Reform UK Headlines — 17 Oct 2026

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? Latest Developments

ITV undercover storm deepens: resignations, "vote interference" claims and a comms chief caught on tape

The fallout from ITV News's year-long undercover investigation (*Undercover: A Year in Reform*, full 90-minute Exposure documentary airs Sunday on ITV1/ITVX, produced by Hardcash Productions) dominated another 24 hours of Reform UK news.

- **Alan Feeney resigns from TWO councils.** The Reform councillor filmed calling Asian homeowners "absolute parasites", describing an area as "infested" with Asian families and saying no more than 1% of the UK population should be non-white, has quit every post he held on Solihull Council (where he was deputy mayor) and Birmingham City Council. He has also been **suspended from his job as a prison custodial manager** — the MoJ called his comments "despicable". Feeney issued "sincere and unreserved apologies" saying the remarks "do not reflect my true beliefs". Fellow Solihull candidates Jamie Campbell and Chris Whelan also resigned, with Whelan quitting as a councillor altogether; Reform's Solihull opposition leader Samantha Gethen said the resignations "were the right thing to do". By-elections follow in Solihull and Birmingham (Shard End), where the Reform group leader apologised to Castle Bromwich voters "for putting trust in councillors". (BBC, Birmingham Live, Express & Star)

- **Hampshire Reform leader George Madgwick accuses ITV of "vote interference".** Madgwick — filmed admitting Portsmouth Patriots members (an anti-immigration group whose members expressed far-right views) "literally come out flyering with us" during May's elections and saying Reform could support them ("Yeah, I do") — claims the two undercover reporters who campaigned with Reform in Portsmouth in March/April "would have had an impact on the result" (Reform narrowly lost three of the four seats they worked) and wonders "whether their interference in an election is a potential criminal offence". He denies Patriots membership, says he "supported their movement over the years from the sidelines", and called the infiltration "an entirely disgusting invasion of personal privacy" ("I allowed these men in my home. I made them drinks. They met my dogs."). ITV denies electoral interference, saying the programme follows broadcasting regulations and is "in the public interest". (BBC, Haslemere Herald/LDRS, Daily Echo)
- **Reform's Director of Communications caught on camera.** An ITV undercover reporter secured a job working with comms chief **Ed Sumner**, who was filmed **privately condemning a controversial party candidate as "clearly a racist"** and clashing with Nigel Farage over how the case was handled. Left Foot Forward reports the aide accused Farage of protecting the candidate who told David Lammy to "go home". Sumner previously advised Reform MS Laura Anne Jones and was exposed by Nation.Cymru for offensive WhatsApp messages (complaining London's NYE fireworks focused too much on "immigration, diversity and gays"; derogatory remarks about the late Mohammad Asghar and his daughter Natasha). (Nation.Cymru, Left Foot Forward)
- **Sarah Pochin's "male issue" tape.** The Runcorn and Helsby MP was secretly recorded telling a reporter posing as a press officer that Reform is "so f***ing chauvinistic", "excludes you if you're a woman" and has "a bit of a male issue going on"; she also said the party "so needs women press officers". **Robert Jenrick** dismissed it — "That's not my experience of Reform" — and was challenged by Radio 4's Anna Foster ("but you're not a woman"), struggling to answer what support he'd offered Pochin before insisting "You're trying to make something where there is nothing." In overnight coverage Jenrick defended Reform's vetting process, and separately claimed Farage has done more to tackle racism than "almost anybody". (Left Foot Forward, ITV, The Independent)
- **Richard Tice calls undercover journalism "probable criminal activity"** in a party video after Reform HQ inadvertently employed an undercover reporter — a response LFF says has been widely mocked. (Left Foot Forward)
- **Martin Roberts**, a former Reform Wales Senedd caseworker (employed by Jason O'Connell MS after standing as the party's 4th-placed candidate in Pontypridd Cynon Merthyr in May), was filmed referring to Black people with racial slurs. He is understood to have since left the role, though O'Connell has not confirmed when. (Nation.Cymru)
- **Cross-party condemnation spread to London:** Hounslow politicians condemned two Reform councillors featured in the investigation (My London), with calls for them to be ousted from the London council (Evening Standard). A Bromley Reform councillor was filmed describing Black children as "animals" and calling for King Charles III to be decapitated, claiming he was a secret Muslim.

