How and why Andy Burnham should deliver public ownership.

Who is We Own It? Why should you listen to us?

> "Your team were massive to us... We had legal challenges, and there were huge obstacles to overcome. But We Own It was fantastic. It was your victory as well when we finally did put buses back under public control. The first place to do it after 40 years of deregulation."
>
> **Andy Burnham at We Own It Labour Conference event with LabourList, September 2024**

We Own It set up the successful campaign Better Buses for Greater Manchester that pushed Burnham to take buses into public control with the BeeNetwork. We then coordinated with grassroots campaigners on Better Buses for West Yorkshire and Better Buses for South Yorkshire to win victories for public control from mayors Tracy Brabin and Oliver Coppard.

Under the Conservative government we successfully pushed back against privatisation of Channel 4, and were named as one of the Big Issue's Changemakers of the Year. We helped to stop privatisation of the Land Registry.

We campaigned for over a decade to bring rail franchises into public ownership and under the Starmer government we helped to secure an amendment to protect Great British Railways as a publicly owned organisation.

We have campaigned for public ownership of water since 2019 when we released a People's Plan for Water. We have put pressure on the government and Ofwat since 2023 for Thames Water to lose its licence, culminating in Environment Minister Emma Reynolds rejecting the latest deal from its US creditors.

We Own It is independent of any party and the only policy we campaign for is public ownership. We are a not for profit organisation representing public service users and the majority across party lines who want public services run for people not profit.

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Executive summary

> "From the 1980s, this country took a series of wrong turns. Political power was centralised, economic power privatised"
>
> **Burnham's first speech as Prime Minister in Parliament, September 2026**

Private profit-making companies can do many things well; running essential public services and natural monopolies is not one of them. Andy Burnham has rightly called time on an **extreme ideological experiment** that has been robbing the country blind since Thatcher.

The Labour Party has **a proud history of delivering public services** for the public, from the NHS - arguably the best thing humans have ever created - to the Blair government when Stephen Byers protected the public against private Railtrack's failures, to Labour mayors today taking buses into public hands, and trains too in Liverpool. Burnham's very first speech in parliament recognised the huge opportunity to build on that legacy, giving a clear identity and purpose to this government.

A policy of strong public services working for people not profit fits with announcements that have already been made, such as ending rough sleeping, cutting bus fares and giving communities a stake in local energy generation. People want hope but they want it anchored to a set of principles that are **classically Labour, classically British and uncompromising enough to make a difference** to their lives.

They want energy bills they can afford, clean rivers and seas, public transport that's genuinely easier than driving or flying, an NHS to be proud of, care that families and communities can rely on, a Royal Mail that actually delivers letters. They want decent wages for a hard day's work and true accountability over services that used to belong to them. This isn't about turning back the clock but about reasserting the social contract in the name of justice and fair play - and cracking on with delivering what the country needs at pace.

We argue that the government must understand **the necessity of public ownership, not just public control**. Public ownership will succeed if the policy programme is bold, properly funded and clearly communicated - a coherent vision of taking back key services and assets for the benefit of the British public

Some of this can and must be done through **creating new institutions and insourcing contracts** but the government shouldn't be afraid to engage in the necessary negotiations around compensation of shareholders. People want to see this kind of bravery from politicians and they will reward it.

Our key recommendation is that the government should use legislation - in particular an expanded special administration regime - to take back our assets by holding the current owners to account. Regulation cannot be a wishy washy compromise with the status quo. It must involve forcing private companies that are "too big to fail" to invest their own money and deliver on their statutory duties.

Squeeze them as far as possible and **when they become unprofitable and collapse, take them back**. **Stand ready with a public sector provider** - not just in the context of utilities but other services like social care.

Public ownership is politically worth it because it is **popular with both left and right**, and taps into a **patriotism** that both can get behind. Our solution enables the government to create space to plan and deliver directly, to **tackle service failures** with a consistent approach and messaging, and to **deal with a root cause of the cost of living crisis**.

In an era when simple messages land and conflict grabs attention, **Burnham can be a hero** by going out to bat on behalf of the British public against the shareholders around the world who are ripping us off in so-called "markets" where households have no choice.

This report provides an overview of how public ownership can be delivered and why it's worth it. We hope it will encourage the Prime Minister, Ministers and MPs of all parties - but particularly Labour MPs - to seize the moment. Suggested policies are shown in red throughout.

What is public ownership? Why do you say 'public ownership' rather than 'nationalisation'?

Public ownership means that the assets and operation of the service belong to democratically elected public authorities, there is accountability to the public and all profits are reinvested in the service. It is the best way to run public services which are a) often natural monopolies (or competition is limited or not practical) b) essential services and c) deliver outcomes that are relevant to our democracy like clean energy or sewage-free rivers.

