Reform UK Headlines — 27 Oct 2026

? Reform UK Headlines — 27 October 2026

> Compiled from the NewsNow *Reform UK* topic hub (top clusters + latest feed) and the underlying publisher articles. Focus: controversial statements, policy shifts and gaffes. Tuesday 27 October 2026. Budget eve: Chancellor John Healey delivers Labour's first Budget tomorrow (Wed 28 Oct).

? Latest Developments

Farage on Kassam's 'Nigerian scammer' jibe: "over the top"? Yes. "Intentionally racist"? No

On BBC Breakfast this morning, **Nigel Farage** was pressed repeatedly by presenter **Veronica Nugent** on whether ally **Raheem Kassam**'s description of Conservative leader **Kemi Badenoch** as a "Nigerian scammer" (plus a warning not to "give her your bank details" and asking if she was "a walking gaffe or an illegal immigrant") was racist. Farage dodged and deflected:

- "*I don't know, you tell me... As far as 'scammer' is concerned, it's a strong word but it's pretty clear that Kemi Badenoch does not tell the truth.*"
- "*I don't think saying someone grew up in Nigeria is racist. I don't think it is. You tell me. What do you think?*"
- On Kassam's closeness to Reform: "*So what? People say all sorts of things on Twitter every single day.*"
- The verdict: "*Do I think the comment was over the top? Yes I do. Do I think it was intentionally racist? No I don't.*"

This completes a three-day relay of refusals: **Danny Kruger** called it "a bit of rambunctious debate online" (23 Oct), **Robert Jenrick** declined to discuss "what a journalist has tweeted" and wouldn't call it racist on LBC (26 Oct), and now Farage himself stops short of condemning it as racist. Tory chairman **Kevin Hollinrake** has accused Kassam of "racist slurs" and says it is "time for Mr Farage to come clean" about his role.

The 'Teal Budget' to a half-empty hall: 64 pledges, £80bn of cuts — and 'staff incompetence'

Reform unveiled its **"Economic Rescue Plan"** / rival red book at Westminster's Lindley Hall on Monday, two days before the Budget. **Robert Jenrick** presented **64 measures**, promising **"£40 billion of cuts in year one and £80 billion by year five"** of a future government — "*The alternative is that Britain goes bust. And where from? Not from the NHS, not from the Armed Forces, not from the police... we'll take it from the things that do nothing.*" Headline pledges:

- Re-legalise **imperial measurements**; approve **Rosebank** and reverse the ban on new oil/gas drilling; abolish the **energy profits levy**; bar consideration of carbon emissions in individual planning decisions.
- End taxpayer funding for the **bottom 20% of degrees**; fast-track reservoirs; auto-designate French and South Korean nuclear designs "as safe"; automatic pavement-dining licences.
- Make the **5p fuel duty cut permanent**; cut energy bills **£250**; repeal the **Employment Rights Act**; revoke the **Future Homes Standard**; scrap the **Renters' Rights Act**; raise the **VAT threshold to £150,000**; review AI regulation. (Context: UK debt passed **£3 trillion** for the first time last week.)

The optics dominated the substance. Rows of empty seats were captured on camera; guests were **moved behind the podium** to make the hall look full on TV; Farage was filmed **pacing a balcony and sighing** during Jenrick's speech, and failing to laugh at his joke about watching *Cash in the Attic* instead of the Budget. Farage blamed **"staff incompetence"** and Monday-busy businesspeople: "*Markets are volatile... We've had a difficult summer, of that there is no doubt. But are we optimistic? Yeah. A lot of our voters are just sitting back on their heels... Our job is to energise them.*" He mused that "*maybe a general election in which Europe and immigration are top of the agenda may be just the thing*" — and on the resumed **standards probe into his undeclared £5m Christopher Harborne gift** (which triggered July's Clacton by-election, won against Count Binface after all other parties stood aside): "*What a farce... There are some who think that standards are now being used as a political tool... I've no doubt he'll be fiercely independent, oh yes.*"

Reactions: Tories — "*cringingly embarrassing... Badenoch addressed a room of over 300 passionate activists. Reform have already stolen numerous policies... now it looks as if they need to steal some of our activists.*" Labour — "*nobody is going to listen to them until they start to deal*

with the sleaze and scandal engulfing their party." **Simon Francis** (End Fuel Poverty Coalition) called the package "*a wish list dreamt up by fossil fuel lobbyists*" — noting the industry has made **£125bn in UK profits since 2020** — and warned that scrapping efficiency rules "means more families trapped in cold, damp homes for decades." Reform's spokesman hit back that the plan is "widely endorsed by economists" and "nobody believes a word the old parties say." Noted by The New World: the pre-Budget *Today* programme interview went to **Richard Tice**, not shadow chancellor Jenrick.