The exodus continues: 104 and counting

- **The New World** reports the number of Reform councillors elected in May who have since resigned, defected, been suspended or expelled has passed **104 — 4.4% of all new Reform councillors, or 0.642 gone per day** (per the "R U STILL THERE?" tracker run by Chris Barker). Latest departures: Leeds councillors **David Dresser and Paula-Jane Thackray** (resigned after suspensions pending an internal investigation; two Leeds quitters have formed a "Leeds First" group).
- **Bradford:** Bolton & Undercliffe councillor **Jon Barras** quit to sit as an independent, citing the City of Sanctuary motion and a motion to direct extra education funding to white working-class boys only as the "final straw" ("I cannot care less what colour you are, every child should have the same opportunities"), plus "systemic bullying" from local leadership. Reform group leader Stephen Place demanded Barras resign his seat and face a by-election; Barras refuses. His departure days after the Sanctuary motion **lost by one vote** compounds a bruising week for Reform-run Bradford. (BBC)
- **Sheffield:** ex-Reform councillors **Mick Lee and Robert Hanson** formed the **New Chartist Reform Group** ("Reform have some good ideas but… they've got the people to implement those ideas" — Hanson; both will campaign on disability issues and zero-tolerance anti-social-behaviour enforcement). (BBC/LDRS)
- **Doncaster:** Conisbrough councillor **Will Shaw** quit to be "politically neutral" in his roles as Doncaster's farming and nature recovery champion and on the Conisbrough North Pride in Place Board. (Doncaster Free Press — fetched via search snippet, page Cloudflare-blocked; BBC)
- **Plymouth:** council leader Tudor Evans (Labour) told Cabinet the Reform group is **"collapsing"** — down **25% of its membership in four months** — as committee seat allocations went to an extraordinary full council review. (Exmouth Journal/Plymouth Herald)

Polling: a bad week crystallises

- **Ipsos (via MailOnline, Friday night):** the public now see the **Conservatives as the main opposition/challengers to Labour for the first time in this Parliament** — Tories 35, Reform 32 — overturning Reform's **28-point lead from May**. Ipsos's Keiran Pedley: "the tectonic plates are shifting on the Right of British politics… Reform has had scandal after scandal whereas Kemi has looked like a steady pair of hands." Lord Hayward cautioned the post-conference bounce needs 4–6 weeks to prove durable. The Mail frames it against Reform's "police probes over donations and a new racism and sexism scandal".
- **YouGov Wales (published 15 Oct; fieldwork 28 Sep–5 Oct, n=1,039): Farage is the least popular party leader in Wales — 23% favourable / 66% unfavourable, net −43.** PM Andy Burnham tops the table (+14), Rhun ap Iorwerth is +1, Badenoch −22, Zack Polanski −26, Ed Davey −6. Despite Farage's personal unpopularity, 51% regard Reform as one of Wales's "main parties" (Plaid 78%, Labour 67%, Tories just 31%). Top issues facing Wales: health 48%, economy 44%, immigration/asylum 33%. (Nation.Cymru, Wales Online)
- **Farage's response on the Chelmsford walkabout:** Reform dropped to third "because the whole of the Tory press [is] promoting Kemi Badenoch as the saviour" and "we've had problems whether it's ITV or Channel 4"; he insists "we will be back up in those polls, I

have no doubt". He also explained skipping August's Clacton by-election count (where Count Binface came second): **"I didn't want to get punched."** (Nation.Cymru/PA)