Public ownership is the norm for such services across Europe and the world. 9 out of 10 water companies worldwide are in public hands[1] and the UK is almost unique in having a privatised energy grid.[2] The UK has many successful publicly owned organisations, including the Met Office, the Land Registry, Ordnance Survey, the Royal Mint, Transport for London underground services as well as the NHS which was the most efficient healthcare system back in 2014 before austerity and privatisation[3], and Scottish Water which reinvests at least 35% more than the privatised English water companies.[4] Publicly owned organisations are run by experts and professionals, but they are accountable to the public instead of to shareholders.

Nationalisation can imply a top down kind of public ownership at only one level - the national level. But public ownership can be **local, regional, national** or a combination of all three, and it should involve the people who use public services, who we are here to represent. We propose that public ownership could incorporate principles of governance from cooperatives or household mutuals, but it must qualify as public ownership, meeting these five key tests:

Profits all reinvested. 100% of any profits created must go back into maintaining and improving the service.

Ownership guarantee. The company should be 100% owned by local (in the case of water) elected authorities with a governance structure that protects against the risk of future takeover by the private sector AND future sell off by government.

We get a vote*. Households in the region - the public service users - must have a direct way to hold the company to account and improve the service. They should also have access to all data. (Water, for example, is a natural monopoly so we have no say as consumers but we must have a say as citizens)

Efficient borrowing. The company must have access to finance for investment at public sector borrowing rates. This will always be cheaper than private finance.

Representation.The board which oversees performance must represent the broad public interest, including households, trade unions and environmental organisations such as (in the case of water) local anti sewage groups

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*It's vital that the people who use the services have leverage they can actually use to make those services better (unaccountable bodies like Passenger Focus or government-chosen panels are not sufficient). Our 2019 report 'When We Own It' argued that services such as water should be regulated by a watchdog that is democratically accountable to households, like a union for the people who use public services.[5] This could be one way to combine the best of public ownership and real power for local households. An alternative would be for citizens to be able to vote directly for the board. Another approach would be to copy Paris and its 'Water Observatory' which includes citizens holding the public water company accountable.[6]

Why public ownership rather than public control?

Would you rather own your home than rent it? If so, you have some idea of the benefits of ownership rather than, say, **rent controls**.

Ownership means you have an **asset** that increases in value over time, you are using your monthly mortgage payment **for your own benefit** and you have **full control** - you can paint the walls any colour you like.

This is a household analogy that holds. When countries own public assets and services, they are **wealthier**, they can benefit from **revenue streams** from household bills and they have the **real control** that only ownership can provide.

	10 benefits of public ownership	10 problems with privatisation
1	**Natural monopolies** can be run by professionals to deliver public policy goals, with **accountability** to households, workers and the environment as well as elected politicians	Natural monopolies are the **worst of all worlds when they are privatised** - we are a captured revenue stream with no voice
2	Money is freed up for **reinvestment into better services or lower bills**. Investment is cheaper in the public sector	We have to pay the wasteful **privatisation tax** - paying for shareholder **dividends and expensive debt** on top of paying for infrastructure improvements
3	Public ownership can build on best practice to deliver **quality as the primary goal** - for example, evidence shows the cleanest bathing waters in Europe are in public ownership[7]	**Cutting corners**, for example an Oxford University study found that outsourcing of NHS services has led to an extra 557 deaths[8]
4	**Comprehensive coverage**, for example cross subsidy within bus networks, or NHS services that cover both emergencies and operations	**Cherry picking**, for example, bus companies will choose to run buses on profitable routes but ignore rural communities, unless government steps in with a subsidy
5	**Public purpose and planning** - public services can achieve policy goals like affordable bills, local investment, a cleaner environment, energy security and net zero, strong communities	**Misaligned incentives** rather than purpose as the driver, for example doctors in the US perform unnecessary operations for profit, private prisons get paid more if more people are in prison[9]
6	**Integration and data sharing**	**Fragmentation and "commercial confidentiality"**
7	**Oversight in the public interest**	**Inadequate regulation** with an impossible task to please both industry and households, and revolving doors between industry and regulators
8	**Flexibility** to make changes to services that work for the public, flexibility to use assets for our benefit	**Lack of flexibility** - councils and government departments have to pay more for changes to contracts, they also lose flexibility when assets like school playing fields or hospitals are sold off
9	**Public sector capacity and expertise is developed** locally, regionally, nationally - standards and systems can be developed. The brightest and best go to work in the public sector to deliver outcomes for the country	Handing over control to private companies **weakens the public sector**. Professor Mariana Mazzucato and Rosie Collington say "The more governments and businesses outsource, the less they know how to do"[10]
10	Ownership means **direct responsibility** not bailouts after the fact	**Risk of bailouts** - shareholders take the profit, government takes the risk and has to step in anyway when things go wrong, for example with Carillion or the East Coast railway line

None of this is to say that public ownership is a panacea, but it is structurally more likely to lead to better results. The government should then be building on best practice here in the UK and around the world to deliver the best possible services - for example the Dutch system of water regulation[11] or the Croatian drive to clean up rivers and seas.[12]

If ownership is the key, why is there so much talk about public control?

For the first time in 40 years, Andy Burnham successfully brought buses into public control in Greater Manchester, ending Thatcher's deregulation and providing a better service, encouraged by our campaign Better Buses for Greater Manchester.

