Reform UK Headlines — 22 Oct 2026

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? Latest Developments

Reform reports ITV and Hardcash to the police over undercover racism sting

Reform UK has gone on the offensive against the broadcaster behind *Undercover: A Year in Reform*. Home affairs spokesman **Zia Yusuf** announced the party has "reported multiple ITV journalists and their board of directors to the police" and will take legal action against all of them, claiming the journalists breached fraud and elections law while making the documentary. Yusuf further alleged the undercover reporter who got work as a Reform press officer had **"doctored" her passport** to gain the job. Trade press (Broadcast) confirms the complaint names both ITV and production company Hardcash. The documentary exposed councillors and candidates using racist language — including black children referred to as "animals" and a member saying his area had become "infested" with Asian families.

- Nation.Cymru (21 Oct): https://nation.cymru/news/reform-says-it-has-reported-itv-to-the-police-over-undercover-investigation/
- Broadcast (21 Oct): https://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/itv/reform-uk-reports-itv-and-hardcash-to-police-over-undercover-doc/5221667.article
- The Independent (21 Oct, ConsentPaywall): https://www.independent.co.uk/ — NewsNow id 1327650835

Cash-rich Reform launches media "fightback" — Trump TV-style channel and a newspaper

Reuters (via CNA) reports Reform is aggressively deploying the **£72m donated by crypto businessmen Christopher Harborne and Ben Delo** in September. Key details from at least eight party officials:

- A **daily streaming channel** modelled on Trump TV, with an initial budget **exceeding £10m** and plans for **25 journalists and editors**, to "break the monopoly of an establishment media it regards as hostile".
- A **newspaper with an initial print run of 15 million**.
- Twelve media-job adverts already posted; ~half the £72m earmarked for HQ running costs until the election due by mid-2029.
- Board member **Gawain Towler**: "The media always say they offer a fair hearing to all opinions… But when it's Reform, they just want to say we're horrible."
- Peril flagged: Reform could be forced to hand funds back if Labour changes donation rules — officials say they will contest that. The party remains under police and parliamentary investigation over funding (the earlier £5m Harborne gift to Farage; the Channel 4 sting showing officials allegedly soliciting a foreign donation).
- CNA/Reuters (22 Oct): https://www.channelnewsasia.com/business/cash-rich-reform-uk-launches-fightback-new-media-platform-6481801

Electoral Commission fine — Reform pays £2,187.50 after missing deadline

The Electoral Commission fined Reform **£1,750** for missing digital imprints on campaign material; because the party **failed to pay by the deadline**, the sum rose to **£2,187.50**. The investigation found three party-run accounts on X, Instagram and LinkedIn lacked digital imprints between at least November 2025 and January 2026, and a February 2026 **Telegraph advert promoting Robert Jenrick** carried no imprint.

- Left Foot Forward (22 Oct): https://leftfootforward.org/2026/10/reform-ordered-to-pay-electoral-commission-fine-over-campaign-material-rule-breaches/

Farage drops the £90bn tax-cut commitment

In a significant policy shift, Farage announced Reform is **no longer committed to the £90bn of tax cuts** in its 2024 manifesto: "We want to cut taxes, of course we do, but we understand substantial tax cuts given the dire state of debt and our finances are not realistic at this current moment in time." He called the reversal "mature": "We are being sensible and not over-promising." The abandoned package included a £2m inheritance-tax threshold, 15% corporation tax, a £20,000 personal allowance, 20p/litre fuel-duty cut and stamp-duty abolition under £750k. The Chartered

Institute of Taxation notes the retreat was pre-signalled by Richard Tice's "performance related tax cuts" conference line and Farage's "savings before tax cuts" interview.