Dan Thomas: "anti-white racism" defence

Reform's **disgraced former Welsh leader Dan Thomas MS** (Casnewydd Islwyn) — who resigned as Senedd group leader in September after arrest on suspicion of assault and controlling/coercive behaviour, bailed, **not suspended by the party** — defended Reform over the ITV probe, claiming undercover investigations of Plaid, Labour and the Greens would reveal **"anti-white racism and antisemitism"** and that "the media have no interest in exposing their left-wing friends". Welsh Labour source: the language exposed is "utterly appalling… Martin Roberts was not some fringe activist… Simply dismissing this as another 'bad apple' is not good enough". (Nation.Cymru)

?? Policy / Controversy

- **Equality Act hypocrisy (Independent exclusive):** an official Reform booklet distributed at last month's Birmingham conference advises its adult-social-care councillors to embed equalities considerations and use **equality impact assessments** — while the party pledges to repeal the Equality Act 2010 "on day one" (Suella Braverman, February: Britain is being "ripped apart by diversity, equality and inclusion"). The booklet itself notes Reform "would seek to abolish the Equality Act 2010" but says understanding how decisions affect communities "remains fundamental to good governance". Bridget Phillipson: "desperate hypocrites". Reform spokesman: the guidance reflects "the law as it currently stands" and is "perfectly compatible" with policy — new legislation would "maintain many of the same workplace protections".
- **Face-coverings Senedd debate:** Reform Wales' shadow transport/economy minister **Jason O'Connell MS** will lead a short Senedd debate on **Wednesday 21 October** on restricting full-face coverings where used to conceal identity in crime, antisocial behaviour or intimidation — citing Nottingham's September targeted restriction (local policing bodies attribute a 40% fall in city-centre ASB to the wider operation) and possible changes to Newport's city-centre PSPO. Note: O'Connell is the MS who employed Martin Roberts. (Pembrokeshire Herald, South Wales Argus)
- **Kirklees climate rollback:** Reform-run Kirklees Council is moving to **scrap its climate emergency declaration and 2038 net-zero target** — branded "dangerous" by opponents — following the same pattern in Reform-controlled Sandwell and Nuneaton & Bedworth. (Huddersfield Hub, Yorkshire Live, Birmingham Live)
- **Pembrokeshire Pride postpones Reform Q&A:** the planned session with Milford Hakin county councillor **Scott Thorley** was called off "in light of recent issues surrounding Reform UK", stressing Thorley is "not personally responsible for the actions of others". Thorley: "I was ready and willing to sit down and talk… no hard feelings", suggesting unspecified outside pressure. (Pembrokeshire Herald)

- **Tierney pressure mounts:** Solihull's Green group leader **Max McLoughlin** says Reform councillor **Phil Tierney** — exposed in May for X posts naming Islam as the thing he'd "delete from the Earth" and calling for mosques to close — has "no option" but to resign; Reform promised an investigation but has taken no public action while forcing Feeney/Campbell/Whelan out. Reform did not respond to LFF. Related LFF exclusive this week: Reform county councillor and former parliamentary candidate **Nigel Alderson** reposted an image of a **pig defecating on a Quran**.
- **"Rotten culture" commentary:** LabourList's editorial asks "at what point does one 'rotten apple' become a rotten bushel over several seasons?", cataloguing the pattern from UKIP-era remarks to last year's far-right conspiracy candidates; HuffPost argues Reform (and the Greens) aren't going anywhere and two-party politics isn't back; PoliticsHome's focus-group piece finds the Lib Dems "not cutting through" — the real realignment fight is on the Right. The Nerve published a Stewart Lee column linking Putin-style social-media undermining to Trump, with Reform/Farage references.
- **Walsall:** Reform accused of "hijacking Christmas" in the row over the Willenhall lights switch-on (Express & Star, Birmingham Live — headline-level, paywalled).
- **PM's line:** Andy Burnham said Reform must take "immediate and firm action", adding "we've allowed a poison into our politics in recent years, and it's time to draw a line under it" — and praised Kemi Badenoch for drawing a line at Tory conference. Farage: the probe happened "because the establishment frankly want us out of the picture… you can't vet people for what they say in the future". Party sources suggest those filmed have been suspended or have left.

