

BUSINESS MANIFESTO



Nick Buckley
INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE

FOR MAYOR
of Greater Manchester
2024



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OVERVIEW

Small and medium-sized businesses are the heart of our economy and have been overlooked for far too long. Politicians seem to only want to engage the multi-nationals for a good photo opportunity, which helps when they want a well-paid job in the future.

I got my first job at the age of twelve helping the local milkman on his rounds every weekend morning and then I became a paperboy. I set up my first business at seventeen promoting a local video shop and increasing sales.

In my twenties, I worked on the markets as a self-employed trader and eventually moved into wholesaling. Occasionally, I worked in bars and on building sites when I needed extra money.

In my thirties, I worked for *British Midland* at Manchester Airport until an industrial accident ended my career. I secured a job at *Manchester Council* which led to an amazing career reducing crime and disorder.



In my forties, I set up and funded an award-winning charity to stop young people from making poor choices and ending up in a life of crime. I also created projects to help rough sleepers off the streets and into accommodation and employment.

I am now in my fifties, I design services for the third sector, as well as publish books on social issues and solutions.

I want to create an environment where small businesses can flourish and be successful. I do not want to run your business, in fact, I want to get the government out of your way so you can do what you need to do. I will listen to you and find out what you need from me.

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Law & Order

How do we expect shops to make a profit when shoplifting is semi-legal, and when shopkeepers spend so much on security that they cannot take a wage?

Antisocial behaviour blights local commercial areas and high streets. We need to tackle begging, criminal damage and littering so areas are inviting and feel safe.

Pedestrians are not safe on pavements any longer as electric bikes fly past delivering takeaways or simply causing a nuisance.

Criminal gangs target commercial premises with very little chance of ever getting caught.

How can it be right that employees are afraid of being assaulted at work? And even afraid of tackling a shoplifter in case THEY get arrested.



The above will all be tackled by Greater Manchester Police as we start the process of reclaiming the streets from the criminals.

We will go back to basics and tackle the stuff that ruins people's quality of life of people. I want a zero-tolerance approach when it comes to dealing with criminals, and an end to 'soft touch' policing.

I worked with the police for 20 years tackling antisocial behaviour, so this is one of my areas of expertise.

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Transport

I have stated that I will cancel the *Clean Air Zone (CAZ)* and Mayor Burham has now followed suit. But to ensure that this scheme cannot be activated another day by another Mayor, I will dismantle the infrastructure and cancel all contracts.

Policies which aim to reduce vehicle use, such as congestion charges, 15-minute cities and low-traffic neighbourhoods have produced unintended consequences and been counterproductive and unpopular. I want to push back against these policies, putting practical solutions above ill-conceived 'green' ideology.

Public transport is vital for many people, including shoppers and employees. I will look at the new *Bee Bus Network* to ensure it is financially sustainable and does not collapse.

I will push back against the implementation of more cycle lanes that are reducing road capacity and eliminating parking spaces outside shops.



I will be campaigning for better transport networks across the whole of the north so we can build the powerhouse we keep being told is on the way.

I want to see an expansion of Manchester Airport, new Metrolink lines and upgrades to our trunk roads. We also need to tackle the blight of potholes. Nothing says 'failing country' like the poor state of the roads.

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Towns & High Streets

We need to save our high streets and our town centres. I will engage experts to look at ways in which our high-street shops can compete with online shopping.

Manchester city centre is important but it cannot be allowed to suck the life out of the rest of the region.

We need to improve public transport but not at the cost of drivers. Most small businesses say that driving is the most important form of transport for their customers.

We need to encourage more customers to visit shops by slashing car parking fees. And increase the ability for drivers to stop outside shops for a limited time – passing trade is vital.



Repurposing commercial properties for residential housing must take place so we do not have boarded-up shop fronts – planning permission must be made simpler. These new residents will hopefully spend their money in the remaining local shops.

No one knows what the future holds for our high streets and town centres, so we must remove government bureaucracy so entrepreneurs can flourish in this new business arena. Innovation is needed.

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Public Sector Procurement

We need local money spent locally. This is one way we invest in the region. I want our taxes spent in a smarter way.

I have submitted applications for public sector contracts so I know how horrendously complicated the process is. It is for this reason that small local businesses do not apply. They do not have the resources or the time for such protracted procedures. Meaning that the 'big boys' get all the contracts.

I want the procurement process simplified and advertised to small local businesses as a possible source of new contracts. Over time, I would like to see local government running fewer services themselves by offering them out to contract.



I would also like to see automatic financial compensation paid to businesses for late payments by public sector organisations. 30 days is more than enough to process an invoice and make a payment. I know businesses that will not accept council contracts because of the delay in payments.

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Future Skills

Our state education needs dramatic improvement. Far too many pupils leave school with few academic and social skills, making them virtually unemployable.

Far too much emphasis is placed on university courses and too little on vocational training. We need more tradespeople and technical skills. Developing these skills through apprentices encourages a good work ethic.

I want to see less money spent on wasteful 'green' projects and senseless diversity initiatives. And more resources channelled into up-skilling the people of Greater Manchester so they can better access well-paid jobs.

Far too many young people do not understand how to be an employee and what it means when you accept a job contract.



This is where we need charities and community groups to step in and invest in their own friends and neighbours.

I expect every adult to contribute to society and the first step is to ensure they have the basic skills needed to pay their own way.

If we are not investing in skills today then how are we to run the businesses of tomorrow?

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Saturday Jobs

How do we create the fully-rounded adults of tomorrow when we treat our young people as little children?

I will work with businesses to develop part-time work opportunities for young people aged 13 and above. Working Saturdays, after school and during school holidays will encourage a work ethic and an understanding of regular employment, especially when working alongside adult employees.

The life lessons learned will be invaluable to young people, especially those who come from homes where there are no working adults.

I will create the necessary paperwork covering safeguarding responsibilities, hours of work etc and downloadable consent templates for parents to sign.



I want the next generation of young people to be work-ready and possess the skills needed to excel in any job. We stop the *Universal Credit* claimants of tomorrow by giving them the confidence to see a better future.

Aspiration is not a dirty word.