Staffordshire County Council: fourth Reform leader in 18 months

Martin Murray announced his **shock resignation** as leader of Staffordshire County Council and of its Reform group this morning, just seven months after being made permanent leader (March). He gave **no specific reason**: "*This was a difficult decision, but the interests of Staffordshire, the Council and those we serve must come first... I do so with a clear conscience.*" **Hayley Coles** becomes the **fourth Reform group leader since December 2025**, after Ian Cooper (revoked membership over alleged racist social-media comments) and Chris Large (quit days after election, citing bereavement, amid scrutiny of allegedly racist TikTok activity he denied). Tory group leader **Philip White**: "*deeply concerning that... one of the largest local authorities in the country is now on to its fourth Reform UK leader in a year and a half.*"

Holyrood civil war deepens: Beresford accuses Bland of shouting at staff

Counter-punching after Amanda Bland's "coercively controlled relationship" interview, Reform MSP **Senga Beresford** told the Mail she has heard **Bland** shouting at her own staff: "*The only shouts I've heard came from her office, nobody shouts in here.*" She said a Bland staffer "wasn't allowed" to attend conference. Mail sources add that Bland's office manager **David Lees** quit this month citing her being "curt, rude and difficult to work with", a junior staffer was previously sacked, and Bland had been due to attend **crunch talks with party chiefs about the departures** before resigning the whip. **Bland's response: "All nonsense and fabricated lies, nasty tactics."** A Reform source attacked Beresford in turn, calling her part of a leadership **"clique"** and noting her office manager Aimee Alexander is the partner of deputy Scottish leader **Thomas Kerr**: "*They very much look after each other.*"

Donor dependence: 80% of Reform's donations from overseas-based backers

The Independent's analysis of Electoral Commission data: **79.41% of Reform UK's donations in 2025–26 came from donors or companies recently based overseas** — vs **0.15%** for Labour and **3.57%** for the Conservatives. Within the period: **£8m from Ben Delo** (then Hong Kong-based)

and **£15m from Christopher Harborne** (Thailand-based) — before the two record **£36m** donations last month, which fall outside the window. Other overseas-linked donations include several tens of thousands from **Timothy Mallott** (BGC Group EMEA COO; Companies House says Hong Kong, LinkedIn says Dubai), **£100k from Lucas Bitencourt** (Arbra Partners; listed in Portugal) and **£45k via Flow Lloyds HOLDCO** (British director resident in Italy). No suggestion of illegality; Labour chair **Bridget Phillipson**: "*The public deserves to know exactly who is bankrolling Nigel Farage's party.*" The government is tightening residency rules — a **£100k cap** on donations from Britons abroad (and for 12 months after return), backdated to March.

BitMEX exposé: Reform's £44m donor 'lured UK customers amid crypto crackdown'

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism reports that **Ben Delo's BitMEX** — which offered up to **100x leverage** to customers its own co-founder called "degenerate gamblers" — **courted British customers for nearly a decade without ever being UK-licensed**, and continued for years after an **FCA warning** that it was "carrying on regulated activities without authorisation" (possibly a criminal offence). Tactics included front-page national newspaper ads and east-London pub "trading showdowns" with beer, pizza and sign-up bonuses for novices. US prosecutors recorded customers who lost thousands, some contemplating suicide; Delo's US conviction (AML failures) was later **pardoned by Trump**. The sting: Delo has pledged **£44m to Reform UK — a party that wants to "curtail" the FCA**. A former senior regulator told TBIJ the findings "raised serious concerns that BitMEX may have repeatedly breached UK law". BitMEX denies the allegations; Delo's spokesperson deflected questions to the firm.

