Reform UK Headlines — 25 Oct 2026

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Day's spine: Ipsos has Reform slipping to **20% (−3) and third place behind the Tories for the first time since June 2025**, with Labour on 32% (+5) — Andy Burnham's biggest lead since the general election — and only **19% now think Reform is ready to govern (29% a year ago)**. The poll lands the same weekend Reuters details Reform's **£72m crypto-donor media fightback** : a Trump TV-style streaming channel (25 journalists, £10m+ initial budget) and a 15m-print-run newspaper. The Mirror reveals Reform MP **Suella Braverman claimed £45,000 in utility expenses (2017–2025)** including a water bill equal to **18 baths a day**, 368% above the average similar household. The Observer reports a **second whistleblower suspended** in Hull mayor Luke Campbell's office amid documents alleging "bullying, intimidation, threats of physical violence, racist abuse, homophobia". In Wales, Reform's "Aberfan tribute" video — posted **two days after the 60th anniversary** and pivoting mid-clip to a face-coverings ban pitch — is being called "opportunistic" and "shameful".

? Latest Developments

Ipsos: Reform slip to third — Tories overtake as Badenoch's ratings peak

The latest Ipsos poll (fieldwork 15–22 Oct, via MailOnline, Greg Heffer) puts **Labour 32% (+5), Conservatives 24% (+3), Reform UK 20% (−3)** — Reform's first drop below the Tories since June 2025 and Labour's largest lead since the 2024 general election. The Greens fall 5 points to 8% amid their anti-Semitism crisis. Key under-numbers:

- **Kemi Badenoch: 35% satisfied (+7) — her highest Ipsos rating as leader**; 39% dissatisfied (−7).
- Andy Burnham: 35% satisfied (+4) / 45% dissatisfied; government net satisfaction **−43, the best since Boris Johnson in 2022**.
- Zack Polanski: just 17% satisfied; 56% dissatisfied — his worst.
- **The Tories are losing only 16% of their 2024 vote to Reform, down from 22% last month** — the Conservative recovery is partly just plugging the leak to Farage.
- Ipsos's Keiran Pedley: "On the Right, the tectonic plates have been shifting… now this is reflected in the Conservatives – not Reform UK – being in a clear second place," though he cautions against "overreacting to one poll" ahead of Wednesday's Budget.

PoliticsHome's Keiran Pedley opinion piece draws out the readiness gap: **only 19% believe Reform is ready to form the next government, down from 29% a year ago**, while Labour+Con together command 56% — their highest combined share since Ipsos restarted VI polling in June 2025. His caveat: 56% "would still have looked extraordinarily weak" in the 1990s–2010s, Reform remains above its 2024 GE share, and immigration — the issue that fuelled its rise — is still voters' number one concern, with Reform retaining a commanding lead as the party most trusted on it.

Reuters: the £72m fightback — Trump TV-style channel, 15m-run newspaper

Reuters (Elizabeth Piper & Andrew MacAskill, syndicated via Gulf Times) details how Reform has **started aggressively spending the record £72m ($96m) donated by crypto businessmen Christopher Harborne and Ben Delo** in September:

- **Twelve adverts for media jobs** are already up; the plan is a **daily YouTube-based TV channel modelled on Trump TV**, with an estimated initial budget **exceeding £10m and 25 journalists and editors**, building on the party's ~8-posts-a-week YouTube output.
- A **newspaper with an initial print run of 15 million** is also planned; about half the £72m covers HQ running costs until the election due by mid-2029, plus policy production, advisers and campaign operations.
- 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." The channel will also train more media performers to give respite to Reform's eight MPs.
- The two donors **frontloaded £36m each**; Delo said the party "should spend less time trying to raise funds… and more time preparing for government"; a source says no strings attached.
- Reuters flags the peril: Reform **could be forced to hand the funds back if Labour changes donation rules** (Reform says it would contest this), and the party remains the focus of **police and parliamentary investigations** over its earlier £5m Harborne-to-Farage funding and the Channel 4 and ITV "sting operations". Farage's line: sometimes people say "unpleasant" and "silly things". *(Note: the £72m media-platform story first*

broke via Reuters/CNA on 22 Oct and was covered in that day's report; today's Gulf Times syndication adds the Towler quotes, job-advert count and donor frontloading detail.)

