

How many wedges can Sunak create before he has to call ...

Published: January 13, 2026, 5:43 am

As the [Guardian notes](#) this morning:

Rishi Sunak is to prioritise the interests of millions of car owners with a series of measures that will provoke environmentalists and curb the power of local councils.

In a package expected to be announced at the Tory conference on Monday, the prime minister will set out his “plan for motorists” that will limit the number of 20mph speed restrictions and favour drivers over bus passengers.

It seems that Sunak wants controversy and is determined to find it. There are massive issues inherent in this planned suggestion, which it is thought will be announced on Monday.

First, there is the issue of constraining local democracy when local democracy matters to a lot of people because Westminster is so alien to many.

Second, there is the risk of upsetting those who want these restrictions. I recently wrote to my local council supporting their plan to introduce a 20mph limit in the whole of Ely - which would massively reduce risk in a town with many small roads and a lot of pedestrians (including me, on the vast majority of my local journeys). Sunak seems to want to sacrifice the safety of those who walk to the car.

Third, this is meant to divide the population between those who have cars and those who do not. Sunak clearly wants to exploit this divide by driving a wedge between the two.

Fourth, there is a massive green dimension to this as well: the bias is anti-public transport and pro-the most fuel-consuming form of travel that we have.

I am sure that there is a hard core of people who will support Sunak on this. The petrol-head community is real, and already Tory voting in the main. He will be seeking to keep them in the fold with measures like this.

But can you really win an election on policies known to be deeply unpopular in society precisely because they drive wedges into it? Is that really possible for long? I doubt it. This, like so much that Sunak is doing, appears to be the action of a desperate man whose time is up.

And precisely because he seems to be anticipating that fact, I am beginning to wonder whether November is now on the cards for a general election date. I dismissed this idea until very recently. Now I am not so sure.