- CIOT (21 Oct): https://www.tax.org.uk/reform-uk-tax-nov25

??????? Wales: Senedd fury over face-covering debate

"Angry scenes" as Reform calls for burka ban — Nuremberg Laws invoked in response

Reform's short debate (called by **Jason O'Connell**, Pontypridd Cynon Merthyr) on banning Muslim face coverings produced some of the worst-tempered exchanges of the Senedd term, on the evening of the **60th anniversary of Aberfan**:

- O'Connell opened with balaclava-clad youths on illegal e-bikes "from Newport to Rhyl", then insisted "We have no issue or problem with Islam or Muslims… We do have an issue with people living amongst our communities hiding their identities."
- **Francesca O'Brien** called face coverings "anti-British": "Not all cultures are equal… we cannot continue to import alien cultures into this country."
- **Joe Martin**: the burka and niqab are "two of the many ways in which fundamentalist Islam is uniquely incompatible with Western civilization… Assimilation means losing religious face coverings."
- Deputy First Minister **Sioned Williams** (Plaid) called it a "shameful" end to a "sad day", and invoked the **Nuremberg Laws**: "The Jewish people of 1930s Germany were subject to the Nuremberg Laws… Who decides that a woman who [has] a face covering is less British or less Welsh?" Reform benches protested and raised a point of order; presiding officer Huw Irranca-Davies made no ruling.
- Plaid's **Carrie Harper**: "How on earth can you claim to stand up for women when you are trying to dictate what Muslim women can and cannot wear?" **Kiera Marshall** told of a constituent violently attacked over her headscarf. Labour's Huw Thomas noted Reform hasn't condemned "the masked mobs who stormed RNLI stations".
- The **Muslim Council of Wales** (Dr Abdul Azim Ahmed) condemned "disturbingly authoritarian attitudes… coupled with dangerously ultra nationalist attitudes about culture and belonging"; O'Connell accused the group of trying to "silence" the debate. No vote was held — the Senedd has no power to ban face coverings. Protests took place on the Senedd steps before and after, joined by Plaid and Labour MSs.
- BBC (21 Oct): https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cmd7qrew7z72o

Reform MS posts AI "slop" image of the Aberfan disaster

On the 60th anniversary itself, Afan Ogwr Rhondda MS **Steve Bayliss** marked Aberfan with an **AI-generated fake image** of the tragedy (116 children and 28 adults killed in 1966) — depicting black material cascading onto a modern-windowed building beneath terraced houses on the crest, nothing like the real Victorian Pantglas Junior School. Nation.Cymru called it "disrespectful" AI slop.

- Nation.Cymru (21 Oct): https://nation.cymru/news/reform-ms-creates-ai-slop-image-of-aberfan-disaster/

"Bad Boys" stunt mocks Senedd staff after gatecrashing row

Cai Parry-Jones and Iain McIntosh added sunglasses to their official Senedd photos and used the reggae hit *Bad Boys* to mock Commission staff who complained about the pair gatecrashing a private staff briefing on the Senedd renovations (staff reported feeling "anxious and intimidated"). McIntosh, shadow minister for government efficiency, lashed out at "sensitive civil servants" — apparently confusing the civil service with Welsh Parliament staff. Both declare they are "here to stay".

- Nation.Cymru (21 Oct): https://nation.cymru/news/reform-mss-mock-senedd-staff-with-bad-boys-stunt/

Other Welsh items

- **Flintshire Nation of Sanctuary bid:** Reform UK Wales leader on Flintshire council **Cllr Helen Brown** has tabled a Notice of Motion to withdraw Flintshire from the Local Authority of Sanctuary programme and Wales' Nation of Sanctuary coalition, citing residents' immigration concerns. Flintshire's sanctuary status was championed by the late Cllr Teresa Carberry. — Nation.Cymru (21 Oct): https://nation.cymru/news/councils-reform-leader-seeks-to-remove-local-authority-from-wales-nation-of-sanctuary-policy/ ; Evening Leader: https://www.leaderlive.co.uk/ — NewsNow id 1327650576
- **O'Brien's father defects TO Reform:** Swansea Gower councillor **Richard Lewis** — 50+ years of defections, a 2021 formal rebuke for likening a children's home outdoor area to a "concentration camp", and dropped from becoming Lord Mayor in 2013 over Bangladeshi-immigration leaflet remarks (all five council groups lodged a joint ombudsman complaint) — has joined Reform, the party of his daughter, Gŵyr Abertawe MS Francesca O'Brien. — Nation.Cymru (21 Oct): https://nation.cymru/news/reform-mss-father-joins-daughters-party-after-decades-of-defections/
- **Powys chairman's unpermitted holiday let:** Powys County Council chairman **Cllr Geoff Morgan** (Reform, Ithon Valley) has run the Old Cobblers Shop, a Grade II listed

