

“Is he willing to take on vested interests?”: From Westminster to Greater Manchester, Greens challenge Burnham in first week as PM



The UK has a new Prime Minister.

But from continuity cabinet appointments, to standard Starmer policy positions, Burnham's first week on the job has many asking: is this change, or more of the same?

From Westminster to Greater Manchester, Greens have been challenging the new PM to commit to the real change the country needs.

As Zack Polanski said: "There is an affordability crisis, an inequality crisis, and a climate crisis. We will judge Andy Burnham on whether he provides the leadership necessary to deliver solutions."

“Is he willing to take on vested interests?”

On the day of Burnham's coronation, Zack made clear where he would focus his attention if he were in the PM's position.

"We need action on sky high rents, with rent controls, we need to end the rip off and take water into actual public ownership, not tinkering with the existing failed model as is being suggested.

"We need wealth taxes as a first step towards tackling gross inequality and getting serious investment into our economy and public services."

Key to achieving any of these fundamental changes to how our economy works is a willingness to change the status quo.

But Zack noted that Burnham's first speech as PM "failed to mention any willingness to challenge the vested interests of the establishment which Labour has become part and parcel of and has driven these crises."

"The Prime Minister's speech today will leave many sceptical that Andy Burnham really plans to challenge the wealth and power of the establishment and it all starts to look and sound like more of the same."

Another fossil fool?

One vested interest that Burnham seems unlikely to take on is the oil and gas lobby.

Repeated reports suggest Labour are set to give the go-ahead to the climate-wrecking Rosebank oil field and Jackdaw gas field.

As Zack said "There is a climate crisis and yet the mood music coming from within the Labour Party has been to reverse policy on North Sea drilling, to appease powerful fossil fuel interests, and Donald Trump."

And Green MP Adrian Ramsay noted the total omission of climate and nature from Burnham's introductory speech outside No. 10:

"He failed to mention one of the greatest crises our country is facing: the climate and nature emergency. Burnham must end speculation and commit to no new oil and gas fields. Anything else is a failure of leadership."

I welcome the new PM to his post, but he failed to mention one of the greatest crises our country is facing: the climate and nature emergency.

Burnham must end speculation and commit to no new oil and gas fields. Anything else is a failure of leadership.

– Adrian Ramsay MP (@AdrianRamsay) [July 20, 2026](#)

Amid a summer of extreme heat, drought, and wild fires, a decision to expand North Sea drilling would be all the more blinkered.

Sold on international markets, these fossil fuels would also do nothing to lower UK household bills.

As Zack said: "Only serious investment in renewable energy will provide the energy security and reduced bills that we need."

Continuity Starmer: more US bombers at UK bases

On his first day in office, Burnham continued what's now a Labour tradition: appeasing Donald Trump.

Picking up where Starmer left off, the war mongering President was the first world leader Burnham spoke to in No. 10.

And he wasted no time in approving the continued use of UK bases by US bombers for Trump's illegal war on Iran – even amid the latest escalation by the US which has seen it bomb civilian infrastructure.

Of course, Burnham and his cabinet have questions to answer on the genocide in Gaza too.

Ellie Chowns this week wrote to Wes Streeting, the new Defence Secretary, to ask what steps he will take to end the UK's complicity in the genocide in Gaza.

In his brief time out of the cabinet this year, Streeting made public his views that Israel is committing war crimes – expressed both in WhatsApp messages to Peter Mandelson that he made public in February, and again in an interview on the News Agents podcast in June.

As Ellie wrote: "Your appointment therefore marks a first. We now have a Secretary of State in the UK Government who has made public their view that the Israeli government has committed war crimes during the genocide in Gaza."

This brings with it legal obligations to act. And Ellie challenged Streeting to do so.

"You now have a direct responsibility for the UK's complicity in these horrors. But as ever, we need action, not words. If you are serious about ending this injustice, you will start by ending the sale of all arms to Israel."

A few weeks ago, the new Defence Secretary, Wes Streeting, said there were "serious and substantial allegations of war crimes" in Gaza.

International Law prohibits states from exporting weapons if they know the arms will be used to commit war crimes, genocide, or crimes against... pic.twitter.com/y050YLUHUi

– The Green Party (@TheGreenParty) [July 22, 2026](#)

And the Green Party has challenged another senior member of Burnham's cabinet to follow through on their words with action.

Louise Haigh – this week promoted to first secretary of state – last year described Israel's assault on Gaza as a genocide and asked the Government to impose sanctions on Netanyahu and "his genocidal regime".

Zack Polanski has today written to her to ask if she stands by her comments and if – more importantly – she will act on them.

Continuity cabinet

Many of Burnham's other cabinet appointments suggest he hasn't learnt the lessons of Starmer's failure.

From his endorsement of Shabana Mahmood's performatively cruel approach to running the Home Office...

... to the clear signal he wants to prioritise defence spending over, say, support for sick and disabled people by naming John Healey Chancellor...

... to the appointment of Yvette Cooper – second only to Wes Streeting for donations from organisations linked to private health – as Health Secretary, the signs are there that we can expect more of the same.

Especially if you're a renter.

Just this week, in a video with economist Beth Stratford, Zack outlined the potential win-win of rent controls – both helping millions of renters, and saving the Government money.

Burnham had previously signalled his support for the policy. But on Friday, returned Housing Secretary Angela Rayner confirmed that this Labour government "won't be looking at rent controls".

As Zack summed up: "By ruling out rent controls, this new Labour Government are already demonstrating that they have no interests in supporting struggling people in this country – but will always back the interests of the powerful and wealthy."

Less than a week to elect a Green Mayor of Greater Manchester

The former Mayor of Greater Manchester may have turned his back on renters, but Geraldine Coggins hasn't.

The Green candidate for Mayor of Greater Manchester paid Burnham a visit on Friday to hand deliver a letter urging to change his mind on rent controls.

Affordable housing is a key pledge of Geraldine's – with plans to create 20,000 affordable homes over 10 years – and as mayor she will keep campaigning for rent controls to help people make ends meet.

The Labour party has failed the people of Greater Manchester on housing.
Geraldine is the candidate to replace Labour and defeat the hateful politics of Reform.

Greens can win on Thursday 30 July – with your help.

You can help us replace Labour and defeat Reform. [Head over to the campaign website](#) to find out how you can help.

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