? Key Contradictions & Points of Interest

1. **Vetting whiplash:** Jenrick defends the vetting process (ITV, overnight) while Farage concedes "you can't vet against what somebody might say in the future" and Reform's own statement admits some individuals "who do not share our values will initially make it through vetting" — two years after Farage promised to root out "bad apples".
2. **Equality Act:** pledging day-one repeal while instructing its own councillors to run equality impact assessments.
3. **Pochin vs Jenrick:** the party's own MP says it "excludes you if you're a woman"; its Treasury spokesperson says there is nothing there — and is challenged for not being able to speak to women's experience of the party.
4. **"Vote interference" framing:** Madgwick's criminality musing echoes Tice's "probable criminal activity" — reframing undercover journalism as the offence, while Reform HQ itself employed one of the reporters.
5. **Dan Thomas's whataboutery** ("anti-white racism" in other parties) comes from a politician arrested on suspicion of assault/coercive behaviour who was never suspended by Reform.

6. **Local-government bleed:** 104 May-elected councillors gone (4.4%), Plymouth group down 25% in four months, new defections in Bradford, Sheffield, Leeds and Doncaster — several defectors cite the party's own local leadership ("systemic bullying", "they've not got the people") rather than its national politics.
7. **Polling squeeze from both directions:** Tories overtake Reform as perceived main opposition (Ipsos 35–32) while Farage hits net −43 in Wales (YouGov) — yet 51% of Welsh adults still see Reform as a "main party".

? Quick Summary

Story	Status	Key fact
ITV *Undercover: A Year in Reform*	Documentary airs Sun 19 Oct	Feeney, Campbell, Whelan resigned; MoJ suspended Feeney
Madgwick vs ITV	"Vote interference" claim	ITV: "in the public interest"; Patriots flew Reform leaflets
Sarah Pochin tape	Chauvinism row	Jenrick: "not my experience"; Foster: "you're not a woman"
Ed Sumner footage	Comms chief on camera	Called candidate "clearly a racist"; clashed with Farage
Councillor exodus	104 gone since May	4.4% of new Reform councillors; 0.642/day
Ipsos poll	Tories 35, Reform 32	Main opposition perception flips; May lead was Reform +28
YouGov Wales	Farage net −43	Least popular leader; Burnham +14 tops table
Equality Act	Hypocrisy exclusive	Conference booklet backs impact assessments
Face coverings	Senedd debate Wed 21 Oct	Led by Jason O'Connell MS
Kirklees/Sandwell	Climate rollback	Scrapping climate emergency + 2038 net-zero
Dan Thomas	Whataboutery	"Anti-white racism" claim; never suspended by party
Phil Tierney	Resignation calls	Green leader: "no option"; no Reform action since May

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? Source Links

Fetched & verified this run:

