No	Yes	
The type of the MP's majority: large or small?	Large	Count	251	78	329
		% of total	76.3%	23.7%	100.0%
	Small	Count	375	226	601
		% of total	62.4%	37.6%	100.0%
Total		Count	626	304	930
		% of total	67.3%	32.7%	100.0%

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by	Phi	.142	.000
Nominal	Cramer's V	.142	.000
N of Valid Cases		930	

- Not assuming the null hypothesis.
- Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Did the MP's comment feature in an article?

			Did the MP's comment feature in an article?		Total
			No	Yes	
Name of MP	Annette Brooke	Count	58	40	98
		% of total	59.2%	40.8%	100.0%
	Hywel Francis	Count	91	19	110
		% of total	82.7%	17.3%	100.0%
	John Battle	Count	99	36	135
		% of total	73.3%	26.7%	100.0%
	Jim Knight	Count	140	60	200
		% of total	70.0%	30.0%	100.0%
	Kevan Jones	Count	61	23	84
		% of total	72.6%	27.4%	100.0%
	Norman Lamb	Count	177	126	303
		% of total	58.4%	41.6%	100.0%
Total		Count	626	304	930
		% of total	67.3%	32.7%	100.0%

Was the MP only passively mentioned?

			Was the MP only passively mentioned?		Total
			No	Yes	
The type of the MP's majority: large or small?	Large	Count	219	110	329
		% of total	66.6%	33.4%	100.0%
	Small	Count	496	105	601
		% of total	82.5%	17.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	715	215	930
		% of total	76.9%	23.1%	100.0%

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by	Phi	-.181	.000
Nominal	Cramer's V	.181	.000
N of Valid Cases		930	

- Not assuming the null hypothesis.
- Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Was the MP only passively mentioned?

			Was the MP only passively mentioned?		Total
			No	Yes	
Name of MP	Annette Brooke	Count	87	11	98
		% of total	88.8%	11.2%	100.0%
	Hywel Francis	Count	69	41	110
		% of total	62.7%	37.3%	100.0%
	John Battle	Count	94	41	135
		% of total	69.6%	30.4%	100.0%
	Jim Knight	Count	152	48	200
		% of total	76.0%	24.0%	100.0%
	Kevan Jones	Count	56	28	84
		% of total	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
	Norman Lamb	Count	257	46	303
		% of total	84.8%	15.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	715	215	930
		% of total	76.9%	23.1%	100.0%

Was the response from the MP unknown or unclear?

			Was the response from the MP unknown or unclear?		Total
			No	Yes	
The type of the MP's majority: large or small?	Large	Count	324	5	329
		% of total	98.5%	1.5%	100.0%
	Small	Count	594	7	601
		% of total	98.8%	1.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	918	12	930
		% of total	98.7%	1.3%	100.0%

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	-.015	.646
	Cramer's V	.015	.646
N of Valid Cases		930	

- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Was the response from the MP unknown or unclear?

			Was the response from the MP unknown or unclear?		Total
			No	Yes	
Name of MP	Annette Brooke	Count	97	1	98
		% of total	99.0%	1.0%	100.0%
	Hywel Francis	Count	105	5	110
		% of total	95.5%	4.5%	100.0%
	John Battle	Count	135	0	135
		% of total	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Jim Knight	Count	194	6	200
		% of total	97.0%	3.0%	100.0%
	Kevan Jones	Count	84	0	84
		% of total	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Norman Lamb	Count	303	0	303
		% of total	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	918	12	930
		% of total	98.7%	1.3%	100.0%

Did the MP get mentioned for the purpose of analysing their actions?

			Did the MP get mentioned for the purpose of analysing their actions?		Total
			No	Yes	
The type of the MP's majority: large or small?	Large	Count	299	30	329
		% of total	90.9%	9.1%	100.0%
	Small	Count	585	16	601
		% of total	97.3%	2.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	884	46	930
		% of total	95.1%	4.9%	100.0%

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	-.142	.000
	Cramer's V	.142	.000
N of Valid Cases		930	

- Not assuming the null hypothesis.
- Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Did the MP get mentioned for the purpose of analysing their actions?