building in Llanbister, as an Airbnb-style holiday let **without planning permission for several years** — fully booked this month. He declared an interest and vacated the chair in July when councillors discussed council-tax discounts for self-catering properties; retrospective applications were only lodged in August. — Nation.Cymru (22 Oct): https://nation.cymru/news/reform-council-chairman-runs-holiday-let-in-listed-building-without-planning-permission/

?? Policy & Controversy

Durham fallout: Grimes under fire, leader "breaks silence", Hopgood counter-attacks

- **Darren Grimes**, Durham County Council's Reform deputy leader, was secretly filmed appearing to offer **media training** to Welsh councillor Karl Lewis (who had shared Tommy Robinson and Andrew Tate content) as part of ITV's investigation. Grimes responds the findings are the "worst" thing he can be criticised for. — North East Bylines (22 Oct): https://northeastbylines.co.uk/news/politics/durham-deputy-leader-darren-grimes-under-fire-after-undercover-investigation/
- **North Yorkshire Council leader Carl Les** (Reform) has broken his silence after historic posts were unearthed (Yorkshire Post, 22 Oct — Cloudflare-walled; snippet-level): https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/politics/reform-council-leader-breaks-silence-as-historic-posts-unearthed-9301371
- **Lib Dem Amanda Hopgood** accuses Durham Reform of "spin": presenting the council-tax choice "as an order from government", taking credit for investment developed before Reform took office, and "making promises sound like results". — Northern Echo (22 Oct): https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/26657909.amanda-hopgood-challenges-reform-claims-durham/
- **Warwickshire:** ex-leader **Rob Howard** accuses Microsoft of "blackmail" as the Reform-run council braces for a software-cost hike (National World page Cloudflare-walled; snippet-level): https://www.warwickshireworld.com/news/politics/warwickshire-county-councils-ex-leader-accuses-microsoft-of-blackmail-9300788

Hampshire protest-restrictions legal threat

Hampshire Reform leader **Cllr George Madgwick** has written to PCC Donna Jones and Chief Constable Alexis Boon questioning whether the dispersal restrictions imposed during the 4 October Gosport protest (covering parts of Portsmouth) were proportionate or lasted longer than necessary. The party is consulting legal advisers; the letter is not a formal claim. Hampshire Police say the powers protected residents and protesters. (Madgwick previously called the ITV documentary "vote interference".)

- Meon Valley Times (21 Oct): https://meonvalleytimes.co.uk/reform-uk-considers-legal-challenge-over-hampshire-police-protest-restrictions/

Money in politics: the £72m shadow

Democracy for Sale (Peter Geoghegan, with ex-Electoral Commissioner David Howarth) uses Reform's **£72m from two crypto billionaires** — "a party that just happens to have promoted tax cuts for crypto-billionaires" — as the case for closing UK political-funding loopholes: no donation caps, spending limits only in the year before an election. Angela Rayner says the government is "taking action" via the Elections Bill. (Originally published 14 Sep; resurfaced on the hub this week as the Reuters media-platform story broke.)

- Democracy for Sale: https://democracyforsale.substack.com/p/stop-billionaires-buying-our-politics

Polling: Labour 6 points clear

More in Common (fieldwork 16–19 Oct): **Labour 28%, Conservatives 23%, Reform 22%, Lib Dems 10%** — Labour's lead boosts new PM Andy Burnham; Reform still short of its ~30% polling highs of last year and now third. Context noted by LFF: the standards probe into Farage's undeclared £5m Harborne gift, and the Met investigation into the alleged solicitation of an illegal donation from a wealthy American.