- Nation.Cymru — Farage least popular party leader in Wales: https://nation.cymru/news/farage-least-popular-party-leader-in-wales-new-poll-finds/
- Nation.Cymru — Disgraced former Reform Wales leader defends party: https://nation.cymru/news/disgraced-former-reform-wales-leader-defends-party-over-itv-probe/
- Nation.Cymru — Burnham: Reform must act immediately: https://nation.cymru/news/reform-uk-should-take-immediate-action-against-racism-burnham-says/
- BBC — Hampshire Reform councillor calls ITV report 'vote interference': https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cqjdm2nylkz0o
- BBC — Reform councillor Alan Feeney quits over offensive comments: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c64g1803dkp7o
- BBC — Call for by-election as Bradford councillor quits Reform: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cw4g1d9rvqlqo
- BBC — Ex-Reform UK councillors create new group (Sheffield): https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c6ly3zx9k30mo
- Left Foot Forward — Pochin secretly recorded: https://leftfootforward.org/2026/10/reform-mp-sarah-pochin-secretly-recorded-saying-party-excludes-you-if-youre-a-woman/
- Left Foot Forward — Jenrick challenged over chauvinism dismissal: https://leftfootforward.org/2026/10/robert-jenrick-challenged-by-journalist-after-dismissing-sarah-pochins-claims-of-chauvinism-within-reform/
- Left Foot Forward — Green leader calls on Tierney to resign: https://leftfootforward.org/2026/10/green-party-group-leader-calls-on-reform-councillor-previously-exposed-for-anti-islam-posts-to-resign/
- Left Foot Forward — Tice "probable criminal activity" mocked: https://leftfootforward.org/2026/10/reform-mocked-after-richard-tice-calls-itvs-undercover-reporting-probable-criminal-activity/
- Left Foot Forward — Alderson pig/Quran repost exclusive: https://leftfootforward.org/2026/10/exclusive-reform-councillor-reposted-image-of-a-pig-defecating-on-a-quran-on-his-x-account/
- Left Foot Forward — Aide accused Farage of protecting candidate: https://leftfootforward.org/2026/10/undercover-reporter-shows-nigel-farage-being-accused-by-aide-of-protecting-candidate-who-told-david-lammy-to-go-home/
- The Independent — Reform equality advice exclusive: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/reform-equality-act-councils-farage-labour-b3067555.html
- LabourList — Reform's rotten culture is exposed: https://labourlist.org/2026/10/reform-rotten-culture-exposed/
- MailOnline (via NewsNow /A/3/1327284730) — Ipsos: Tories overturn Reform lead: https://www.newsnow.co.uk/A/3/1327284730
- Haslemere Herald/LDRS — Madgwick defends Patriots links: https://www.haslemereherald.com/news/politics/madgwicks-response-to-itv-investigation-964579
- The New World — 104 ex-Reform councillors: https://www.thenewworld.co.uk/rats-in-a-sack-104-all-out-number-of-ex-reform-councillors-elected-in-may-reaches-its-century/

- Exmouth Journal — Plymouth Reform group 'collapsing': https://www.exmouthjournal.co.uk/news/26645649.plymouth-leader-attacks-reform-departures-seat-review/
- Pembrokeshire Herald — Pride postpones Thorley Q&A: https://pembrokeshire-herald.com/151533/pembrokeshire-pride-postpones-qa-reform-councillor/
- Pembrokeshire Herald — Face-coverings Senedd debate: https://pembrokeshire-herald.com/151521/reform-wales-to-raise-full-face-coverings-in-senedd-debate/
- PoliticsHome — The Lib Dems are not cutting through: https://www.politicshome.com/opinion/article/the-lib-dems-are-not-cutting-through
- The Nerve — Stewart Lee column: https://www.thenerve.news/p/stewart-lee-column-putin-russia-reform-farage-nathan-gill-trump-social-media

Headline-level only (fetch blocked / resolver trap):

- ITV — Jenrick defends Reform UK's vetting process (NewsNow id 1327287224 — ITV ids now 301 with no Location via /A/3/)
- ITV — Second Reform councillor resigns after undercover investigation (id 1327271680)
- Doncaster Free Press — Councillor Will Shaw explains Reform exit: https://www.doncasterfreepress.co.uk/news/politics/councillor-explains-why-he-quit-reform-uk-to-go-independent-9293550 (Cloudflare 5.7KB shell; substance via search snippet + BBC https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cmqln25vqpx7o)
- HuffPost UK — Reform And The Greens Aren't Going Anywhere (0-byte response, known 406 trap; substance echoed via LabourList/PoliticsHome)
- Birmingham Live — Castle Bromwich apology / Solihull emergency meeting / "appalled" leader (Reach ConsentPaywall — headline-level)
- Evening Standard — Calls to oust exposed members from London council; Jenrick "almost anybody" racism claim (ConsentPaywall — headline-level)
- Wales Online — YouGov two-thirds unfavourable (Reach ConsentPaywall — covered via Nation.Cymru)
- Express & Star — Walsall 'hijacking Christmas' row (ConsentPaywall — headline-level)

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