For buses, there has been complete deregulation, a free market wild west since 1986, everywhere outside of London. Private bus companies cherry pick profitable routes and there is no network wide planning.

Regulation, aka public control, is a big step up from that, and it's brilliant that Labour mayors are moving in this direction. However, it's equivalent to regulation in the water and energy sectors where the prices and service level are specified, or rail franchising with private companies. It doesn't provide the benefits of ownership. Public control is also less interesting, understandable or compelling to the general public. It can sound like a cop-out.

Public control of buses is a good start, leading to lower profit margins and better services. But better still would be **public control of the networks alongside setting up new publicly owned bus companies** where these don't exist. This would mean every penny from our fares would be reinvested back into better buses instead of being wasted. Research shows the best bus systems in Europe have both public control and public ownership.[13] Public ownership of buses would save £506 million a year.[14] The publicly owned bus companies which survived Thatcher - Lothian Buses, Reading Buses, Nottingham City Transport - consistently win awards.

Burnham has succeeded with the BeeNetwork but he needs to go further. And the BeeNetwork is not particularly instructive when it comes to water, energy, Royal Mail, or public services in general because public control is just a (necessary) step along the way to the public ownership that is required. Regulation - or public control - in sectors like water and energy is already happening, and it has failed since the 1980s.

HOW is public ownership affordable?

> "A country run in the private rather than public interest."
>
> **Burnham's first speech as Prime Minister in Parliament, September 2026**

Privatisation is wasteful - OWNERSHIP is the only way to end the rip off. Thatcher has left us all paying **a privatisation tax** - for example, a third of every water bill in England flows directly out in expensive debt and dividends, and there are inefficiencies in fragmentation. But there are also the missed opportunities to deliver for public policy goals and to put money in people's pockets - these have an economic cost too.

> "*Public ownership would mean that the £22 billion earmarked for shareholder returns and interest over the next five years would go instead towards repairing our broken water infrastructure, paying off debts and letting water company staff do their jobs properly*[15]"
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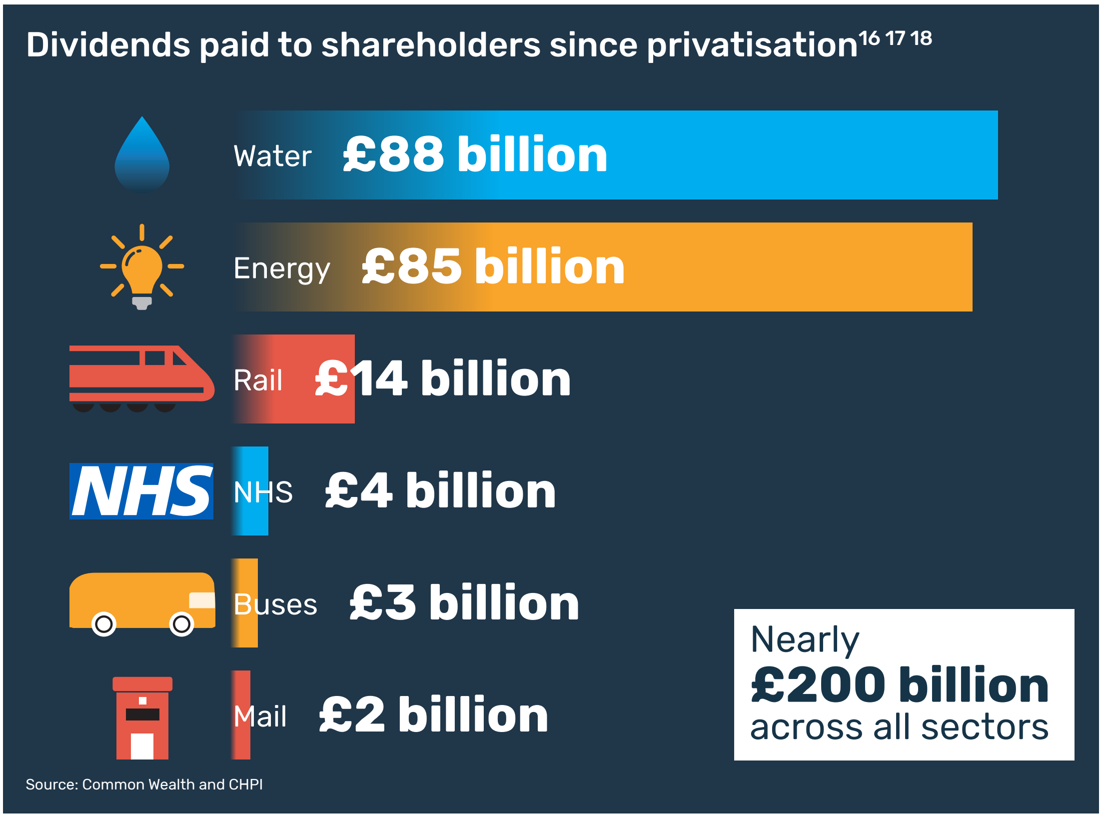
> **Paul Davies MP in the debate about a referendum on public ownership of water.**



NB Some public services are profitable assets with a revenue stream that can sustain themselves financially, like water and energy. Others require subsidy but this should be seen as an investment as they provide wider economic as well as social benefit, like the NHS or the railway.