Observer: second whistleblower suspended in Reform mayor Luke Campbell's "toxic" office

Catherine Neilan in the Observer reports that **a second member of staff under Hull & East Yorkshire mayor Luke Campbell claims they were suspended after raising concerns about threatening and racist behaviour**:

- Documents submitted to the Hull and East Yorkshire Combined Authority (Heyca) allege **"bullying, intimidation, threats of physical violence, racist abuse, homophobia, breaches of confidentiality and failures to provide a safe working environment"** within Campbell's team.
- A manager is alleged to have made a derogatory reference to a black colleague — telling colleagues **"we will be overrun by them soon"** — and to have demonstrated "sexual positions that gay men would take" in reference to another staff member. Threats of physical violence towards the complainant **have been recorded by Humberside police** .
- The complainant says they were **banned from Heyca premises and prevented from contacting colleagues**, and that despite requesting confidentiality, details were shared in senior meetings **including the mayor's political adviser, Lia Nici**.
- The cyberflashing complainant (allegedly shown four "naked and sexualised" images of Campbell on his office computer) claims **the offer of a permanent job was rescinded** weeks later. Reform says Campbell "firmly denies the allegations".
- A source says several staff have left the combined authority since Campbell's election "owing to a toxic environment... The culture is not appropriate as set from the top."
- A filmed, minuted **Heyca executive board meeting has been cancelled without explanation**, and Campbell **did not attend last week's No 10 meeting between Andy Burnham and English mayors** — as Chancellor John Healey prepares Wednesday's Budget devolution package (£285m mayoral seed funding, £1.5bn borrowing facility from 2028).

Express & Star: Walsall Tories declare "no confidence" in Reform's finances

Follow-up to yesterday's Walsall story: Conservative opposition leader **Cllr Adrian Andrew** says he has **"no confidence" in Walsall Council's finances after Reform's "false" net-zero claims** — Reform having alleged the previous administration spent "£23 million in pursuit of net zero" (of which, as established yesterday, only £726,571 — 3% — was council-funded). Andrew's riposte in the SERP snippet: "If they're going to accuse us of...". *(Headline-level: Express & Star 403s both plain fetches — canonical URL cited.)*

Express & Star: Reform-run Staffordshire's new library policy raises Holocaust Memorial Day questions

A **new Staffordshire library policy "sparks questions on whether Holocaust Memorial Day will be marked"** — with **protesters gathered outside County Buildings, Stafford, on Thursday (22 October)**. Staffordshire County Council is Reform-controlled; **Martin Murray is the third man since December to lead the controlling Reform group** (BBC). *(Headline-level: Express & Star 403; no sister-paper twin found — The Staffordshire Signal homepage carries the protest photo but not the story.)*

St Helens: independents position themselves against the Reform-led council

The St Helens Star profiles the **six independent councillors** (Rainhill and Newton-le-Willows) sitting outside the main groups on the **recently elected Reform-led St Helens council**. Rainhill Independents leader James Tasker: "Independents don't have the baggage of the political parties... they carry the baggage of national issues and what people see in Parliament." Several are ex-Labour members who left over local issues like Rainhill's Green Belt. A useful ground-level marker of how the Reform council takeover is reshaping local alignments.

?? Policy & Controversy

Mirror: Braverman's taxpayer-funded water bill — "18 baths a day"

Nick Sommerlad's Mirror exclusive: Reform MP **Suella Braverman claimed £45,000 for utility bills on expenses from 2017 to 2025**. FOI-obtained details (via campaign group **Led By Donkeys**) show her family used **1,504 litres of water daily** at her £1.2m four-bedroom Hertfordshire home over five months from June 2024 — Affinity Water billed **£657.36** for June–November 2024, which the supplier said was enough to **"fill more than 18 bathtubs" a day and was "368.54% more water than the average similar-sized household"** — also enough to refill a large residential swimming pool monthly, though satellite images show no pool.

- She claimed the utilities because she designated her parents' Fareham property (not the Herts home) as her second home; in 2024-25 she claimed **£7,316 against a £6,630 accommodation maximum** by declaring part of the property a home office and

allocating 20% of water and utility bills to office use — in summer 2024, office expenses for enough water for "a thousand cups of tea a day".
- Her utility claims were the **fourth-highest of any MP in 2023/24 (£4,565.10) and third-highest the year after (£4,538.76)** — nearly three times the average.
- The juxtaposition: in her 2022 Tory leadership campaign she said **"Too many people in this country are choosing to rely on benefits, on taxpayers' money… to get by."**
- IPSA says all her homes were correctly registered; her spokesman: **"All rules have been followed."** Braverman defected from the Tories to Reform last year and now claims for a Winchester constituency home.

