



Who's Who: Burnham's Cabinet

July 2026



The UK woke this morning to news of a removal of VAT on electricity bills from October – saving the average billpayer £45 per year. This was Andy Burnham's first policy measure as Prime Minister and part of his commitment to provide people with "breathing space" while more radical policies are formulated. The modest level of the relief and confusion around how it is to be funded has already begun to attract some criticism. Nevertheless, it is a quick start to life as PM for Andy Burnham with his Cabinet barely through the door.

The appointment of John Healey as Chancellor came as a surprise to many, but it's an astute move which has gone down well with the media and markets. Healey is an experienced minister who understands how the Treasury operates, having served as a junior Treasury minister in Tony Blair's government and in recent times has criticised its conservatism while Secretary of State for Defence. Burnham will hope that his new Chancellor's unflashy style will continue to reassure the markets, prove acceptable to all factions of the Labour Party and avoid being a political distraction.

A key contributing factor to Sir Keir Starmer's downfall was his inability to unite the party's different factions around a shared vision. Burnham's Cabinet is a clear attempt to correct that. He has put those to the right of the party in roles where voters currently favour a more centrist position. Shabana Mahmood continues as Home Secretary and Wes Streeting as Defence Secretary. And where he has proposed more radical state intervention, namely in housing, energy and water, three figures associated with the "soft left" of the party are given the key jobs: Miatta Fahnbulleh as Energy Secretary, Angela Rayner as Housing Secretary, and Angela Eagle as Environment Secretary. Key allies Annaliese Midgeley and Louise Haigh have landed critical political roles, as Chief Whip and CDL / First Secretary of State respectively.

Burnham has simultaneously overseen a purge of some of Starmer's most loyal ministers as he lays the foundations for a new direction. Rachel Reeves, who reportedly rejected the Defence Secretary role she was offered, Darren Jones, Liz Kendall, Peter Kyle and David Lammy were all casualties. But a return to Cabinet for Rayner and for Johnny Reynolds as Business Secretary – both members of Starmer's original Cabinet – represents a consistency that will be welcomed by some and has the advantage of reducing reading-in time on key parts of the government's agenda.

Starmer was ultimately undone by his inability to capitalise on his landslide election victory and command the loyalty of the Parliamentary Labour Party. Burnham is the most popular he will ever be on the Labour benches and he must use that capital wisely to make a bold start to his programme if he is to make discernible progress in the remaining three years of this Parliament. Appointing a Cabinet more representative of the Labour Party's different factions, coupled with an affable and approachable personal style, is likely to buy him time with his own party at least. But the tough questions from the media and his political rivals have already started being asked.



NICK KING

**Founder and Managing Director
Henham Strategy**

Key appointments for the EIA

Business, Innovation, Science, and Trade

Jonathan Reynolds



Jonathan Reynolds returns as Business Secretary, with the expanded department now covering Business, Innovation, Science and Trade: DBIST. Reynolds was first elected in 2010 as MP for Stalybridge and Hyde. Before becoming an MP, he worked for Labour councillors at Stockport Council and later served as a parliamentary aide to James Purnell, now Andy Burnham's Chief of Staff.

Since entering Parliament, Reynolds has held a number of shadow frontbench positions under Ed Miliband, Jeremy Corbyn, and Starmer. Following Labour's General Election victory in 2024, Starmer appointed Reynolds as Secretary of State for Business and Trade and President of the Board of Trade. In this role, he was responsible for the government's relationship with business, trade policy and industrial strategy before moving to the position of Chief Whip in September 2025.

Reynolds is widely regarded as a pragmatic, pro-business figure within the Labour Party, with a particular interest in investment, economic growth and industrial policy. His time as Secretary of State for Business and Trade was well received by business, with many welcoming his openness to engagement. His previous relationship with Purnell will potentially be helpful in coordination between No 10 and DBIST. Burnham will be the fourth Labour leader on whose front bench Reynolds has served, demonstrating his popularity across the Labour Party.

Reynolds oversaw the development and publication of the Industrial Strategy, making him unlikely to de-prioritise it and supporting the EIA's efforts to link events to the IS-8 sectors. Although not known for attending business events, he was highly engaged with businesses and repeatedly stressed the need to attract more investment and make the UK easier to do business in, aligning closely with the EIA's messaging.

Culture, Media, and Sport

Lisa Nandy



Lisa Nandy has retained her position as Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport, having been appointed after Labour's General Election win in 2024. This makes her one of the longest continuously serving Cabinet members.

Nandy was first elected as an MP for Wigan in 2010, and quickly joined Labour's frontbench under Ed Miliband. Despite changes in leadership, Nandy continued to move around the Shadow bench, and even stood in the 2020 Labour leadership election to replace Jeremy Corbyn, finishing third behind Starmer and Rebecca Long-Bailey.