There are ways to deliver more public ownership which don't bring up the question of compensating shareholders:

Setting up new publicly owned companies like Great British Energy - and giving them a serious budget to get things done - can be done without any need to compensate shareholders. The government could create a retail wing for Great British Energy so that households can buy directly from a publicly owned energy company and benefit from cheaper bills. It could also create other new publicly owned companies, for example setting up a **new rolling stock company** to own trains and helping local authorities to set up **municipal bus companies** and **local, publicly owned care companies**. Set up costs would be outweighed by the benefits of boosting the economy, keeping wealth in the UK and reinvesting profits. The government should be defending the UK's right to set its own drug prices and looking at whether a publicly owned pharmaceuticals plant would help (like the Vaccines Manufacturing and Innovation Centre which was set up by the UK government in 2018, played a key role in delivering vaccines during Covid, and was then shortsightedly sold off in 2022).

Insourcing services when contracts come to an end and **building up in-house capacity** instead can also be done easily without any need to compensate shareholders. The government is already delivering this with rail franchises and it promised **"the biggest wave of insourcing in a generation"** before getting elected. This could be delivered across local and national government, building up public sector capacity and expertise instead of relying on private companies. A new fair wages resolution could help so that outsourced workers have the same terms and conditions as public sector workers, making it possible for example, for NHS trusts to be able to run care services.[19] The government has already said it is "ending the era of outsourcing by default" and bringing cleaners and security staff in-house. A key policy for this government should be to **phase out private profits in the NHS as contracts come up for renewal,** including ending the deal with Palantir and other private companies, and saying no to new Private Finance Initiative style deals - Burnham says he regrets previous PFI deals.[20]

> "Labour's been bowing down before the mantra that the market is the answer to everything, and this is why we've lost a lot of people who don't see what we stand for anymore."
>
> **Burnham in 2015**

Protecting the public purse; negotiating compensation is normal

Where compensation of shareholders (and creditors) is necessary, this is normal and has happened many times before.

- In 2001, the Blair government stood up for the public interest in court when Railtrack went bust. They used special administration and the shareholders lost their appeal, only receiving a quarter of what they wanted[21]
- In 2007, Northern Rock was taken into public ownership in just five days
- In 2021, Bulb was brought into special administration when it collapsed. Unfortunately the government missed the opportunity to create a new publicly owned retail company for energy with its established customer base
- In 2023, the Conservative government kickstarted the process of buying part of the National Grid to create the National Energy System Operator. Utility Week suggests that the £630 million agreed was an overpayment
- In 2026, Keir Starmer brought British Steel back into public ownership - negotiations are ongoing

Compensation levels are agreed in court and they can **take account of how these companies have performed, whether they have invested and how much money they have extracted** from us over the years. Given the track record of privatised companies, the government should be aiming to protect the public purse as much as possible.

What should the government do?

"When we sold off the water, sold off the electricity, sold off the gas, sold the council homes, sold off the buses, sold off the trains, we found ourselves in a position where ordinary people can't afford those basics anymore; those essentials."

Andy Burnham **Sky News interview, August 2022**

1) Take Thames Water into special administration and permanent public ownership

Thames Water is now being run by its creditors, an unaccountable group of US hedge funds (even though water in the US is 87% publicly owned).[22] As Charlie Maynard MP has pointed out, this is not how privatisation was intended to work and effectively there is now no "Ultimate Controller" of Thames Water. It has been in breach of its licence for over two years because it has run out of money due to its ballooning £20 billion debt.

The creditors have now put forward five proposed deals - starting with a request to pollute illegally until 2040, then reducing the timescale to 2030, and so on - and the government has rightly said no every time.Ofwat has a duty to take enforcement action including the ability to take Thames Water into special administration.[23]

The cost would be minimal. While the government's framework (Regulatory Capital Value) says the company is worth £21 billion, the reality is that KKR didn't want to buy Thames Water for £4 billion. Thames Water's shareholders have walked away and written down their shares. As the Good Growth Foundation has said, this hasn't stopped them from investing elsewhere in the economy.[24]

THE COST:

Shareholders receive **£0**

Creditors accept a **40%-90% haircut***

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We estimate anywhere between **£2 billion and £12 billion** of expensive debt that households are paying for would be refinanced more cheaply in the public sector, reducing the repayments burden

*A "haircut" in this context means the creditors who lent money to the now-bust company would have their debt written down - they wouldn't receive the whole value back. The Conservative government estimated that the debt would be cut by around 40% but that was over two years ago. Since then, the creditors have received high interest bailout loans paid for with bill rises, and repeatedly asked for permission to dodge fines and pollute without consequence. Compensation levels for shareholder and creditors aren't fixed, they are a negotiation, as explained above.[25]

2) Use legislation and/or special administration to take back water more widely

There are two ways the government could approach this.

