Forward **Together**

Latest news from David Baines MP
Your Member of Parliament for St Helens North

September 2026 Edition



Welcoming schools back this September!

PLUS: Buses back into public control in St Helens... Reflecting on the summer as Parliament returns... Labour Party Conference... Visiting local organisations... Welcoming students to Westminster AND MORE

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Welcome to my September newsletter..

Remember you can encourage your friends and family to subscribe 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.

Our buses are back where they belong

September saw the launch of the first phase of the franchised bus network in St Helens - following the decision by Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to bring buses back into public control. Bus services across St Helens and the whole region have been run by private operators for over 40 years.

This significant move will mean that bus services in St Helens have returned to public control under the Liverpool City Region's franchised bus network. Bringing with it new routes, higher frequency, capped fares and more reliability for passengers.

This is a historic moment for St Helens and the entire region. The Prime Minister recently spoke of 40 years of wrong turns, and no more is that true than in our bus networks. For decades, our bus services have been ran by private operators who have let us all down – higher fares, unreliability and routes that don't serve enough people, all while the companies operating them have continued to profit. Now we are turning the page.

This move will make bus services more affordable, reliable, and accessible – with better routes and frequency. We have seen this the difference this makes to passengers in action in Greater Manchester with the publicly-owned Bee Network. I would like to thank Mayor Steve Rotheram for making the decision to bring our bus services back into public control and for all the work him and everyone involved have put in to make this happen.

Without devolution, this wouldn't have been possible – that's why this signifies a real change in direction from the status quo - rebalancing the scales of power in this country and putting power back into communities is one of the core missions of this Labour government, and this is just the start.

Bus services are back in our hands, where they belong.



Schools return!

It's that time of year when children head back to the classroom for another year.

Speaking as a dad I know it isn't always easy sending the children back, but if you're in that same boat as me I hope yours are happy enough, ready to play, learn and get stuck in, and at the very least that they're looking forward to seeing their friends again.

And speaking as a former teacher, I hope all our incredible school and college staff had a well-earned break and are looking forward to changing lives for another year. I had the pleasure of visiting Wargrave C of E Primary School in Newton-le-Willows, and I would like to thank Headteacher Ms Epstein, Deputy Headteacher Mrs Kamczyk, and all the amazing staff and children for such a warm welcome.

They are one of the latest Primary Schools to benefit from Labour's free school breakfast programme which is helping more children and families enjoy the best start to every day, and it was great to hear about the positive impact this will have as well as everything else the school is doing to support its children.

The free breakfast club support is just one thing the Labour government is doing to support more families. From this month, we are also offering more free childcare for working families, we're expanding free school dinners, and we're capping the number of branded uniform items families can be asked to buy.

All these things will hopefully add up and give mums, dads and carers a little bit of breathing space this school year.

More widely, we've also committed to a **VAT cut on electricity bills, a reduction in business rates for pubs, clubs and music venues, as well as free bus travel for children and discounts on various family attractions over the summer.**

We're also bringing the £2 bus fare cap back across the country, though here in our region it never went away – and now, as of last weekend, we have publicly owned buses too with a new fleet hitting the road, and more routes and greater frequencies being introduced already in many areas. I was proud to support the plans for greater public control back when I was council leader, and it is fantastic to see them come to fruition.



It’s time to Hope Again

The end of September saw the first Labour Party Conference under our new Labour Leader and Prime Minister Andy Burnham. It was a conference filled with optimism, with the Prime Minister outlining his vision for the country to break with ‘politics as usual’ and draw a line on a decade of division.

The Prime Minister’s speech was a real statement of intent, showing that he – and we as a Labour government – won’t be doing politics as usual, and that it’s time to break the mould from the last 40 years of deindustrialisation, deregulation, privatisation, austerity and Brexit; putting Britain on a new path with greater public control of energy, water, housing and transport.

On energy, it was announced the creation of a new **publicly-owned Great British Grid** that will compete with private companies to drive down costs and speed up connections. On water, the Prime Minister laid out plans to introduce a new bill to parliament that will **unlock public ownership of water companies**, repealing Margaret Thatcher’s ideological ban on public ownership of water companies. On housing, we reiterated our pledge to deliver a **council house building revolution**, and to reform the Right to Buy policy so that new council homes cannot be bought as easily. And on transport, it was welcome to hear that **Avanti West Coast will be brought into public ownership in March 2027.**

This new direction comes as after a series of immediate measures to give people breathing space, including capping bus fares at £2 in 2027, taking VAT off electricity bills which will take effect immediatelyy, as well as Your First Home to help people without the bank of mum and dad get on the property ladder.