			Did the MP get mentioned for the purpose of analysing their actions?		Total
			No	Yes	
Name of MP	Annette Brooke	Count	97	1	98
		% of total	99.0%	1.0%	100.0%
	Hywel Francis	Count	96	14	110
		% of total	87.3%	12.7%	100.0%
	John Battle	Count	121	14	135
		% of total	89.6%	10.4%	100.0%
	Jim Knight	Count	187	13	200
		% of total	93.5%	6.5%	100.0%
	Kevan Jones	Count	82	2	84
		% of total	97.6%	2.4%	100.0%
	Norman Lamb	Count	301	2	303
		% of total	99.3%	.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	884	46	930
		% of total	95.1%	4.9%	100.0%

Appendix 4

The criteria we used to assess a website were:

1. *Was the website aesthetically pleasing?*
2. *Was the website design unique or based on a party template?*
3. *How much data did the website communicate?*
4. *Was the material on the website in addition to, substituting or merely repeating other media presence? Did it contain original writing?*
5. *Was the site updated regularly?*
6. *Did the site have any unusual or unique features? General comments on the site.*
7. *Does it have features to make it accessible to disabled users?*

Our assessment:

Small Majority MPs

Norman Lamb - <http://www.normanlamb.org.uk/>

1. Not a particularly attractive website. Overly cluttered layout, and not organised very well; sections appear to be cobbled together without any thought for what is likely to be the most popular
2. Website design is based on Liberal Democrat classic MP website template. Too similar to other LD websites.
3. Website communicates masses of data on Mr Lamb's current parliamentary activity, including lists of recent questions asked in Parliament – very effective considering that Mr Lamb asks significant quantities of questions on a consistent basis.
4. Website appears to be used to complement existing means of communication. No evidence of original writing for the website; seemed to be reproducing press releases.
5. Site was updated almost every other day to include more questions or press releases
6. Site actively solicits views of constituents with respect to local issues and beyond. Included an Annual Report – Mr Lamb's own assessment of his performance across the year (which was also delivered to every home in the constituency)
7. The website passed an accessibility test run by w3.org, the architects of the WWW. They 'develop interoperable technologies (specifications, guidelines, software, and tools) to lead the Web to its full potential' (w3.org)

Annette Brooke - <http://www.annettebrooke.org.uk/>

1. A reasonably attractive website: more structured than Norman Lamb's, and a more complementary colour scheme.
2. Website design is based on Liberal Democrat MP website template, but it is a newer version than Norman Lamb's.
3. A good amount of data on recent activity, but not very personal to her. Seemed to incorporate a lot of data from the national party's website, however. Also included lots of local council data, so it was more of a portal of information for the local community.

4. Appears to complement existing means of communication, but no evidence of original writing for the website itself, just rehashed press releases.
5. Updated every few days, especially her speeches and questions in Parliament.
6. Included a survey asking for local opinions on a wide variety of issues. Unusual to see such a direct soliciting of opinion in this form. Personal message (custom written for the site) also featured requests for comments from constituents very prominently.
7. The website passed an accessibility test run by w3.org, the architects of the WWW. They ‘develop interoperable technologies (specifications, guidelines, software, and tools) to lead the Web to its full potential’ (w3.org)

Jim Knight - <http://www.jimknightmp.com/>

1. Very good first impression. Website is clear, structured carefully and simple. Attractive, professional design.
2. Seemed to be a custom built website; not like other Labour MPs who tend to have a party template site.
3. Website includes lots of data on the many campaigns Mr Knight is associated with, many of them focusing on local issues in South Dorset.
4. A lot of evidence of original writing from Mr Knight; numerous pages appeared to have been written in the first person (other sites tend to be in the third person). Definitely adding to existing media presence.
5. Regular updates every couple of days.
6. Site had its own “diary”, written by Mr Knight reflecting on the events of the past few days in his life as an MP or just in general. Also included an Frequently Asked Questions section, detailing a lot of his answers to topical questions that are in the news headlines at the moment. Allowed people to subscribe to an E-Newsletter. A model website that many MPs would do well to learn from.
7. No apparent accessibility functions.