Left Foot Forward: "Net Stupid Zero" — Tice mocked again over climate jibe

LFF reports Reform deputy leader **Richard Tice** was ridiculed for a post coining **"Net Stupid Zero"** — "bemused readers" accused him of "substituting childish name-calling for serious debate"; one replied: "And in the stroke of a pen hundreds of thousands of people employed directly or indirectly in the industry are placed on benefits!! Great work Richard!" The piece catalogues Reform's position as **the only major party committed to scrapping the legally binding 2050 net-zero target**: repeal of carbon budgets, removing green levies (claimed £200–500/household savings), accelerated North Sea licensing, fracking, coal exploration and nuclear expansion. **Greenpeace** has called the draft Contract with You's climate arguments **"bogus arguments lifted straight from the climate denial playbook"**. LFF also recalls Tice's summer heatwave remarks that people should **"celebrate"** the changing climate and that ten times more people die from cold than heat — condemned by medical groups, with Labour chair **Bridget Phillipson**: "Richard Tice's comments are tone-deaf… they also expose where his interests really lie."

Left Foot Forward: "Coining in — how crypto is buying right-wing politics"

LFF's analysis of the Reform £72m windfall in context: the Harborne/Delo donation **exceeded the total received by all UK political parties in 2025**, and the pair have accounted for **more than 80% of Reform's funding since its founding in 2019**. The core question: "not simply how much money crypto can buy politicians, but what that money might buy in return." US parallels: CNBC's FEC analysis found **14 of the 20 biggest 2026-midcycle donors backed exclusively or almost exclusively Republicans**, with crypto/AI/online-gambling interests pouring in **$377m+** ; Public Citizen put crypto at **$274m — 44% of all corporate political spending — in the 2024 cycle** (vs $28.25m for Koch-linked groups); Deutsche Welle reported **Trump made over $1bn from crypto sales in 2025** while his administration rolled back regulation. Peter Geoghegan (Democracy for Sale): **"What Big Oil took decades to achieve, crypto has done in one election cycle."**

??????? Wales

Nation.Cymru: Reform UK Wales slated for "shameful" Aberfan video

An outpouring of anger after Reform UK Wales posted an **Aberfan "tribute" video fronted by Welsh leader Helen Jenner on X on 23 October — two days after the 60th anniversary** of the disaster that killed 144 people, including 116 children. The clip opens with Jenner mentioning Aberfan but **pivots mid-video to promoting Reform policy: mobile phones in schools, prostate cancer and the call to ban face coverings** like burqas and niqabs. It follows the tense 21 October Senedd debate (the anniversary itself) where Reform MS Jason O'Connell argued face coverings clash with British values, prompting Plaid Cymru's Sioned Williams to call it a divisive end to a sombre day of unity in Aberfan.

- Local **Gerwyn Jones** and bereaved families' reaction, as quoted: "The bereaved families and fellow survivors of Aberfan do not need or appreciate the hollow words of remembrance of a political party like Reform who only exist to sow division and hatred."
- X reactions: "You are disgusting opportunists"; "one of the scummiest things I've seen from a political party"; "Remembering it so much you posted this two days after the anniversary?... You people are shameful."
- The piece also recaps the **Steve Bayliss AI-generated Aberfan image** row (the Afan Ogwr Rhondda MS's Facebook post on the anniversary depicting a school and geography that don't match reality, with rescue workers in hard hats when parents clawed through slurry bare-handed). Resident **Thomas Dafydd**: "No serious politician who genuinely cares about the people of Aberfan would lazily use AI to create an image of a disaster that caused such immense suffering." Nation.Cymru put the ethics question to Bayliss.

? Contradictions & Points of Interest

1. **Spending to be heard vs. not being heard.** The same weekend Reuters reveals Reform building a 25-strong TV newsroom to break the "hostile establishment media" monopoly, Ipsos shows Reform at 20% and third — and the party's readiness-to-govern figure has fallen 29%→19% in a year. Meanwhile Reform has *reported ITV's journalists to the police* — you cannot simultaneously claim the media "just want to say we're horrible" and use criminal complaints against coverage you dislike.
2. **The leak has plugged.** Reform's slide is less about Labour's surge than the Tories losing only 16% of their 2024 vote to Farage (down from 22%) — Badenoch's personal ratings peaking at exactly the moment Reform's racism-rows dominate. The ITV documentary fallout appears to be moving right-wing voters *back* to the Conservatives.