Later this year, the government will publish a Plan for Britain that will cover the next 10 years – including more control of the basics and more power in the hands of people and places to set their own ambitions.



He set out his vision for the country during a deeply moving speech – including tackling youth unemployment and an emotional announcement that **we will deliver a long-overdue National Care Service, built for everybody and free at the point of use. This will be paid for by reforming the pensions triple lock from April 2030.**

This is a better deal for pensioners and a new way of doing politics. We are protecting a State Pension that rises every year to ensure we can build a National Care Service that provides older people with free personal care to give everyone peace of mind in later life.

Our care workers across the country are some of the best of us, and their work can never be played down – but the system as a whole is broken. Care services are costly and unreliable, often pushing people who need consistent care into A&E corridors, creating a deeply unpleasant experience and piling even more pressure on the NHS. This issue can't be ignored any longer, and under our Prime Minister Andy Burnham, we won't let it continue.

On the last day of Conference, The Health Secretary Yvette Cooper announced an **investment of £50 million in a new "public health approach" to supporting victims of domestic violence.** This will play a key role in the Labour Government's approach to tackling Violence Against Women and Girls.

And every year at Labour conference delegates from every Constituency Labour Party attend and take part in debates and votes to help guide and influence party policy.

This year's conference saw a debate on tackling violence against women and girls, and one of our St Helens North delegates - the brilliant Shana Begum - secured the honour of proposing the motion.

You can see her speech here, and it's worth watching!

The Labour government has already made it a national mission to halve violence against women and girls in the next decade, and this funding from the Health Secretary can help make a real difference, treating the issue as the epidemic it really is.

All in all, this year's Labour Party Conference was a huge moment. A moment for the Labour movement to come together and set out how, with our Labour values, we can deliver the change that people so desperately need.

It was filled with genuine optimism that we can achieve a better future, a future that includes all of us and benefits the many. They are Labour values, and they are values that can bring us together. There is much work to be done, but we know what we need to do so people feel like they can **hope again.**



With the fantastic Shana Begum



Lancashire v Yorkshire MPs rugby league game at the Hill Dickinson Stadium

Reflecting on the summer as Parliament returns

Parliament returned in September and it was good to get back down there, fighting our corner, and championing our local area.

It was a busy summer in St Helens North with lots of meetings and visits, lots of casework dealt with and residents supported, and big announcements from the new prime minister to start to provide more help to people and businesses with the cost of living.

We had a pretty big by-election result in Billinge and Seneley Green, with Labour's Steve Owen winning the seat back just a few months after we lost it. Congratulations to him, and thank you to voters there for your support.

We know there's a lot more to do to win back people's trust but we're determined to do it. Cllr Owen joins our three other Labour councillors in the town hall and I know he will work hard to stand up for everyone in Billinge and Seneley Green and hold the Reform administration to account.

Reform won a landslide in May and so far their time in power has sadly been dominated by US-style culture war stuff, focusing on attacking projects that support marginalised groups like Refugee Week and Pride, and announcing the end of support for climate change targets in the middle of a summer dominated by wildfires. You couldn't make it up, and you wouldn't want to - but sadly this is the reality. I said in May I will work with anyone who has good intentions in the best interests of our community.

I certainly don't want to spend my days sticking the boot in every time Reform say or do something dangerous because I'd get nothing else done, however I will always defend our communities and our values from attack - and I can't help but be concerned by some of the things coming out of the town hall and what that suggests about the priorities and intentions of the new administration.

The Reform council's announcement that they would not honour commitments made and already budgeted for is the latest worrying development.

It was snuck out late on a Friday night. The council statement was quite carefully worded, and I feel nothing but sympathy for the good council officers who had to draft it and press send.

The leader's separate personal statement was more overtly political and was frankly something of an insult to council officers and former councillors who have set balanced budgets and been fiscally responsible through years of austerity inflicted on us and championed by right wing politicians like Cllr Woodward.

The fact is that because we now have a Labour government, and because it is thankfully turning the page on austerity, we were able to secure more funding for St Helens Borough Council in January this year.

The previous Labour administration decided to use this extra funding to help families with the cost of living by offering free school uniforms, to provide free parking in St Helens town centre to boost businesses, to bring back the park ranger service, and to provide funding for investment in every part of the borough.

All this was budgeted for and agreed in March. That's the time of year, every year, that the budget is agreed.

The fact that Reform dodged questions about the free school uniform programme all summer and waited until late on a Friday one week before children go back to school is contemptible.

