**Initial Planning Stage**

After brainstorming the possible ways in which we could gather and analyse tweets, we decided on two approaches; one which gave a UK-wide analysis of the popularity of the main parties, and one which focussed on particular key constituencies. To gain UK-wide analysis, we decided to use track terms such as the main party names and their candidates, and study the sentiment behind these tweets. We would track change in sentiment over time, and look for trends in the popularity of each party.

The second approach we decided upon was to focus on swing constituencies, because their starting point is less biased than other areas of the UK. This would therefore give us an insight into the popularity of each from a more neutral perspective. We selected 10 constituencies who’s brexit vote had been opposite to that of their MP, 6 who’s vote in general elections had been consistent with the winning party for the last 14 years, and 15 which had a winning margin of only 1,000 people 2015 general election. In order to localise our tweets to these swing constituencies, we chose to track the local party candidates using their full name and twitter names.

After we had decided upon the approach to be used with twitter, we considered additional sources of information which could enable us to make an informed prediction. We decided to use betting odds, Google trends and political polls:

* We agreed that betting odds would be useful as they are produced by technical analysts who have experience in forecasting political outcomes. Using the betting odds they had produced would effectively be utilising their expertise. This would be used within our first approach to analyse the whole of the UK, as the odds are issued on a national level.
* Google trends have been shown to correlate with election outcomes in the past, therefore we decided to take these into account. We acknowledged that simply because a candidate or party had been ‘googled’ more than another, didn’t mean that they would necessarily be more popular, but, after some research, we discovered that on many occasions in the past, a strong correlation has been shown between the number of times an electoral candidate is googled, and their position in the outcome of the respective election.

We would be able to filter the trends to specific areas, allowing us to use Google trends on both a national and constituency level.

* Lastly we decided to investigate political polls obtained from a variety of sources as a method of engaging with the public directly, and gaining a preliminary insight into public opinion. These polls would be conducted on a national level and so would be used exclusively in the first approach.