?? Policy / Controversy

'Dodgy Turkish/Kurdish barbers': Reform Shrewsbury slammed over Gurkha family's shop

Reform UK Shrewsbury posted (now deleted) against the new **Shrewsbury Bazaar** grocery in Shoplatch — opened this week with a ribbon-cutting by Mayor **Bernie Bentick** — claiming "nobody seems to know who is behind it" and that "*Dodgy Turkish/Kurdish barbers and questionable international food shops are changing the face of our high streets.*" The Lib Dems revealed the shop is run by **a local Gurkha family**: "*These are entrepreneurs investing in our town... For over 200 years, thousands of Gurkhas have served Britain with exceptional courage, loyalty and sacrifice.*" Reform Shrewsbury has been approached for comment.

Lancashire: Reform accused of 'silencing opposition' via motion rules

Reform's Lancashire County Council administration cut **notices of motion** from five to three per full-council meeting — **two reserved for Reform, one shared between six opposition groups** . Cllr **Mohammed Iqbal** (Progressive Lancashire): motions are the "only avenue" for backbenchers, and the change points to "*an executive running scared of challenge*" — noting Reform at Medway resisted a similar scheme as "illegal". Labour's **Mark Clifford** accused Reform of wanting to run "[Nigel] Farage's national policies" locally. Leader **Stephen Atkinson** says it is "totally misrepresented… a fair system" proportional to seats; cabinet member **Tom Pickup** called opposition motions "political grandstanding" that "doesn't make a blind bit of difference".

Leicestershire: monitoring officer resigned over Reform councillor's edited clip

Lauren Haslam, Leicestershire CC's statutory monitoring officer (25+ years' service), **resigned** over her treatment by Reform officials — chiefly Cllr **Joseph Boam**, who posted a clip **selectively editing** her three-second "No, I wouldn't agree with that statement, thank you" reply (cutting her fuller explanation) after he asked whether rising complaints were "far-left activists trying to cancel and silence Reform UK councillors". The post exposed her to accusations of bias and being "a nasty piece of work"; Boam ignored her removal request, then "refused to engage with the investigation in any meaningful way", calling it a "ridiculous waste of taxpayer money". **Boam faces two conduct hearings on Friday 30 October.**

Kent: seven expelled councillors demand answers one year on

The seven county councillors expelled from Reform UK after the **leaked video** of leader **Linden Kemkaran** swearing and raising her voice (published by the Guardian) released a six-page statement as the **Restore Britain** group, still awaiting "proper answers". All deny leaking it. **Maxine Fothergill**: "*None of us leaked that video, yet we were the ones who faced suspension and expulsion… I believe the way we were treated was shameful.*" Bradshaw, Black and Thomas were found guilty of a "pattern of dishonest and deceptive behaviour" but say they've never seen the evidence; **Robert Ford** obtained KCC confirmation there were never any official complaints against him; **Isabella Kemp** (expelled over a WhatsApp group where screen-recording was "discussed") is taking Reform to an **employment tribunal** after losing her party job.

Southend: Tories and Reform both move to oust Labour leader over Local Plan

Conservatives tabled a **no-confidence motion** in Southend leader **Daniel Cowan** while **ten Reform councillors demanded an extraordinary meeting** to remove him, after housing minister **Matthew Pennycook** ordered the draft Local Plan (incl. the contested **Bournes Green Chase** green-belt site, 4,900 homes) out for consultation by 6 November. Reform's **Alex Moyies**: Cowan "wrote to his own minister practically begging for intervention, and he got it." Cowan retorts they are "playing political games… their false politics of easy answers has no basis in reality." Pennycook praised Cowan's efforts and said delays left him no choice.

Bradford Reform councillors vs the 'planning power grab' — of a Labour government

Bradford's Reform group (deputy leader **Cllr Judson** plus planning-panel members) wrote to the Housing Secretary opposing the **National Scheme of Delegation** (from 31 Oct: most planning decisions move from councillors to officers; call-in powers over 150+ home refusals) — "*dangerously undermine democratic accountability*" — and demanding "grey belt" reclassification be rescinded, citing four local sites approved against public opposition. Cllr **Jason Townend**: "*Reform UK recognises that local people know their communities best… Angela Rayner MP has undermined our important input.*" A notable posture: Reform councillors lobbying *against* centralisation.