One is to simply legislate to bring all the privatised English water companies into public ownership in one go. (Welsh Water should also be included, although it's a "not for profit" it is unaccountable, has a terrible track record on sewage and spends 41% of its money on expensive finance - one reason why Professor David Hall at the Public Services International Research Unit says this "mutual" is not an appropriate model[26] And as Welsh Water has no shareholders, compensation would be unnecessary, indeed impossible; the cost would be zero.

THE COST:

£14 billion the cost of bringing water into public ownership, according to Moody's in 2019[27]

VS

£22 billion the ongoing cost of keeping privatisation over the next 5 years[28]

The government could also look at normalising the licences of water and energy network companies which currently have 25 year notice periods; reduce these, for example to three months, in line with rail companies under franchises.

The other option is to use special administration laws to take back water companies one at a time. Companies providing essential services in a natural monopoly can enter special administration **if they go bust or if they fail to fulfil their statutory duties**.These provisions exist because these companies cannot be allowed to "go bust" in the normal way - the infrastructure and services must continue so the government props them up.

The government can use regulation to force private companies to deliver, to genuinely hold their feet to the fire. This could include **saying no to bill rises** - given dividends and lack of investment in infrastructure over the years. If private companies are required to invest more of their own money, their profit margins will reduce. Feargal Sharkey has suggested the companies could be forced to include their liabilities from lack of investment on their balance sheets. If and when they go bust, the government can step in with a publicly owned alternative and put UK households first. The simple message behind this option - **require the companies to meet their obligations and take them back if they fail** - will resonate with the public, tapping into a sense of fair play.

> *"If shareholders would receive nothing in an insolvency procedure, the compensation payable in nationalisation should reflect that reality"*
>
> **Nottingham Law School research[29]**

3) Expand insolvency laws to take back public assets and services across the board

Burnham says the government is currently looking at insolvency laws to see what can be done about Thames Water. The existing regime applies to energy networks and Royal Mail as well as water companies. The government **should consider public services in the round when looking at insolvency laws**.

They could and should be expanded so that the government can respond appropriately when other private sector companies delivering public services are "too big to fail" and are failing. The government needs to be able to withdraw from providing a constant revenue stream to profit-hungry private companies. That means **updating the special administration regime to cover all public services and setting up a public sector provider in each relevant sector that stands ready to step in** if companies go bust.

The regime should include profiteering private equity companies in social care, for example. Vulnerable children and older people should not be at the mercy of private equity. Wales is ending for-profit provision in children's services.[30]

> *"The sector-by-sector development of SARs has resulted in redundancies and gaps. Crucially, entire categories of essential providers...are excluded without principled justification"*
>
> **Nottingham Law School research[31]**

Our 500 year old Royal Mail should be taken into public ownership - either directly and fairly cheaply by just buying out its Czech billionaire owner Daniel Kretinsky for a price less than £3.6 billion, or by holding it to account using special administration for a failure to deliver letters as per the universal service obligation.

Energy network monopolies - whose average profit margin is 38% - could be taken into public ownership one at a time when they fail to invest or deliver on their duties.[32] Once taken into public hands, they could become the default local publicly owned retail option for households (as well as or instead of setting up a Great British Energy retail wing) and could work to upgrade homes and businesses at speed.

> *"The Norwegian government is our biggest gas supplier. The German government owns our second-biggest gas-powered generator (Uniper). The French government (EDF) runs our nuclear power stations. And the Danish government (Orsted) is building our biggest new windfarms. All of which begs the obvious question: why can't our own government step in to clean up this market mess? Our energy system has been asset-stripped, sold off to foreign states, global multinationals and billionaires. Their basic business interest isn't investing for the long-term, or bringing down costs – it's extracting the maximum profit they can. And until we address this basic issue, no number of tweaks, subsidies, or new government consultations, are going to fix our broken energy system. Our proposals are simple and clear. Take back control with public ownership. Start with the Grid, and with a properly sized Great British Energy."*
>
> **Unite report on energy, 2025[33]**

What about government borrowing levels?

- The value of an asset with a revenue stream - like water or energy - needs to be captured appropriately and the government's accounting shift from public sector net debt to net financial liabilities means that this is now possible. For example, bringing water into public ownership would create savings of £3 billion to £5 billion a year.[34]
- The government should change the accounting rules in line with other European countries so that public corporations can borrow directly, and their borrowing is not treated as borrowing by general government. The New Economics Foundation says this is needed so that opportunities can be taken locally "rather than routing everything through gilts and general taxation"[35]
- The government should communicate clearly about which services and assets fall under the category of public services, and the benefit to the wider economy of funding them properly and taking them into public ownership. The Attlee government's nationalisations from 1945-50 involved compensating shareholders with government bonds equivalent to 25% of GDP. [36] What is being proposed in this report is incredibly timid in comparison.

WHY is public ownership worth it?