We'll disagree about policies. That's fine. If Reform don't want to provide free school uniforms or free parking, just say so - be brave enough to own it. Don't hide behind nonsense about not being able to afford something already budgeted for - especially when the first thing most residents noticed was you magically finding £200k for a political adviser. It stinks, and the public can smell it.

Running the council means making decisions, and it means holding responsibility for communicating those choices in a clear and honest way.

In contrast to Reform, the Labour government is providing more support for families from this September. There are more free Primary School breakfast clubs starting in St Helens North, more free childcare is available for working families, a cap on the number of branded school uniform items families can be asked to buy is coming into force, and we're expanding free school meals.

That's the kind of support families need, and that's what Labour is getting on and delivering. You can watch my video discussing this here.

Suicide Prevention Day

September 10th was #WorldSuicidePreventionDay, a chance for us all to remember everyone affected by suicide.

Like too many others, I've been affected by the suicide of a loved one. I think about him often, not just on days like this. It never leaves you.

It is ok not to be ok, and if you or someone you know is struggling to cope, Samaritans are there day or night, free, on 116 123.

Let's keep working together to prevent suicide and save lives. Suicide is not inevitable — with the right support, connection and action, lives can be saved.



In St Helens North

It was a pleasure to visit Newton Community Hospital in September. I know so many people who use the services here, and I know what it means to our community. Thank you Rob Cooper - Chief Executive of Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust - for showing me around and introducing me to all the wonderful staff.



It was an emotional night at Saints saying goodbye to Jonny Lomax and Mark Percival, without doubt two of the best to pull on the red V. Thank you to them both for everything, and see you in 2027 Saints!



The council consultation on the future of Newton-le-Willows Library has ended. I wrote the council Chief Executive on 10th September with questions about the proposals. I have yet to receive a response, but you can read my letter here. I hope councillors will think very carefully about the plans.

Congratulations to The Haydock Band who performed as number 2 out of 18 in the National Brass Band Championships of Great Britain! They have made everyone back at home so proud and I can't wait to see what the future holds in store for the band.



I cannot believe the transformation from what was a virtually derelict container just a few weeks ago to what is now a cosy and extremely well kitted out space for the brand new Haydock Men's Shed group. All credit to Dave Bailey and his family, and all the volunteers including Andy who between them have done an absolutely incredible job.



And huge thanks to those local companies and individuals who have donated their time, money and services to making it happen including Vinyline Signs & Graphics, JW Carpets and Flooring and Carpet Corner Parr.

Thank you so much to the team at Satis Education for inviting me to be a part of their roundtable last week with local education leaders discussing the government's White Paper, inclusion, SEND, accountability and more.



Our frontline school staff have the experience and knowledge to deliver the very best for all our children. We need to find the best way to allow them to get on with it.

In Westminster

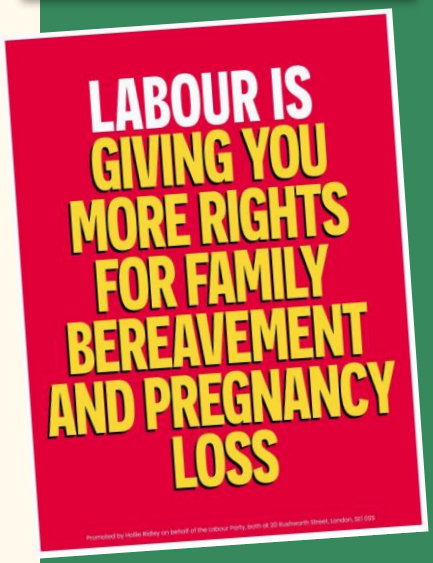


It was great to welcome Politics students from my old college Carmel College to Parliament and I was really happy to answer their questions and tell them a bit about my role. They are exceptionally bright and a credit to Carmel.

The Health Bill was one of the most significent things we have voted on in September. This Labour Government is putting the NHS back on its feet and making it fit for the future. This Bill contains three major reforms around devolving decisions, reducing bureaucracy and improving patient care. Health Secretary Yvette Cooper announced that a life-extending drug to treat a specific type of incurable breast cancer will now be available on the NHS in England.



Suffering a bereavement or the loss of a pregnancy is one of the most painful experiences a family can go through. But for too long, people have had to fight for the opportunity to grieve. Labour's changing things - with new legal rights to allow you to take the time you need to deal with loss. Read the full announcement on my website.