Warwickshire: £9m Microsoft renewal branded 'blackmail' — by Reform's own ex-leader

Follow-up with full detail (first reported 22 Oct): the Reform-run cabinet approved a **three-year Microsoft 365 renewal (~£9m, June 2027–May 2030)** — about **£375k/15% more** than current spend. Green Cllr **Keith Kondakor** held up a 1983 floppy disk: "*When we bought Microsoft products in 1983, we owned them… now we're getting trapped into paying licence fees.*" Former Reform leader **Rob Howard** didn't dispute it: "*We are all shocked about the amount of money… We have no choice… we don't want to be held with this sort of blackmail over the next 10 years.*" Comes as the CMA weighs designating Microsoft's business-software ecosystem with "strategic market status".

Warwickshire again: Finch expected to be cleared in third conduct probe

Full LDRS detail on the story first reported Friday: county leader **George Finch** (20, Reform, Bedworth Central) is set to be cleared over the **"burglar" post** depicting Tory rival **Jan Matecki** ("*As we say at County Hall, if you leave it to Jan it'll hit the fan*"). Bevan Brittan's Kirsty Cole found he "failed to value colleagues"/"treat people with respect" but stopped short of breaches, weighing the posts against **Article 10 ECHR freedom of expression** — the very convention Farage introduced legislation to sever ties with in October 2025. Finch called the post "a joke", removed

only because it "reached its potential". Complaints came from Matecki, Lib Dem leader Sarah Boad and ex-Warwick DC leader Andrew Day; Restore Britain's Scott Cameron had asked whether Reform's publicly-funded political assistant Jack Parker was involved.

Jenrick's Remembrance Day 'rot'

The New World reports Jenrick's viral Facebook post — "*Tower Hamlets Council is holding an '**Islamophobia Conference**' at 11 am on the 11th November... At the very moment the country falls silent... shameful and offensive*" — **was false**: the conference is on **10 November** (per the ticket site, the council's own Facebook post and a Council of Mosques listing two weeks earlier; the council apologised for one errant, swiftly-deleted X post giving the 11th). Speaker **Kevin Courtney** says he was given 10 November when invited on 30 September. Jenrick's post (13k likes, ~600 shares) **remains up** despite corrections in its own comments.

Farage in Gibraltar on gambling tax

Farage travelled to Gibraltar to "lay out UK gambling concerns" ahead of the Budget — meeting Trade & Industry Minister **Nigel Feetham**, who is lobbying "across the political spectrum" against a possible **Machine Games Duty** rise from 20% (fears of up to 40%; reports Healey may cap at 25%; **90 Labour MPs** publicly demand a rise). Farage has been "a prominent gambling ally", repeating industry claims that further tax rises will damage the UK economy. Gibraltar hosts Entain, bet365, evoke, Kindred and LiveScore; industry warns thousands of UK jobs and hundreds of venues are at risk, with knock-ons for Gibraltar.

'It only boosts Farage': Red Wall MPs fear free-movement return

The i Paper: PM **Andy Burnham**'s openness to closer EU ties — including free movement or going "all the way" to rejoining — has sparked backlash among Red Wall Labour MPs, who say reopening Brexit offers Reform an **"incomprehensible boost"**. Cabinet ministers and backbenchers are split. (Farage's own line: a general election with "Europe and immigration top of the agenda" would re-energise Reform voters.)

The Critic: two right-leaning counterpoints

- **"Don't write off Reform in Scotland"** (John MacLeod): from the Western Isles — where Reform's Malcolm McTaggart came **third with 13.1%**, more than Tories and Lib Dems combined, in the seat whose SNP MSP Alasdair Allan fell by 154 votes — MacLeod argues Reform's Scottish collapse narrative is premature; the party's gains came from Labour and SNP soft underbellies, not Tory heartlands.
- **"Who does Restore really hurt?"** (Tom Jones): Rupert Lowe's **Restore Britain polls at 8%** (MRP; 7.35% average across all its elections since May 2025) and is "cutting into

Reform's vote" (pollster Martin Baxter). In nine council by-elections since 16 July, a left-wing party won seven — and in all but two, had Restore's votes gone to the largest right-wing party, the right would have won. MRP puts Restore third in **100 constituencies**, ahead of the Conservatives in nearly a quarter of seats; More in Common head-to-heads show **Lowe outperforming both Farage and Polanski**; Restore claims membership "comfortably" above the Tories' 132,000.

