UK Headlines — 20 Sep 2026

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? Top Stories

Earl Spencer accuses the King of "gaslighting" him over Diana claims

Princess Diana's brother has used his first interview since the row erupted to say he is "telling the truth" about a phone call with King Charles in the days after his sister's death — and to accuse the King of "gaslighting" him.

In his book *Swan Song: Diana, My Sister*, Earl Spencer claims the then-Prince of Wales said "we'll forget her soon enough" during an argument over whether Princes William and Harry should walk in Diana's funeral procession. Speaking to the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg at his Althorp estate, Spencer said: "I can tell you here and now, those are exactly the words he said." He added: "I've only ever had two calls on the line with Prince Charles at any stage of my life. I was hyper alert to what he was saying."

Buckingham Palace responded that the King was "mindful that the pain of fraternal grief can cloud reason, affect judgement and colour memory in ways others do not recognise, even many years after such a loss". Spencer's retort: "Well, is he furious? Is he furious or is he embarrassed?"

The row is on every Sunday front page. The **Sunday Times** reports unnamed friends of the King calling Spencer a "hypocrite" who is "peddling Diana's privacy". The **Mail on Sunday**, which is serialising the book, carries the "gaslighting" allegation in full. The full Kuenssberg interview airs on BBC iPlayer at 16:00 and BBC One at 18:30.

Badenoch turns fire on Burnham over Russian threat

Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch has told the **Sunday Telegraph** the Prime Minister is "fiddling while Europe is at risk of burning" in the face of Vladimir Putin's hybrid warfare. She said the government must stop pretending the UK lives in a "carefree world", called Andy Burnham a "people pleaser", and added: "difficult choices cannot be avoided through dither and delay."

It follows Friday's warning from President Macron that Russian hybrid attacks against Europe and France are "intensifying", and a joint statement from France, Poland and other European allies. Trump signed a sweeping Russia sanctions bill on Saturday.

Two killed as Ukrainian drones hit Moscow region in "unprecedented" attack

At least two people have been killed and six injured in what Moscow's regional governor called a "massive" overnight Ukrainian drone attack. Governor Andrei Vorobyev said 249 drones were shot down over the Moscow region and reported fires in several residential houses. A 44-year-old woman died in Sofyino; an elderly man was killed in Orekhovo-Zuevo.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said 450 drones heading for the capital were downed in an "unprecedented attack", and that a facility at an oil refinery was damaged. Flight restrictions were imposed at two airports, with Sheremetyevo warning passengers of disruption. A Ukrainian official said eight people, including three children, were killed in Russian attacks on the Kyiv and Sumy regions on Saturday.

NATO welcomes US–Denmark Greenland security deal

Nato has welcomed the agreement between the US and Denmark on Greenland's security, saying it will "help advance security, stability and cooperation in this vital region". Trump claimed the deal gives the US "permanent control over security, and all other needs" in the semi-autonomous Danish territory, with "no cost to the United States".

Danish PM Mette Frederiksen said she was "pleased that there is a prospect of a good agreement" for all three parties — but no text has been released and the deal, expected to be signed next week, requires parliamentary approval. Trump said it includes a rule that no US adversary could hold a military presence or make sensitive investments in Greenland without US written approval.

Houthis fire on Riyadh for the first time since July

Air raid alerts sounded in the Saudi capital for the first time since the Iran-backed Houthis escalated their attacks in July, after the group said it launched drones and ballistic missiles at Riyadh and at energy sites on the Red Sea coast. Saudi authorities said they intercepted a ballistic missile fired at Riyadh; a column of black smoke was seen rising from fuel tanks near the city's international airport.

The US State Department urged Americans in the Middle East to "exercise vigilance", warning the conflict "has the potential to escalate rapidly" and that travellers "should seriously reconsider travel to and through the region".

Sir Jim Ratcliffe: "I've lost confidence in the UK"

One of Britain's richest people says the country is "on the slide". The Ineos founder and Manchester United co-owner told the BBC the UK is in decline due to a combination of high taxes and high immigration, called the failure to invest further in North Sea oil and gas "insanity", and warned gas storage is so low the UK could "run out of gas" in a cold snap this winter.

The government said it was delivering growth and that business investment had risen over two years, adding: "We have a diverse energy mix and are confident in our security of supply." Sir Jim — worth around £15bn and a Monaco tax resident since 2020 — has been followed out of the UK by Lakshmi Mittal and, most recently, hedge-fund boss Chris Rokos.

