



Only the Green Party commits to Makerfield public ownership pledges

## Description

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Composite image of Restore, Labour, Reform and Green Party candidates for Makerfield by-election in front of a

Only the [Green Party](#) has responded to a Makerfield public ownership pledge launched today, explaining which local public services they would take back if elected. Andy Burnham has not clarified his position, despite his critique of privatisation in recent weeks.

Campaign group [We Own It](#) asked the six main Makerfield candidates for their positions on public ownership of water, energy and buses, as well as a local BlackRock deal with Greater Manchester Pension Fund to buy up GP surgeries.

Nearly [10,000 emails have been sent to the candidates](#) over the weekend to put pressure on them to reveal their policies. This follows on from a previous letter [seeking candidates' views on support for Palestinian people](#)

The campaigners point out that in 2025 [United Utilities dumped sewage into waterways in Makerfield for over 3,000 hours](#). The electricity distribution company [Electricity North West is rated only 1.9 on Trustpilot](#) and has slowed down grid connections.

In 2025 the local gas distribution company [Cadent Gas paid out Â£38 per household in dividends to its shareholders](#). These include Australian asset management firm Macquarie and the Chinese sovereign wealth fund.

Cat Hobbs, director of We Own It, said:

It's really shocking that Andy Burnham has spent the last few weeks attacking 40 years of Thatcherite privatisation but won't take a clear position on the local water and energy

companies ripping off the people of Makerfield.

Voters deserve to know if he will stand up for them or for a handful of shareholders around the world. Keir Starmer promised public ownership and then betrayed voters. Burnham can't fool us twice.

Water and energy are profitable assets with a revenue stream so it's a great deal for the public purse to bring them into public hands. United Utilities and the North West energy grid are monopolies - there is no market. So we need accountability as citizens, and profits reinvested instead of leaking out.

## Public ownership is not unaffordable

The campaigners say public ownership is affordable because the cost of compensating shareholders is decided in court and can include factors like lack of investment and the public interest.

Drawing on a report from Public Services International Research Unit, they argue that the compensation for Electricity North West could be recovered in less than 6 years. Meanwhile, Cadent Gas shareholders have injected so little into the company that it would only take 4 hours for public ownership to pay for itself. United Utilities is a profitable company and public ownership would mean that a third of our bills wouldn't need to be spent on dividends and excessive debt.

The water and energy companies all have a 25 year notice period on their licences, and the campaigners argue this should be reduced.

The pledge also includes a policy to end the BlackRock deal with Greater Manchester Pension Fund that enables the private equity giant to buy up GP surgeries.

The campaigners point out that the public control of the BeeNetwork is not the same as public ownership, and they are demanding both. The pledge includes a demand to set up a publicly owned bus company in Greater Manchester like Lothian Buses or Reading Buses, so that all profits can be reinvested back into the network.

Green Party candidate Sarah Wakefield said:

The people of Makerfield deserve clean rivers, and a system which puts their needs before the needs of shareholders.

She also said:

The Green Party has always supported public ownership of utilities.

And Wakefield said she is "right behind" taking back the grid, especially:

in the context of the current affordability crisis and rising energy prices.

The only We Own It demand Wakefield hasn't signed up to is the call for a publicly owned bus company. She only promises:

effective public control over all of Manchester's buses, trams and railways.

Hobbs pointed out:

Public control and public ownership are not the same thing. It's brilliant that Burnham introduced the BeeNetwork but in addition to control of the networks he could set up a publicly owned bus company for Greater Manchester like the very successful Reading Buses and Lothian Buses.

And he should be standing up against BlackRock by saying no to them buying up GP surgeries through a Greater Manchester Pension Fund deal.

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7. party
8. pledges
9. public
10. the

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