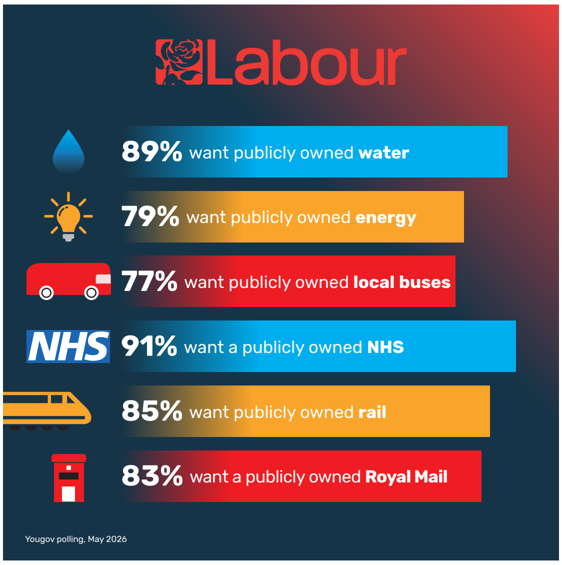
The political opportunities of delivering public ownership; the political risks of not delivering it

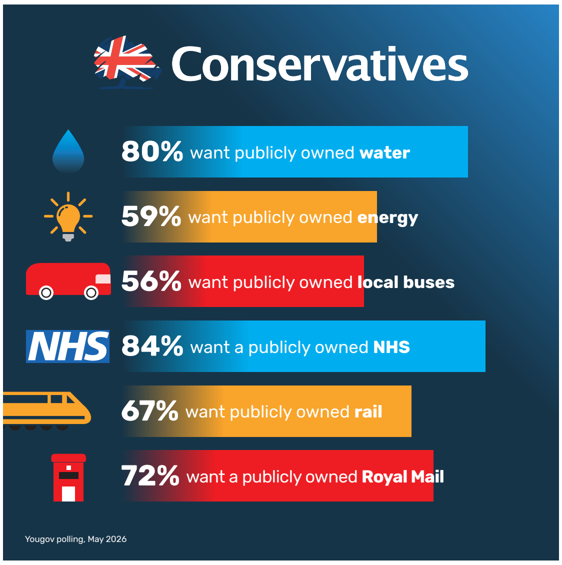
> "There will be no second chance."
>
> **Andy Burnham's speech after being elected MP for Makerfield**

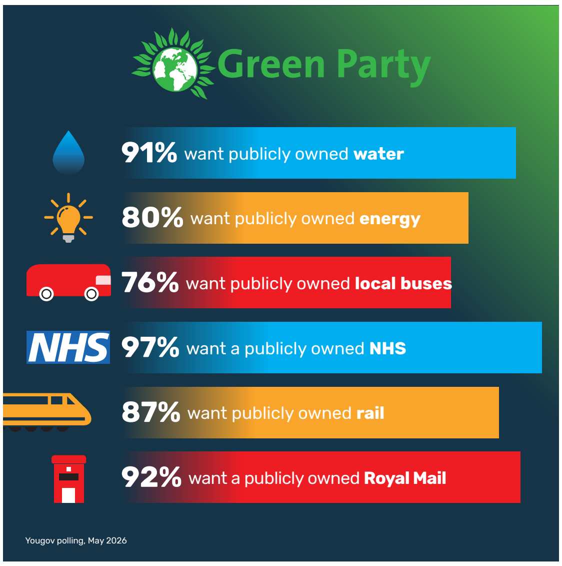
Prime Minister Andy Burnham came to power after Labour lost nearly 1500 seats in the May 2026 local elections, with Reform UK and the Green Party gaining. He has staked his reputation on being a different kind of politician and on delivering public control. A clear, strong commitment to public ownership would benefit this government in a number of ways:

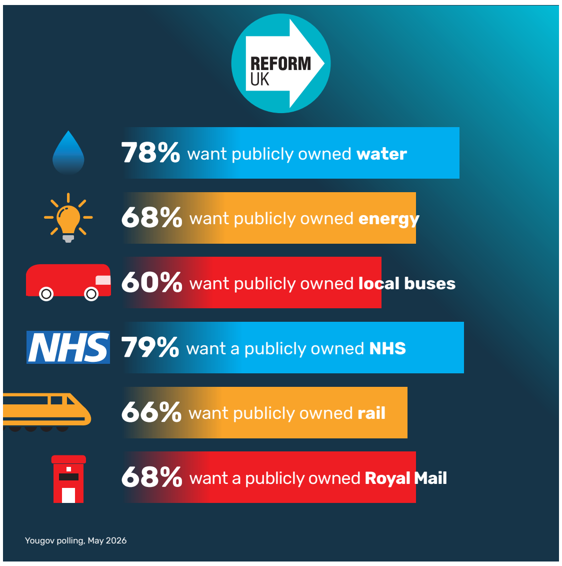
1) A unifying policy

Public ownership appeals to Reform voters and Green voters alike, cutting across the polarisation that affects so many other political issues. A majority of voters across the spectrum back this policy for public services.[37]