Lib Dems cast themselves as the "firewall against Farage"

As the party's autumn conference opened in Brighton, Sir Ed Davey said the Liberal Democrats are "a firewall against Nigel Farage and Reform" and warned that an "unholy alliance" between Badenoch and Farage could turn the UK into a "Trump satellite state". He said the party was ready for a snap election and would build its "orange wall" beyond its 2024 record of 72 MPs.

The combative line came after internal criticism: Roz Savage urged the party to rediscover its "insurgent spirit" rather than be "polite custodians of a system that leaves people feeling powerless". Davey said she was "wrong on that".

Folkestone hotel fire treated as suspicious

A fire at the Grand Burstin Hotel in Folkestone, where about 280 people were evacuated, is believed to have been caused deliberately. Kent Fire & Rescue sent 26 fire engines to the seafront hotel at about 01:05 on Saturday. Kent Police is treating the fire as suspicious and appealing for

witnesses. Crews remained on scene overnight, with the structural integrity of the building a concern.

? Sunday Papers

Paper	Front page
Sunday Times	"Hypocrite Spencer is peddling Diana's privacy, say King's allies" — plus a cartoon of Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor asking "how dare he embarrass the King! That's my job!"
Sunday Telegraph	"PM 'fiddles as Putin threatens to burn Europe'" — also reports Andrew is "living in limbo" over the Epstein inquiry
Mail on Sunday	Serialises Spencer's book; carries his "gaslighting" accusation
Observer	"Careless: how the state stopped me learning the story of my childhood" — Top Boy actor Nkechi Simms on retrieving her care files
Sunday Mirror	"Fury at Maddie suspect's book plot" — convicted rapist Christian Brueckner wants to "cash in on the mystery"
Sun on Sunday	"Kangaroo" — Wayne Rooney in "advanced talks" to join *I'm a Celebrity*
Sunday Express	"Lives at risk as illegal knives 'flood' into UK" — 2,729 blades seized in H1, nearly matching all of 2025
Sunday People	"Pharmacies failing on diet pill checks" — AI-manipulated image of a reporter used to show how easily BMI reviews are cheated
Daily Star	"Razor: Footie needs more hard men" — Neil "Razor" Ruddock interview

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?? UK Politics

- **Reform's spending under scrutiny** — The Sunday Times reports the head of the Electoral Commission is considering slashing spending limits. Vijay Rangarajan says the rules must be "fit for purpose" and maintain public trust. It could affect Reform UK's ability to spend the £72m given recently by two crypto-billionaires (Ben Delo's £36m record donation, plus a £36m matching pledge from Christopher Harborne).
- **Reform's week** — The party is still absorbing a donations row, a suspected assault arrest of its Welsh leader and a Senedd defection to Plaid Cymru. Chris Mason: the row "has mileage in it yet".

- **Parents could lose benefits or face prison for children's crimes** — Youth Justice Minister Jake Richards told the Times the youth justice system "should hold parents to account in a proportionate way". He described a "carrot-and-stick" expansion of Parenting Orders, with prison only "in the most extreme cases" and at a judge's discretion. The Alliance for Youth Justice questioned how jailing parents would protect children.
- **Tom Watson joins Palantir** — The former Labour deputy leader has taken a role at the US data firm.
- **Healey lobbies the EU** — The Business Secretary will ask EU finance ministers to let the UK into the "Made in Europe" scheme.
- **Badenoch instructs lawyers** — The Tory leader is challenging the government over a Tory-run council's 94% tax hike.
- **"Don't be silly" over Falklands and Irish unity** — A senior Tory has told Trump to drop the idea. Ireland's relationship with the UK under Burnham is off to a "very good start".
- **Business rates for hotels** — Burnham's latest idea could make UK hotels the most taxed in the world (Independent).
- **UK Youth Parliament looks set to be axed.**
- **Thames Water rescue deal should be rejected, say MPs** — as should the British Steel plan, which MPs say "lacks credibility".
- **Eurovision** — MPs will examine the UK's "dismal" song choices.
- **MPs reject assisted dying bill** — again; analysis asks why the vote went the other way this time.
- **Budget warning** — Henry Zeffman: Burnham and his chancellor have "a battle on their hands".
- **Party conference season** — Lib Dems in Brighton now; Labour's annual conference runs 27–30 September in Liverpool.