As a retained Secretary of State, businesses can expect continuity. Under Burnham, however, it is likely that Nandy will support the devolution agenda and focus on the impact of culture, media, and sport in towns, cities, and regions. Nandy was previously the Shadow Levelling Up Secretary, and established the Centre for Towns (no longer running) to conduct analysis on the UK's towns. As Culture Secretary, she has spoken on the link between culture, local growth, and opportunity. We would expect this to accelerate under Burnham's leadership. Burnham himself had previously served as Culture Secretary, and so he will understand the potential of the department.

Nandy has been noted for spending significant time in Wigan over Westminster. This makes her a natural supporter of Burnham's No 10 North scheme, as well as a close ally.

For the EIA, the lack of change is a blessing and a curse: there is no need to try to remake the same arguments for a new Secretary of State, but there is also no opportunity to convince a new Secretary of State on the importance of business events. While the goal is to move the sector to DBIST, for Nandy, it will be the link to regional power and economic development that will make the difference.



UK Government

Chancellor of the Exchequer

John Healey



What to expect

Former Defence Secretary John Healey returns to Cabinet in a shock move to Treasury. Expect departmental cuts or tax rises to fund the additional military spending he resigned over. Healey has in the past criticised "Treasury orthodoxy" and is expected to look creatively at ways to increase capital spending in a way that doesn't spook the markets. An unknown quantity, though with some Treasury experience, the early October Budget will be his first big test of credibility.

Home Secretary

Shabana Mahmood



What to expect

Burnham's decision to keep Mahmood as Home Secretary is a vindication of her approach on small boats, but may also speak to the Left's distaste for her, as she was rumoured to be the next Chancellor. Despite Burnham criticising some of her policies, the appointment may be a recognition that her tough stance has started to negate one of Reform's most effective attack lines.

Foreign Secretary

Ed Miliband



What to expect

Originally touted as the next Chancellor, Miliband instead moves to the Foreign Office. His move from DESNZ may signal a more pragmatic government line on net zero. His new role keeps him inside the tent while diluting his grip on domestic policy.

Business Secretary

Jonathan Reynolds



What to expect

A clear signal of Burnham's reindustrialisation agenda, given the strong employer and union relationships he built in his first stint as Business Secretary. The bigger story may be the subsuming of DSIT, though further Whitehall reorganisation risks slowing delivery.

Defence Secretary

Wes Streeting



What to expect

Streeting returns to Cabinet having triggered the leadership challenge. In Health, Streeting had been praised for reforming zeal, as well as his tech-forward focus on driving efficiency. With Healey as Chancellor, Streeting will be preaching to the choir about the need for increased spending, but his lack of experience in defence and security roles will raise eyebrows.

Energy Security and Net Zero Secretary

Miatta Fahnbulleh



What to expect

Known in Westminster as "Burnham's brain", Fahnbulleh's promotion to a Secretary of State underscores her importance to Burnham. Fahnbulleh first cut her teeth as a junior minister in DESNZ, where she led on the Warm Homes Plan. Watch for a more interventionist state, though her sharper critique of the economic model may test the limits of Burnham's business-friendly instincts.

Transport Secretary

Heidi Alexander



What to expect

Alexander stays in transport, a department we expect much of Burnham's platform to run through, whether that's restoring the scrapped second phase of HS2, delivering Northern Powerhouse Rail or cutting bus fares. Keep a watching brief on the impact devolution has on her department's power, as well as the expected priority to push the envelope on infrastructure investment.

Housing Secretary

Angela Rayner



What to expect

Back to the department she resigned from, keep a watching brief on tensions emerging over how MHCLG funds are allocated. It's expected Burnham might want to commit the whole £39bn Social and Affordable Homes Programme to social housing, contradicting the original design Rayner announced when she was Housing Secretary.

Culture Secretary

Lisa Nandy



What to expect

Nandy remains at Culture, where she had been leading negotiations with the BBC about its future. A fellow MP from the North West and sitting in the centre-left of the party, Nandy was expected to retain a Cabinet position. Given Burnham's love of sport and culture, the department may be given a more prominent role under his premiership.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

Louise Haigh



What to expect

Haigh returns as one of Burnham's closest allies and a central figure in his pre-government planning. Traditionally on the party's left, Haigh was central to the welfare rebellion under Starmer and is a vocal backer of wealth taxes. Also appointed First Secretary of State, expect her to shape the direction of this administration well beyond the formal remit of the Duchy, which oversees Cabinet Office.



UK Government

Environment Secretary

Angela Eagle



What to expect

Eagle had been serving as a junior Defra minister, with responsibility for Farming and Food Security. Burnham will need to reassure rural communities he isn't solely focused on the cities, and although Eagle brings experience from her junior role, her own rural credentials are weak with a Liverpool constituency and previous roles in the Home Office.

Northern Ireland Secretary

Sir Chris Bryant



What to expect

Bryant replaces the Labour veteran Hilary Benn who had held Labour's Northern Ireland brief since 2023. Bryant had held various junior ministerial positions under Starmer, but this marks his first promotion to Cabinet. He will have to pick up the sensitive work navigating Northern Ireland's legacy issues.