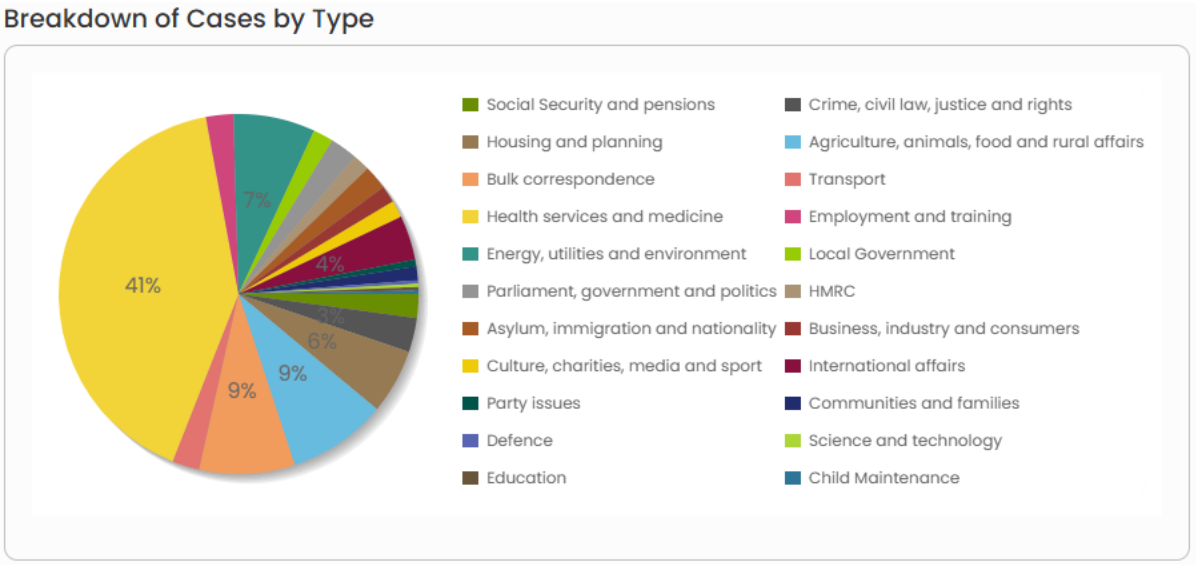


One of the most important votes we have had this September was on the Assisted Dying Bill which came back for a second time. Since the Bill process began in the Autumn of 2024, I have received hundreds of messages, personal stories and questions from local people and from healthcare workers, including many who work in end-of-life care. I went into this debate two years ago with an open mind, and I am truly grateful to all those who have contacted me about this issue, especially those who have shared very personal experiences. I carefully considered all the evidence and all the arguments presented to me and after thorough consideration I came to the view that this Bill is flawed and that the risk of vulnerable people being coerced is simply too great and impossible to avoid. You can read my updated statement in full here.



It was my great honour to pay tribute to the great Sir Billy Boston on the day that his funeral was taking place. I was grateful to the Leader for sending the thoughts of the whole House to Sir Billy's loved ones.

Casework update



This month we have dealt with over 300 cases this month ranging from assisted dying, to north sea oil drilling, to SEND, and council tax issues. Some examples of the cases we have dealt with are as follows:

Housing Support

Assisted a constituent with raising their situation to Under One Roof and ensured that they were awarded the correct banding thus leading to their acquisition of a property.

Visa Status

A constituent was awaiting visa approval and asked for assistance. They then received a response from the Home Office confirming the approval of their visa as a result of our intervention.

Housing Benefit

A constituent had issues paying for rent as their housing benefit was incorrectly stopped last year. The constituent reached out for support and we ensured that the correct benefit and reductions were reinstated to them.

Bridge Tolls

Helped raise a constituent's case regarding being incorrectly fined for failure to pay a toll that they had paid. We ensured that the toll company was aware of the error resulting in their rescinding of the fine.

If you need support or have a question please do get in touch. See my contact details on the back page.

Rugby League Cares





Rugby League recently celebrated its 131st birthday, and to mark the occasion it was the sport's first Rugby League Cares Charity round.

Every Super League and Championship game, plus the 1895 Cup Final, were united in support of seriously injured players. It was great to be at BrewDog Stadium to cheer off Jimmy, John, Ryan and Pete as they started the RL Heartland Handcycle at the home of Saints.

Thank you to everyone who donated to this fantastic cause - Every pound raised went to supporting seriously injured players.

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. Thank you for reading.

Best wishes,

David



Promoted by Andy Bowden on behalf of David Baines, both c/o Suite 2 Westway House, 42-44 Bridge Street, Newton-le-Willows, WA12 9QT