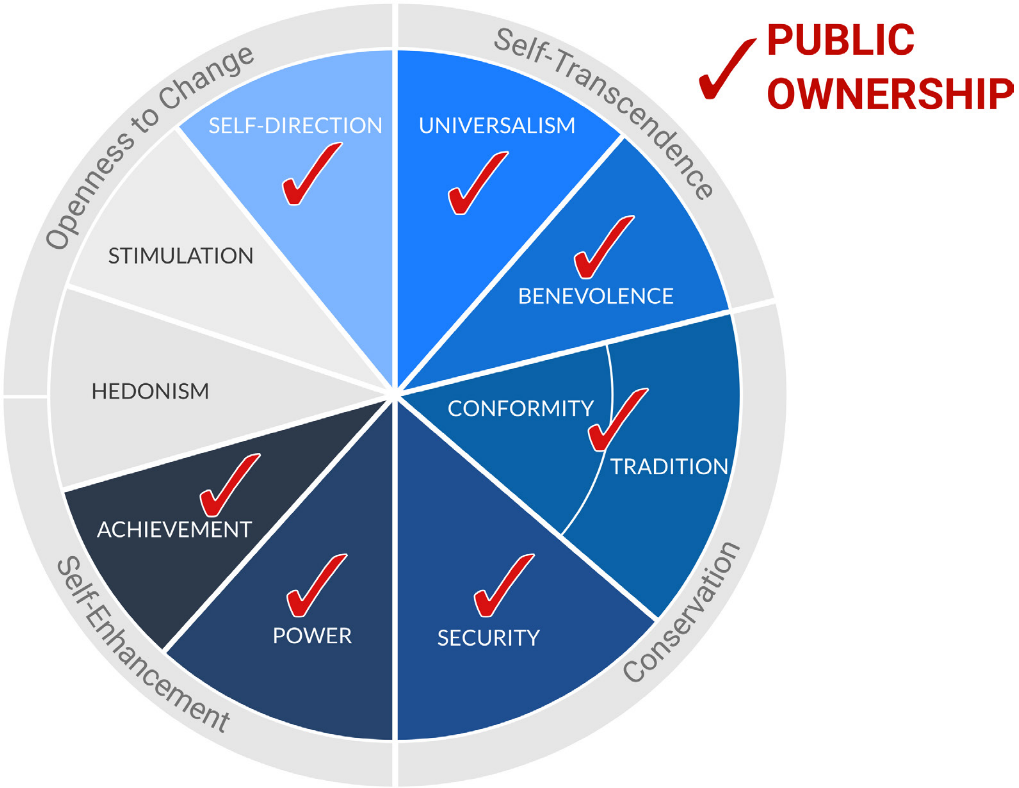




2) A patriotic policy

Public ownership taps into a wide range of values and patriotic public ownership will appeal to both the left and right. In the US, Donald Trump has blocked private equity from buying up homes, prioritising first time homebuyers.[38] Nigel Farage has talked repeatedly about letting Thames Water go bust,[39] and about "our oil". Reform's "contract for the people" committed to a policy of 50% public ownership, 50% UK he pensions for critical national infrastructure.[40] Meanwhile Rupert Lowe has said that "a patriotic energy policy must place the interests of the British people first".[41]

Public ownership has a connection to eight out of the ten basic human values identified by Schwartz.[42]



Public ownership will only help the government reach all voters if the policy is **seen as strong and felt as memorable**. A half-hearted attempt on Thames Water won't cut it - the government needs to be able to say it is taking back our assets. The government has an advantage over Reform and Restore if it can prove it is not in the pockets of lobbyists - it can combine delivering public ownership with an anti corruption message.