- Left Foot Forward (21 Oct): https://leftfootforward.org/2026/10/labour-maintains-6-point-lead-over-reform-in-latest-poll/

Smaller items

- **Basildon:** Cllr **Valerie Robbins** (Langdon Hills) joins Reform from the Independent group, praising Farage's leadership. — Echo News (21 Oct): https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/26658642.basildon-councillor-valerie-robbins-joined-reform-uk/
- **Stratford:** Journalist **John Sweeney** staged a mock trial of Farage before a sixth-form "jury" at Stratford Girls' Grammar School, promoting *The Real Nigel Farage — A Would-Be Prime Minister on Trial*; defence "lawyer" was Farage's partner **Jennifer Gray**. Jury found him "guilty" on six of seven charges. — Stratford Herald (22 Oct): https://www.stratford-herald.com/news/journalist-john-sweeney-puts-nigel-farage-on-trial-at-stra-9487971/
- **Corby:** Reform council leader announces support for a government inquiry into contaminated land. — NN Journal (21 Oct): NewsNow id 1327675313
- **Oldham:** By-election candidates announced (Shardend, 26 Nov). — Oldham Evening Chronicle (21 Oct): NewsNow id 1327650210

? Contradictions & Points of Interest

1. **"Reporting ITV to the police" inverts the scandal** — the party whose members were filmed making racist remarks is now the complainant, alleging fraud/elections-law breaches and a "doctored passport" by the undercover reporter. No police confirmation of the complaint's merits is on record yet.
2. **The £90bn tax-cut U-turn** contradicts the 2024 manifesto's central economic offer. Farage frames retreat as "maturity"; critics will note the party simultaneously plans a £10m+ TV channel and a 15m-print-run newspaper funded by crypto donations — austerity for policy, abundance for messaging.
3. **Imprint fine irony:** the Electoral Commission breach involved an advert **promoting Robert Jenrick** — a Conservative — underscoring how far Reform's spending reached beyond its own brand while under donation investigation.
4. **Aberfan double:** on the very day the Senedd commemorated the disaster's 60th anniversary (and the King sent a message), a Reform MS posted an AI fake of it, and the face-covering debate ran that evening — Sioned Williams explicitly linked the two ("a shameful end to a sad day").
5. **Richard Lewis's defection runs backwards:** after decades leaving parties over immigration remarks, he joins his daughter's Reform — where such remarks are now mainstream rather than disqualifying.
6. **Sanctuary whiplash in Flintshire:** Reform seeks to withdraw the council from a status led by the late Teresa Carberry, while Reform's Powys chairman profits from an unpermitted holiday let — "planning rules for thee but not for me" optics.
7. **"Establishment media is hostile" vs "we'll build our own media empire":** the Trump TV-style channel and 15m-copy newspaper are being launched by a party currently suing/reporting the journalists covering it.

? Quick Summary

Item	Status
ITV/Hardcash reported to police by Reform	New — legal offensive over racism sting
£72m media fightback (streaming channel + newspaper)	New — Reuters/CNA exclusive
Electoral Commission fine	New — £2,187.50 paid after missed deadline
£90bn tax-cut pledge	Dropped — "not realistic at this current moment"
Senedd face-covering debate	Held 21 Oct — angry scenes, Nuremberg Laws invoked, no vote
Aberfan AI image (Steve Bayliss MS)	New — 60th anniversary
Senedd staff "Bad Boys" mock (Parry-Jones, McIntosh)	New — follow-up to gatecrash row
Flintshire Nation of Sanctuary withdrawal motion	New — tabled by Helen Brown

Item	Status
Poll (More in Common, 16–19 Oct)	Lab 28 / Con 23 / Ref 22 / LD 10
Durham: Grimes media-training fallout	Continuing — Hopgood "spin" counter

Sources: NewsNow UK/Politics/Reform+UK hub; article bodies fetched via NewsNow /A/3/ resolver. Cloudflare-walled items (Yorkshire Post, Warwickshire World) cited at search-snippet level and flagged. Compiled by Hermes cron, 22 Oct 2026 09:00 BST.

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