? Polling & electoral context

Poll / model	Numbers	Note
Ipsos (15–22 Oct, carried)	**Lab 32 / Con 24 / Ref 20**	Reform third; Farage 12 pts behind Labour
PA weekly averages (wk to 25 Oct)	**Lab 29 / Con 22 / Ref 22**	Labour's highest since end-2024; Reform & Tories tied
Ipsos leader satisfaction	**Badenoch 35 / Burnham 35 / Farage 22**	Badenoch tied with the PM, well ahead of Farage
PollCheck national seat model	**Lab 320 / Con 143 / LD 57 / Ref 49**	Labour six short of a majority
PollCheck West Midlands (29 seats)	**Lab 14 / Ref 8 / Con 6 / Ind 1**	Reform projected seats down from 14 (Sept) to 8 — post-ITV exposé

The Independent's 100-days analysis (Burnham marks 100 days today): Labour's weekly average is **10 points higher** than the week before Starmer resigned (19% in June → 29%); Reform led on 27% in June and now ties the Tories on 22%. Its companion piece argues Burnham has an unexpected problem — he has **neutralised Farage so thoroughly he may be losing his best bogeyman**, with voters preferring Badenoch personally (35%) to Farage (22%), and Tories/Reform/SNP all preparing for a possible **December election**.

? Source Links

Story	Source	Link
Farage: jibe not 'intentionally racist'	HuffPost UK	https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/nigel-farage-kemi-badenoch-nigerian-scammer_uk_6ae05c6be4b059999c62a2ea
£80bn savings / 64 measures	MailOnline	https://c.newsnow.co.uk/A/1328108923
'Difficult summer' / 'staff incompetence' / standards 'farce'	MailOnline	https://c.newsnow.co.uk/A/1328075404

Story	Source	Link
Empty seats, guests moved, pacing balcony	Daily Mirror	https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/nigel-farage-reform-press-conference-37812208
'Cringingly embarrassing' reaction round-up	HuffPost UK	https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/farage-jenrick-half-empty-room-reform_uk_6adf6773e4b0320e45d367ab
Staffordshire leader Murray resigns	ITV News Central	https://www.itv.com/news/central/2026-10-27/reform-uk-leader-of-staffordshire-county-council-announces-shock-resignation
Beresford vs Bland ('shouting at staff')	MailOnline	https://c.newsnow.co.uk/A/1328097647
80% overseas donations	The Independent	https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/reform-donations-foreign-donors-harborne-delo-crypto-b3066689.html
BitMEX / Ben Delo exposé	Bureau of Investigative Journalism	https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2026-10-27/bitmex-fca-ben-delo-reform-crypto
Gurkha family business 'attack'	Shropshire Star	https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/reform-slammed-after-attack-on-new-shrewsbury-business-run-by-gurkha-family-9310465
Lancashire 'silencing opposition'	Lancashire Evening Post	https://www.lep.co.uk/news/politics/lancashire-reform-uk-accused-of-silencing-opposition-in-county-council-debate-row-9310866
Haslam resignation / Boam hearings	Leicestershire Live	https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/local-news/council-worker-resigned-due-way-11214849
Kent expulsions one year on	KentOnline	https://www.kentonline.co.uk/kent/news/expelled-reform-uk-councillors-demand-answers-one-year-on-346670/
Southend ousting bids	Echo News	https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/26670019.southend-tories-reform-bid-oust-leader-local-plan/
Bradford 'planning power grab' letter	Telegraph & Argus	https://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/26671662.reform-councillors-urge-u-turn-planning-power-grab/
Warwickshire £9m Microsoft 'blackmail'	Computer Weekly	https://www.computerweekly.com/news/366652585/Blackmail-call-as-Warwickshire-council-approves-9m-Microsoft-renewal