Large Majority MPs

Hywel Francis - <http://www.epolitix.com/EN/MPWebsites/Hywel+Francis>

1. Website is rather dull in design. Plain, with an immediate impression that there is not much here.
2. Design was not unique and is provided by ePolitix.com.
3. There is some data on the site relating to Mr Francis’ national campaign to support carers, but otherwise is relatively content-free. Standard pages on the constituency and a biography of Mr Francis, but nothing else tailored to his activity.
4. There is almost nothing new on the website. It is merely a collection of press releases, articles and speeches. No evidence of original writing for the site.
5. The press releases, articles and speeches have not been updated in some time. Last press release was 4 months ago, and the articles and speeches have not been added to in over a year.
6. No unique features.
7. No obvious accessibility features

John Battle - <http://www.johnbattle-mp.org.uk/>

1. Not a particularly attractive website. Appeared to be very amateurish in design and layout.
2. Different to normal Labour template design for their MPs, so at least looked a little more personal.
3. Not much data at all. Most of it was collections of links to other sites, or details about Mr Battle or the constituency. Nothing really tailored to his activity.
4. Material on the website was largely a repetition of press releases or articles in the local media.
5. Website claimed it had been updated recently, but there was no real evidence of much being added apart from extra links to other sites.
6. Nothing unique on the website. No original writing.
7. Included a function to increase the text size of certain articles.

Kevan Jones - <http://www.kevanjonesmp.org.uk/main/index.php>

1. Reasonably attractive design – simple and uncluttered.
2. Based on a normal Labour MP party template.
3. Has some personal data, such as what Early Day Motions he has signed recently, but nothing more beyond a reasonably well maintained list of recent press releases.
4. Seemed to be duplicating existing material, a repetition of what his office has already produced for his local media but placed on the web too. No evidence of anything new for the internet.
5. Updated every few days with a new local party press release.
6. No unique features. No original writing whatsoever (entire site is in the third person)
7. No obvious accessibility functions.

Appendix 5 – Parliamentary activity data

This is the data we considered when coming to our conclusion that parliamentary activity is not related to level of majority at the previous election.

Definitions:

Attendance – the percentage of divisions the MP attended during the 2001-2005 Parliament

Rebellion – the percentage of times the MP voted against the majority opinion in their party

Speeches – the number of speeches made by the MP, in debates, question times and standing committees

Constituency Reference – the number of times the MP included the words “my constituent” or “my constituency” or “constituent” or “constituency” in their speeches.

	<u>Majority 2001</u>	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Rebellion</u>	<u>Written Questions</u>	<u>Speeches</u>	<u>Constituency Reference</u>
Kevan Jones <i>Elected 2001</i>	18,683 Large	73.4%	1.2%	72	170	35
Hywel Francis <i>Elected 2001</i>	16,108 Large	74%	1%	48	29	8
John Battle <i>Elected 1997</i>	14,935 Large	66.5%	1.6%	222	30	7
Norman Lamb <i>Elected 2001</i>	483 Small	73.8%	3%	450	108	9
Annette Brooke <i>Elected 2001</i>	384 Small	76%	1.2%	281	136	26
Jim Knight <i>Elected 2001</i>	153 Small	78.8%	0.5%	68	150	62

Small majority MPs were no more likely to attend divisions, rebel in divisions, ask written questions, make speeches, or refer to their constituents or constituencies in questions or speeches, than their large majority counterparts.

Sources for data

Attendance and Rebellion: each MP's relevant page on <http://www.publicwhip.org.uk>

Written Questions, Speeches and Constituency Reference:

Relevant searches on Hansard search engine:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/cgi-bin/semaphoreserver?DB=semukparl&FILE=search>