Health Secretary

Yvette Cooper



What to expect

Cooper is demoted from Foreign Secretary to Health, although the department will play a key role in Burnham's "preventative state". Picking up from Streeting and James Murray, Cooper will have to face the usual set of problems: doctors strikes, waiting lists, and aging hospital infrastructure.

Education Secretary

Lucy Powell



What to expect

Powell was among one of the earliest MPs to help Burnham return to Westminster and has been rewarded with the Education brief. She is a trusted ally of the PM and her appointment underlines the importance this government is expected to place on skills. Powell continues to serve as Deputy Labour Leader.

Attorney General

Ellie Reeves



What to expect

A barrister specialising in trade unions and employment rights law by trade, Reeves is promoted from Solicitor General to replace Starmer-ally Richard Hermer. As Solicitor General she was dedicated to improving the relationship between the CPS and victims, particularly for violence against women.

Chief Whip

Anneliese Midgley



What to expect

The Knowsley MP and Burnham loyalist takes the Chief Whip role, bringing trade union roots and a backroom pedigree spanning Corbyn's leadership campaign and Starmer's opposition team. She is chosen over the seasoned Sir Alan Campbell, signalling how Burnham intends to manage a febrile party.

Scotland Secretary

Douglas Alexander



What to expect

Douglas Alexander retains his position as Scotland Secretary. A former minister in the Tony Blair and Gordon Brown governments, he brings deep expertise and experience to a new government. Since taking on the Scottish Secretary role, his focus has been on investment, defence manufacturing, exports and energy policy.

Chief Secretary to the Treasury

Emma Reynolds



What to expect

Reynolds returns to the Treasury after a stint as Environment Secretary, having previously served as Economic Secretary. Her previous work at TheCityUK will be welcomed by business. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury is one of the most powerful roles in government, holding day-to-day control over public spending and negotiating departmental budgets during spending reviews.

Work and Pensions Secretary

Pat McFadden



What to expect

McFadden retains his role as Work and Pensions Secretary. The challenge he faces is immense, with the cost of sickness and disability benefits for people of working age now standing at around £58bn a year, with a projected rise to £78bn a year by 2030. Burnham has said he does want to reduce the welfare bill, and McFadden will be tasked with finding a way to deliver that, an area that's traditionally been very controversial amongst Labour backbenchers. Expect this to be an early test of his premiership.

Wales Secretary

Stephen Kinnock



What to expect

Kinnock has been promoted to the Cabinet as the new Wales Secretary, having previously served as junior health minister. Kinnock is the son of former Labour Leader Neil Kinnock. Prior to becoming an MP, Kinnock worked at the World Economic Forum and at a business consultancy.



Minister for AI
Kanishka Narayan



What to expect
Narayan has elevated to a Cabinet level position focused on AI. His promotion will seek to address industry concerns over DSIT being scrapped, the impact this will have on the government's AI policy and its wider approach to technology infrastructure. His role is now expected to be split across DCMS and Cabinet Office.

Leader of the House of Commons
Alan Campbell



What to expect
Campbell has served as Leader of the House of Commons since 2025 and has retained his position under Burnham. Having first been elected to Parliament in 1997, he brings some experience to the new Cabinet.

Minister for Housing and Planning
Matthew Pennycook MP



What to expect
Pennycook has kept his position as Minister for Housing and Planning and has been promoted to Cabinet. Pennycook has helped make housing a priority for the government and has been able to make housing policy his clear niche. Pennycook is well-respected within the Labour Party, being described as "one of the leading housing experts and brightest minds in Parliament" by Angela Rayner.

Women and Equalities Minister
Bridget Phillipson



What to expect
Former Education and Equalities Secretary, Phillipson's brief has been diluted to just the latter. In her previous role she oversaw Labour's removal of VAT from private schools and is regarded as a champion of social mobility.

Justice Secretary
Alex Norris



What to expect
Norris has been promoted from junior minister at the Home Office to replace David Lammy as Secretary of State. Top of his in-tray will be resolving questions on the future of his predecessor's jury trial reforms which Burnham opposed from outside Parliament.

Leader of the House of Lords
Baroness Smith



What to expect
Baroness Angela Smith remains in her role as Leader of the House of Lords, where she is responsible for driving the government's legislative programme. Like Campbell, the former MP for Basildon (1997-2010) brings experience and continuity.

Minister for Intergovernmental Relations
Hamish Falconer



What to expect
Falconer is promoted from junior minister at the Foreign Office to a Cabinet position in both FCDO and Cabinet Office overseeing relations between government, as well as with Europe. Burnham is expected to continue Starmer's 'reset' with the EU.



Henham Strategy
Mercury House
Waterloo, London
SE1 8UL

henhamstrategy.co.uk