



Representing Billinge and Seneley Green, Blackbrook, Haydock, Moss Bank, Newton-le-Willows, Parr, Rainford and Windle

INSIDE THIS EDITION:

Play is Learning!



And more, including:



Taking back control
of our buses



Special event at Newton
Community Centre



Welcoming Bleak Hill
to Westminster!



Dear Residents,

Welcome to my January newsletter which you can now encourage your friends and family to subscribe to [via this sign-up form on my website](#).

I hope you find it interesting and please do feel free to contact me anytime using the details on the back page if you need my support.

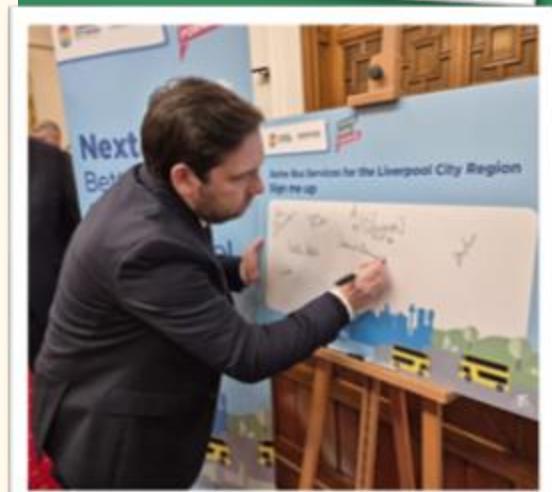
For people, not for profit

This month – alongside the Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram, Marie Rimmer MP and St Helens Borough Council leader Anthony Burns – [I signed the momentous deal to bring our buses in Merseyside back under public control, starting in St Helens later this year](#).

For far too long, our public transport has been run in the interests of making profits, not for the people using it. Buses are a lifeline for so many people in St Helens North and across the country – whether it is to get to work, see family and friends or drop the kids off at school – and people deserve affordable and reliable transport. Since Thatcher deregulated the bus network in the 1980s we've been badly let down – now that is changing.

We're bringing our buses back into public control across the Liverpool City Region, with better routes, keeping fares down and improving services for the people who use them. For people – not profit.

St Helens and Wirral will be the first to see the rollout of our franchised buses from September later this year. This comes alongside other work being undertaken by the Labour government to bring our **railways back into public control too**. Our mission is to deliver reliable and affordable services, and it is one we are determined to deliver.



Bringing bills down for our schools

It was fantastic to welcome Secretary of State for the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, Ed Miliband, to Cowley International College in St Helens North. Alongside Principal Russell Cormack, Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram, and Leader of St Helens Borough Council Anthony Burns, the Secretary of State visited to see and hear about Cowley's commitment to cut bills with Great British Energy solar panels.

Cowley is now one of 23 schools that have now installed the panels following a **£100m investment from publicly owned Great British Energy** and government as part of plans to help cut energy costs for schools with clean, homegrown power.

The Minister saw the real impact of these solar panels are going to have on schools like Cowley International College, and spoke with some of the school's fantastic students from their eco club and a tour of the building.

For too long, rising energy bills and years of underinvestment have put unnecessary pressure on school budgets, forcing leaders to make difficult choices. This investment from Great British Energy – our new, publicly owned energy company set up by this government – shows how we can cut bills with clean, home-grown power.

That means more money staying in our schools and more focus on what really matters: **giving our young people the best possible start in life.**



In St Helens North

It was a pleasure to [catch up with Rev Rachel Shuttleworth at St Helens Parish Church](#). They are a fantastic church, part of the Church of England in the Diocese of Liverpool. They are also part of a group of 11 churches coming together to form a larger single Parish of Church St Helens.

I would like to thanks [St Helens Walking Football Club Chairman Peter Fitzpatrick](#) for the invitation to come to their [session at Ruskin](#) and see them in action! I was really impressed with the level of organisation and the numbers taking part, and the enjoyment of all involved was clear to see.

Park Farm Community Centre is an amazing place [and it was great to catch up with CYP manager Nikki](#), talking support for young people, community events, and lots more. Thank you to all the staff and volunteers who do an incredible job.

I also had the absolute pleasure of [welcoming Bleak Hill Primary School to Westminster](#), and even to Downing Street! I want as many children and young people as possible to visit Parliament and to see it for themselves, because – as I told the children from Bleak Hill – our democracy belongs to everyone including them, and one day they might be our MP or even the Prime Minister!

If you work in a St Helens North school or if you think your child's school might be interested, feel free to email me at david.baines.mp@parliament.uk, share this post with them, or visit <https://learning.parliament.uk/en/session-workshop/tours-and-workshops/> for more information.

I had a [catch up with Council Leader Anthony Burns](#) about progress on the regeneration work in Earlestown and St Helens town centres (including the fantastic plans for the Gamble Building which were revealed recently), and I've also been out campaigning with our local Labour team.