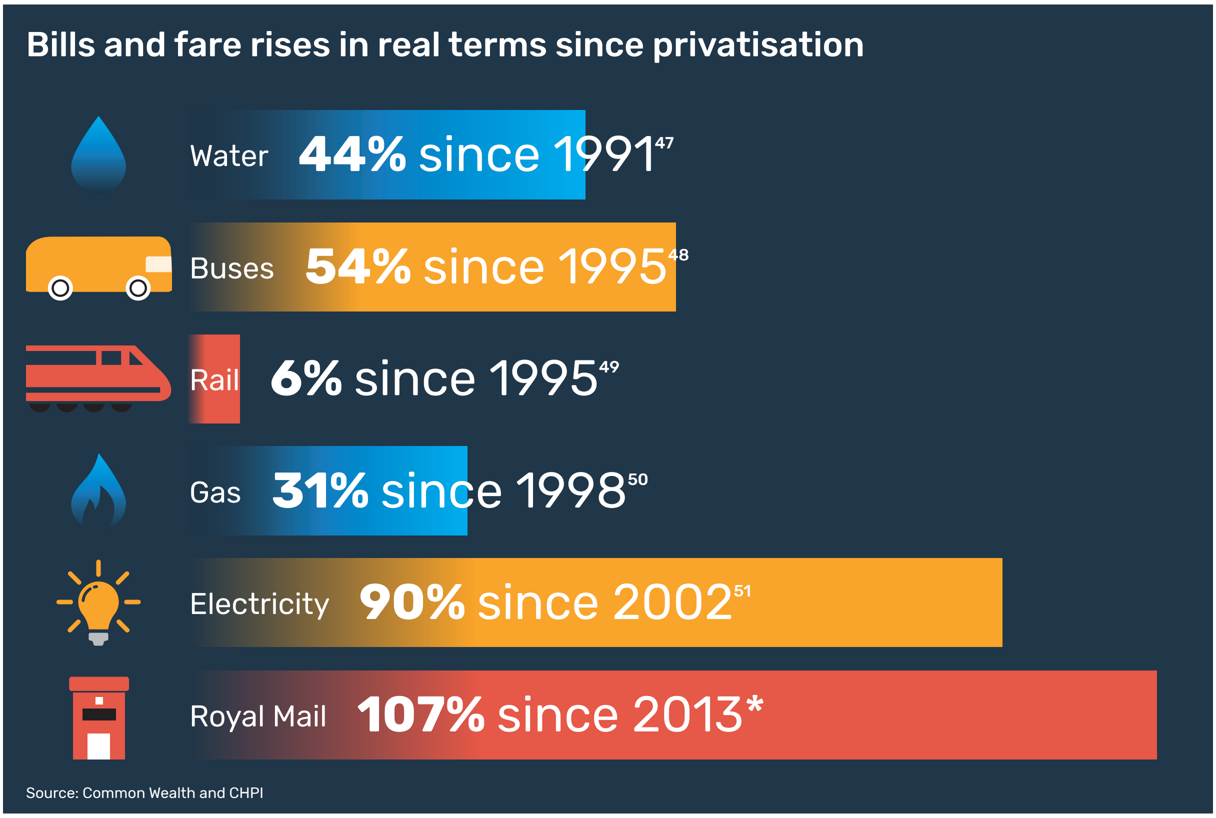
3) A coherent and compelling solution to public services failing

Privatisation means we pay more, get less and lose accountability over services that used to belong to all of us. An Andy Burnham government must respond to these failures - rising energy bills, illegal sewage spills as highlighted in Channel 4's docudrama Dirty Business, Royal Mail missing its targets on letter deliveries, private equity companies that fail to care for vulnerable children or older people, private health companies that cut corners at the expense of our health. An expanded and intentional special administration regime, combined with true accountability and taking services back one at a time, could offer a solution.

Public ownership gives the government room for action - instead of being hamstrung - so it can deliver for people. In Switzerland, for example, every village has a guaranteed timetable for public transport.[43] In France energy bills have been kept low by government-owned EDF.[44]

4) Cutting the cost of living

Voters consistently list the cost of living and the economy at the top of their list of concerns.[45] Cutting bills and fares without increasing the state's capacity to deliver can only ever be a sticking plaster - we need what Common Wealth has called the 'Productive State'.[46] Anger and calls for billpayer boycotts are growing.



*calculated using the Bank of England inflation calculator

5) Burnham as hero - privatisation as the enemy

Andy Burnham went to court to fight the private bus companies on behalf of passengers and the public in Greater Manchester. This kind of boldness is an antidote to cynicism (as Starmer also saw with the popularity of the announcement on Great British Energy followed by less enthusiasm as its limited scope and budget became clear).

Burnham can be a hero by standing up to shareholders around the world looking to rip off the British public. On social media, the conflict between Burnham and profiteers would grab attention and boost his popularity as he faces them down.

> "*As seats become more marginal, candidates from government parties become just as likely as opposition parties to engage in negative messaging*"
>
> **Electoral Studies journal article[52]**

Conclusion

In our current social media age, it takes the public all of ten seconds to spot inconsistency, fake "compromises" and solutions that are no such thing. This creates a cynical doom-loop of mistrust that can only be broken by a politician that seems to be genuinely anti establishment - as Burnham did before being elected MP for Makerfield - prepared to tell the truth and fight the hard battles on behalf of the public.

There are nuanced and complicated policy questions to be resolved in delivering high quality, accountable public services - but whether the government should end the 40 year failed privatisation experiment using every tool in its toolbox is not one of them.

Ownership matters, so a fight over ownership is a fight over power. **A government that takes on this battle will inevitably be told by private lobbyists, established civil servants and compromised advisors that public ownership cannot be done.** But the public will not be fooled and they will not forgive you for attempting to dodge the question of ownership. The bill will come at the next general election and there will be no time for a 10 year plan.

The political risk of being cautious and defaulting to business-as-normal cannot be overstated. You cannot please the majority who want public ownership and also please the vested interests, the foreign shareholders enjoying ripping us off, the private equity companies, the well-funded thinktanks and commentators defending the failed status quo, the Thames Water creditors sucking the lifeblood out of households. Now is a time for Andy Burnham to restore Labour's legacy by being bold and brave.

The political upside is huge if public services are taken back across the board as part of a coherent policy package, and if Burnham tells **a clear, simple story: he will not compromise, the British people deserve to own their own assets, and he'll defend households over shareholders around the world**.

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