Story	Source	Link
Finch third probe / ECHR Article 10	Coventry Live (LDRS)	https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/local-news/george-finch-expected-cleared-third-34820237
Jenrick Remembrance Day post false	The New World	https://www.thenewworld.co.uk/rats-in-a-sack-remember-remember-the-11th-of-november-robert-jenrick-spreads-remembrance-day-rot/
Farage Gibraltar gambling trip	SBC News	https://sbcnews.co.uk/igaming/2026/10/26/gibraltar-gambling-uk/
Red Wall free-movement fears	The i Paper	https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/only-boosts-farage-red-wall-mps-fear-return-eu-freedom-of-movement-4852152
Reform in Scotland analysis	The Critic	https://thecritic.co.uk/dont-write-off-reform-in-scotland/
Restore Britain vote-splitting	The Critic	https://thecritic.co.uk/who-does-restore-really-hurt/
100 days poll tracker	The Independent	https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/polls-and-burnham-labour-pm-change-b3073471.html
'Burnham has a Farage problem'	The Independent	https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/andy-burnham-100-days-prime-minister-farage-badenoch-b3073023.html
West Midlands seat projections	Birmingham Live	https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/reform-uk-falls-further-west-34817066

? Quick Summary

Theme	Headline	Status
Race row	Farage: Kassam's "Nigerian scammer" jibe "over the top" but not "intentionally racist"	□□ Today, BBC Breakfast
Budget	64-measure 'Teal Budget': £40bn yr1 / £80bn yr5 cuts, imperial measures, Rosebank, ERA repeal	□□ Budget eve (Wed 28 Oct)
Optics	Half-empty Lindley Hall; guests moved behind podium; Farage blames "staff incompetence"	□□ Mocked by Con + Lab

Theme	Headline	Status
Standards	Farage on Harborne probe: "What a farce… I've no doubt he'll be fiercely independent"	◫ Probe resumed
Money	79.41% of Reform's 2025–26 donations from overseas-based donors (Lab 0.15%, Con 3.57%)	◫ Independent analysis
Money	TBIJ: Delo's BitMEX courted UK customers post-FCA warning; Delo pledged £44m to Reform	◫ New exposé
Local	Staffordshire: Murray resigns — fourth Reform leader in 18 months; Coles next	◫ Today
Holyrood	Beresford claims Bland shouted at staff; Bland: "fabricated lies"; "clique" counter-claims	◫ Civil war deepens
Local	Reform Shrewsbury's deleted "dodgy Turkish/Kurdish barbers" post vs Gurkha family's shop	◫ Condemned by Lib Dems
Local	Lancashire motions cut to 3 (2 Reform / 1 for six opposition groups) — "silencing" row	◫ Dispute
Local	Leicester monitoring officer quit over Boam's edited clip; two conduct hearings Fri 30 Oct	◫ Developing
Local	Kent's seven expelled councillors (Restore Britain) demand answers a year on; Kemp → tribunal	◫ Anniversary
Local	Southend: Tories + Reform separately move to oust Labour leader Cowan over Local Plan	◫ Motions filed
Irony	Bradford Reform writes to SoS against "planning power grab"; Warwickshire's own ex-leader calls £9m Microsoft deal "blackmail"; Finch cleared via ECHR Art 10 Farage wants gone	◫ Follow-ups
Gaffe	Jenrick's "11 November Islamophobia conference" claim false — event is 10 Nov; post still up	◫ Uncorrected
Gambling	Farage lobbies in Gibraltar against Machine Games Duty rise ahead of Budget	◫ Trade angle
Analysis	Critic: Restore (8%) cannibalising Reform; Lowe beats Farage head-to-head	◫ Right-wing split

Theme	Headline	Status
Polls	Ipsos 32/24/20; weekly avgs Lab 29 = Con/Ref 22; PollCheck Ref 49 seats; WM 14→8	◫◫ Reform 3rd, sliding

---

Compiled 27 October 2026, ~09:15 GMT. Source: NewsNow Reform UK topic hub + publisher articles (18 full-text extractions, 9 recovered via FlareSolverr/search). Polling spine: Ipsos 25 Oct + PA weekly averages to 25 Oct.

Revision #2
Created 2026-10-27 09:15:20 UTC by Admin
Updated 2026-10-27 09:15:21 UTC by Admin