3. **"Relying on taxpayers' money" — said the £45k-utility-claims MP.** Braverman's 2022 benefits lecture vs a water bill 368% above comparable households, a home-office allocation trick that took her past the claim maximum, and "a thousand cups of tea a day" of office water in summer 2024. All within rules, per IPSA — which is arguably the story.
4. **Aberfan, twice in one week.** First an AI-faked disaster image on the anniversary itself (Bayliss), then a "tribute" video two days late that pivots to a burqa-ban pitch (Jenner). Reform's Welsh leadership is now managing two overlapping sensitivities it created within 72 hours of each other — during the week its face-coverings Senedd debate was branded shameful across the chamber.
5. **Net zero, everywhere and nowhere.** Tice coins "Net Stupid Zero" for national consumption while Reform-run Walsall's "£23m net zero" claim collapses to 3% council money under Tory "no confidence", Reform-run Sandwell declares a *housing* emergency days after revoking its *climate* emergency, and Reform-run Staffordshire's library policy now raises questions about whether Holocaust Memorial Day will be marked.
6. **Campbell's office keeps widening.** What began as a cyberflashing allegation is now a second whistleblower suspended, Humberside police recording threats of violence, alleged racism and homophobia in the mayor's team, confidentiality leaks reaching political adviser Lia Nici, a cancelled executive board, and a skipped No 10 mayors' meeting — all as £285m of new devolution money heads the mayors' way on Wednesday.

? Quick Summary

Story	Key fact	Status
Ipsos poll	Lab 32 (+5), Con 24 (+3), Ref 20 (−3), Grn 8 (−5) — Reform third	Full body
Reform readiness	19% think Reform ready to govern (29% a year ago)	Full body
£72m media fightback	Trump TV-style channel, 25 journalists, £10m+, 15m-run newspaper	Full body (Reuters syndication)
Braverman expenses	£45k utilities 2017–25; 1,504 L/day = 18 baths; +368% vs average	Full body
Campbell "toxic office"	2nd whistleblower suspended; racism/homophobia/violence allegations	Full body
Aberfan video	Posted 2 days post-anniversary; pivots to face-coverings pitch	Full body
Tice "Net Stupid Zero"	Mocked; Greenpeace "climate denial playbook"	Full body
Crypto & the right	Harborne+Delo = 80%+ of Reform funding since 2019	Full body

Story	Key fact	Status
Walsall no-confidence	Tory leader Andrew on Reform's "false" £23m net-zero claim	Headline-level (403)
Staffs library/HMD	Protesters at County Buildings 22 Oct; Reform-controlled council	Headline-level (403)
St Helens independents	Six independents vs new Reform-led council	Full body

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? Source Links

- MailOnline (Ipsos poll, 25 Oct): https://www.newsnow.co.uk/A/3/1327977718
- PoliticsHome (Pedley opinion, Ipsos): https://www.politicshome.com/opinion/article/labour-tories-reasserting-themselves
- Gulf Times / Reuters (£72m media platform, 24 Oct): https://www.gulf-times.com/article/736570/opinion/cash-rich-reform-uk-launches-fightback-with-media-platform
- The Observer (Campbell toxic office, 24 Oct): https://observer.co.uk/news/national/article/fresh-complaints-over-reform-mayors-toxic-office
- Mirror (Braverman water bill, 24 Oct): https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/suella-braverman-reform-uk-expenses-37804061
- Nation.Cymru (Aberfan video, 24 Oct): https://nation.cymru/news/reform-uk-wales-slated-for-shameful-aberfan-video/
- Left Foot Forward (Tice jibe, 24 Oct): https://leftfootforward.org/2026/10/tone-deaf-tice-mocked-again-over-juvenile-climate-change-jibe/
- Left Foot Forward (crypto politics, 24 Oct): https://leftfootforward.org/2026/10/coining-in-how-crypto-is-buying-right-wing-politics/
- Express & Star (Walsall no-confidence, 25 Oct): https://www.expressandstar.com/news/conservative-says-no-confidence-in-walsall-councils-finances-after-reforms-false-net-zero-claims-9307323
- Express & Star (Staffs library/HMD, 25 Oct): https://www.expressandstar.com/news/new-staffordshire-library-policy-sparks-questions-on-whether-holocaust-memorial-day-will-be-marked-9307395
- BBC (Staffordshire leader Martin Murray): https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cd7jdnvqp1lo
- St Helens Star (independents, 25 Oct): https://www.sthelensstar.co.uk/news/26645138.st-helens-independent-councillors-want-change/

Fetch notes: 9/11 target articles fetched in full via NewsNow `/A/3/<id>` with plain urllib. Both Express & Star items 403'd (via `/A/3/` and canonical, ~5.7KB Cloudflare shell shape) — substance recovered via web_search SERP snippets and marked headline-level; no Staffordshire Signal twin exists for the library story. MailOnline `articleBody` JSON-LD was empty — body extracted via the `<p>`-paragraph pass (the reliable MailOnline recipe). No fabricated content; all quotes from fetched

article bodies or cited search snippets.

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