There are really important local elections taking place in May, and we're out speaking to as many people as possible about local and national issues. I go out knocking doors regularly (check previous newsletters and my social media!) and I'm looking forward to campaigning in support of all our fantastic local Labour candidates in the weeks ahead.



Backing local pubs and music venues

Readers will know I'm a supporter of our local pubs and clubs. I've enjoyed them as customer and I want to do all I can as our MP to help them survive and thrive.

Following the budget, I met with landlords across St Helens North to hear how they would be affected by changes to rates.

I am glad to see that the government has announced extra support. I know that pubs are the beating heart of our communities, where families gather, where local teams celebrate, and where neighbourhoods come together.

I am also pleased that lots of the industry has welcomed the new support including the British Beer and Pub Association and Punch Pubs, which operates several well-known and much-loved pubs in St Helens North.



At The Woodlands pub just before Christmas

The extra support announced in January includes a 15% cut to business rates bills from April, followed by a two-year real-terms freeze, alongside a review of valuation methods. The measures will save the average pub an additional £1,650 in 2026/27, with around 75% of pubs seeing their bills fall or stay flat.

Social Media and Young People

The Labour government is launching a major consultation on children's social media use and is taking immediate action to restrict the use of mobile phone in schools to protect young people's wellbeing.

The consultation on social media use will seek views on the right minimum age for children to access social media, improving age verification to prevent underage access, moving or limiting addictive features like 'infinite scrolling' and 'streaks', and providing better guidance and parental controls for families.

The government has also provided tougher and clearer guidance for schools regarding the use of smart phones.

As a Dad, I know how much of a worry all these issues can be so I welcome the consultation. We want to get this right and I know there will be a range of views. I'll share details of the consultation as soon as it starts – check my social media and watch out for details in my next newsletter.

Road Safety Strategy

There's lots to welcome in the government's new Road Safety Strategy published in January, which aims to cut deaths and serious injuries on our roads by 65% by 2035.

I've been proud to support the efforts of my constituent and road safety campaigner Sue Rimaitis (pictured) to call for changes around the mandatory reporting of medical conditions to the DVLA.

Following the campaign led by Mrs Rimaitis and supported by me and other MPs in Westminster, I am pleased to see that the new Road Safety Strategy includes proposals for a consultation on mandatory eyesight testing for drivers over 70.

Mrs Rimaitis's 79-year-old mother, Marie Cunningham, and her 85-year-old friend Grace Foulds were fatally struck by 67-year-old Glyn Jones while crossing a road in Southport, Merseyside in 2021. It was later found that Mr Jones had ignored repeated warnings that his eyesight was below the minimum standard - warnings which he failed to self-report to the DVLA.

Further proposals include consultations on lowering the drink-drive limit – unchanged since 1967 – as well as tougher action on repeat offenders, and plans to introduce a three or six-month minimum learning period to reduce collisions involving younger drivers.

There will also be action to crack down on illegal 'ghost' number plates, uninsured driving and vehicles without a valid MOT, mandating 18 new vehicle safety technologies, and establishing a new Road Safety Investigation Branch and Board to oversee delivery.

I know that while Sue and other campaigners have welcomed the strategy as a whole, they believe that regarding eye tests in particular they would like the government to go further, and I will be speaking with her to discuss next steps in the campaign.

But there is no doubt that this strategy is a vital step towards preventing avoidable deaths and injuries, and people in St Helens North will be safer because of it.

Find out more about the Road Safety Strategy and [the five consultations taking place here](#).



With Sue Rimaitis

In Westminster

I was delighted to meet with the Prime Minister to discuss national and international issues, and also how we can deliver for St Helens North in cutting the cost of living.

With Parliament back for the New Year, the government has been pushing ahead with legislation. We have continued to vote on aspects of the Budget, and [I have pressed the government on the Hillsborough Law](#). We have also been debating the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023. I know that this has caused some concern, partly due to a lot of misinformation being circulated. [You can watch an interview with Armed Forces Minister Al Cars - himself a veteran - here, which sets out all the facts.](#)

I will always support our veterans, and I was grateful to the Defence Secretary John Healey for meeting with me to discuss this and also how we can help local businesses benefit from the government's investment in defence. And like everyone else I was appalled by Donald Trump's comments about our Armed Forces. You can [read my thoughts on it here](#).

I attended the Campaign for Gigi event in Parliament to hear about the tragic and preventable loss of beautiful baby Genevieve and the efforts of her parents to ensure no other family has to go through anything like this. Find out more and [offer your support here](#). It was great to meet Arti Sharma from Nurture UK to hear about their fantastic work in schools up and down the country to help make sure that every child is able to learn and reach their potential. Find out more about [their important work on their website](#).

