



Burnham's policy speech shows he has gimmicks but little substance

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Andy Burnham

On 29 June, Andy Burnham gave the first major policy speech of his campaign to become prime minister. And to the surprise of few UK left-wingers, there's little promise of radical change. Instead, there was a strong smell of "continuity Starmer", with a nice gimmick and promise on top to sweeten the deal.

Having already surrounded himself [with dodgy Blairites](#), Burnham was hardly worrying the billionaire class before this speech. And that situation won't have changed much after hearing him speak. Because overall, it seems Burnham is just hoping to make pledges that sound nice but won't scare away [Labour's wealthy donors](#).

Burnham's gimmick and pledge

For all of Burnham's talk of differentness and changification, there are only two main points that really separate him from outgoing souldestroyer Keir Starmer. Those are:

1. Gimmick: A [No 10 North](#) operation, running from Manchester. This would help to pull decision-making powers away from Westminster and closer to places outside London. Many would say [devolution](#) worked for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, so it *could* be a good thing for England too. It just depends on how bold local politicians are (and most currently aren't).
2. Pledge: [The biggest council house building programme since the post-war period.](#) (This is the one to absolutely hold Burnham to account on if/when it doesn't happen.)

Other than these, there's little cause for excitement.

So electoral reform? Abolishing the Lords & replacing it with an elected 2nd chamber?
Restoring accountability by bringing academies back under local govt oversight?
Nationalising all key infrastructure so we control it, not shareholders & foreign billionaires?

Oh, none of that <https://t.co/RM2U1AQD5w>

â?? Saul Staniforth (@SaulStaniforth) [June 29, 2026](#)

The *BBC* even [noted that](#)

Andy Burnhamâ??s economic goal is no different to Keir Starmerâ??s.

Indeed, he reiterated that he would stick to Rachel Reevesâ??s self-imposed straitjacket and continue:

the discipline of our fiscal

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And there are [reports](#) that Burnham may pick award winners like Wes Streeting, Shabana Mahmood, or Ed Miliband to continue Reevesâ??s damage and the Chancellor. Thatâ??s about as hopeful as the possibility of Burnham bringing back [Josh Simons](#) â?? who was very much [part of the machinery](#) that forced Keir Starmer on the country.

Another focus for Burnham would be to further â?? [reduce the welfare bill](#) â?? as if that was somehow the reason for Labour haemorrhaging support under Starmerâ??s leadership [it wasnâ??t](#). That definitely smells like the work of Burnhamâ??s new chief of staff James Purnell, who [loves welfare cuts](#) as much as he [loves vile apartheid states](#)

Burnham claims to want a â??more collaborative politicsâ? and â??the broadest possible coalitionâ?. But it seems for now that the only collaboration and coalition he wants is with the class of soulless corporate lackeys thatâ??s already in charge. (Remember that heâ??s [already dismissed the idea of inviting Jeremy Corbyn back into Labour](#))

Just the Labour rightâ??s latest manoeuvre?

No 10 North â?? and the whole idea of Labour anointing the [uninspiring Burnham](#) to lead â?? looks very much like a desperate attempt to show that Labour recognises it has been losing the north and is paying attention. And if Burnham actually oversees the â?? [biggest rebalance of power](#) â?? ever in the UK, itâ??ll be long overdue.

However, thereâ??s a reason support for Labour has been plummeting in post-industrial and coastal towns that have been suffering decades of decay. And thatâ??s because it has been largely [out of touch and ineffective](#) offering ordinary people there little hope of a change in fortunes.

That's why, if Burnham wants to reverse Labour's terminal decline, words and gimmicks won't be enough. If, as he says, he wants to [sort out the situation with utilities and reindustrialise places that Westminster has left behind](#) he will need to show tangible results within the three short years before the next general election.

While we hope there are lots of positive improvements for ordinary people, though, we don't think Burnham will bring them.

We've had enough of [forensic leaders](#) (Starmer) with a [laser-like focus](#) (Burnham) that are too scared to do anything that meaningfully challenges the power and wealth of the billionaire class. We don't need more leaders who think [bond markets](#) matter more than stopping [greedy corporations from bleeding us dry](#)

In his speech, Burnham reassured billionaires that he wouldn't do anything to hurt their profits. And he hoped that a devolution gimmick and big housing pledge would be enough to stop the country throwing Labour in the [dustbin of history](#) It could be, of course, but only if Burnham turns nice words into real results, and quick.

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By [Ed Sykes](#)

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1. News

POST TAG

1. burnhams
2. but
3. gimmicks
4. has
5. little
6. news
7. policy
8. shows
9. speech
10. substance

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1. News