Fostering is a hugely rewarding and important job. Sue and Dave Cook have helped children from across our borough for more than 20 years and they were recently awarded MBEs for their services to fostering. I was delighted to be able to [pay tribute to them in the House this month](#)

January marks Holocaust Memorial Day and I proudly signed the [Book of Commitment in Parliament](#), and in doing so pledged my commitment to honouring the six million Jewish men, women and children murdered during the Holocaust as well as paying tribute to the survivors who work tirelessly to educate young people today.



Campaigning for Play based learning

[It was a pleasure to meet with the fantastic My Mummy Teacher – Ruth Lue-Quee](#) and some of the other amazing people behind the Play is Learning campaign which was debated in parliament, and I was delighted to take part and help to make the case for continuous provision to be made statutory in Key Stage 1.

Across England, children as young as five are being pushed from play-centred early learning into a formal Key Stage 1 system that often fails to support their developmental needs. More than fifty years of research, alongside international agreement from bodies such as the UN, UNICEF and UNESCO, shows that **play is essential to children's learning, wellbeing and fairness in education.**

However, England is the only UK nation where play-based teaching is not required beyond the Early Years. This campaign calls for urgent change to close that gap, safeguard children's wellbeing and build an education system where every child can genuinely flourish.

This is just the start. I'll keep making the case for learning through play to be part of Key Stage One in every school in England. You can access my speech on this in Westminster [here](#).



Supporting our Armed Forces

It was great to visit Newton Community Centre in St Helens North to witness the signing of their Armed Forces Covenant, reflecting the Centre's ongoing support to our Armed Forces Community.

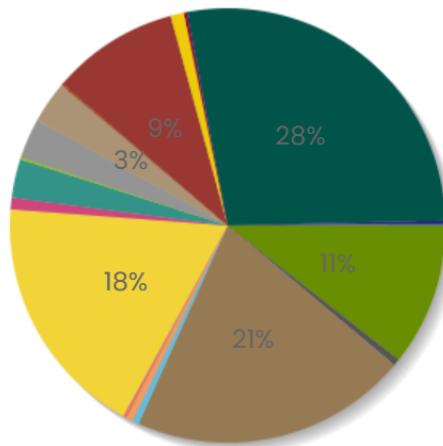
This came in the same week that Labour's new **Armed Forces Bill passed its latest stage in the Commons**, which will extend the Armed Forces Covenant across all areas of central government, devolved governments and local authorities. Under the new government measures, social care providers, employment support services and other public services will be legally required to consider the unique circumstances faced by forces personnel and their families.

This will benefit the 6,302 serving personnel from St Helens and veterans across the borough, on top of other action taken by the government to support our Forces and veterans.

Our Armed Forces personnel and their families in St Helens North and the wider borough make extraordinary sacrifices in service to our country, and they deserve decent homes and proper support in return.



Casework update



- Crime, civil law, justice and rights
- Social Security and pensions
- Local Government
- Agriculture, animals, food and rural affairs
- Housing and planning
- Health services and medicine
- Economy and finance
- International affairs
- Culture, charities, media and sport
- Defence
- Asylum, immigration and nationality
- Transport
- Parliament, government and politics
- Bulk correspondence
- Social services and social care
- Business, industry and consumers
- Education
- Energy, utilities and environment
- Employment and training

This month we have dealt with over 800 cases ranging from views on the WASPI campaign, to education, local government, housing support and nature. Some examples include:

SEND Support

Helped to secure an assessment for a child with SEN to ensure they received education suited to their specific needs.

HMRC Support

Helped provide peace of mind for a constituent by getting a response from HMRC to confirm that they had received and processed their application that they had yet to hear a response from.

School Application

Raised a case to, and acquired a response from, the School Admissions team from a parent concerned by the admissions board having not responded to their application.

DVLA License Renewal

Helped a constituent gain assurances from the DVLA that their license renewal would be processed as soon as possible and also secured from them an explanation as to why the process had been so delayed.

Passport Recovery

Assisted in receiving an update as to the process of having their passport returned to them.

Work Experience

Former [De La Salle School and Carmel College](#) student Tom Critchley recently completed a work experience placement in my Westminster office – It was my pleasure to have him with us. During his time, he gained insight into parliamentary life by observing Select Committees, working groups, and meetings with external organisations. He also learned about the vital behind-the-scenes work that supports an MP, including handling constituent correspondence, arranging meetings, and drafting social media posts.

If you're from St Helens North and you're interested in work experience I do have limited opportunities in my constituency office and in London – get in touch for more information.



As ever I encourage you to get in touch at david.baines.mp@parliament.uk if you need my support or if you have a question, and please do tell me your priorities too. Remember you can follow what I am doing as your Member of Parliament via the dedicated news page on my website and on social media – search David Baines MP on Facebook, Instagram, Threads and Bluesky

David

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