? World

- **Ukraine/Russia** — Overnight drone attack on the Moscow region kills two (see Top Stories). Meanwhile a Russian strike on a train station near Poland is being read as a warning to Kyiv's allies, and residents describe Russian missile tactics that are "exhausting" the capital. Trump has signed a sweeping Russia sanctions bill.
- **Russia** — Polls closed in the country's election, with the outcome never in doubt.
- **Middle East** — Houthi missiles and drones target Riyadh and Red Sea energy sites (see Top Stories). JP Morgan says it is "simply struggling" to forecast oil prices because of Trump's war with Iran.
- **US** — Trump says the US will form an "AI Force" and appoint an artificial intelligence tsar; CNN and Politico journalists were denied White House access after he banned outlets; four were killed in a US strike on a vessel in the Caribbean; friends say Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor is "living in limbo" over the Epstein inquiry.
- **Tech** — Google's Gemini AI hacked three companies during a security test, the company has disclosed. Separately, not all AI workers agree the tech could kill everyone.

- **Israel** — Israel has pardoned Elor Azaria, the combat medic convicted of manslaughter for shooting dead a wounded Palestinian attacker.
- **Gaza** — Ed Sheeran told a Philadelphia crowd the situation in Gaza is "unjustifiable", his first show since his tour was plunged into turmoil over the Macklemore controversy.
- **South Africa** — Grim discoveries of murdered women are sparking fear.
- **India** — A mother's viral barefoot race has ignited a debate about the country's education crisis.
- **Kennedy Center** — Trump's battle to rename it has put its future at risk; questions over whether it is losing "hundreds of millions of dollars".
- **Converse** has pulled a "deeply upsetting" advert after a backlash.
- **Analysis** — The Guardian: has Russia begun ordering assassinations on US soil? Are global stock markets heading for a crash?

? Business & Economy

Metric	Level	Change
FTSE 100 (Fri close)	10,659.1	−1.45%
FTSE 250	24,205.4	+0.56%
GBP/USD	1.3393	+0.26%
GBP/EUR	1.1659	+0.23%

- **Ratcliffe's warning** — Ineos founder says the UK is "on the slide" and warns of a winter gas shortfall (see Top Stories).
- **Oil** — JP Morgan admits it is struggling to forecast prices because of Trump's war with Iran.
- **British Steel & Thames Water** — MPs say the British Steel plan "lacks credibility" and the Thames Water rescue deal should be rejected.
- **Brewdog** — "Insufficient funds" to pay creditors after the takeover deal.
- **Housing** — "Our flat has been for sale for four years": analysis of why the market is so weak. The Resolution Foundation has warned of a coming cost-of-housing crunch.
- **Energy** — Northern Ireland households get an electricity discount; mixed consumer reaction.
- **NHS food vouchers** — Families are missing out on NHS money for healthy food.
- **AI scams** — Food festivals across the UK are being exploited in an AI-powered scam, the BBC found.
- **Learner drivers** — Rising costs push learners to YouTube and TikTok, but instructors warn of risks.
- **Drought** — Tens of thousands of fridge freezers are left at docks as household collections are suspended for parts of the country.

? Crime & Justice

- **Folkestone hotel fire** — suspicious; ~280 evacuated from the Grand Burstin (see Top Stories).
- **Illegal knives** — 2,729 blades intercepted by Border Force in the first half of 2026, nearly matching the whole of 2025. The Ben Kinsella Trust says the figures show the scale of demand.
- **Cardiff** — Four men jailed after police investigating a suspected drug deal found a loaded firearm and a large quantity of drugs at a city flat.
- **Lucy Letby / Thirlwall Inquiry** — The inquiry found a "complete failure to protect babies" on the Countess of Chester neonatal unit and concluded some deaths could have been avoided had the hospital notified police sooner. The report was published on 15 September.
- **Reform Wales** — Leader Dan Thomas was arrested on suspicion of assault and controlling or coercive behaviour; he says he was "released without charge" and has "done nothing wrong".
- **Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor** — Still "living in limbo" over the police inquiry into his relationship with Jeffrey Epstein (Telegraph).
- **RNLI** — A charity video received "pure hatred" after anti-migrant protests; the RNLI has stepped up security after online and physical abuse, but also reported a "significant" boost in donations.

??????? Wales

- **Reform's "challenging" week** — Chief whip Llŷr Powell says the party has "come through it" after the arrest of Welsh leader Dan Thomas and the defection of Senedd member Sarah Cooper-Lesadd to Plaid Cymru. Helen Jenner filled in at First Minister's Questions and is expected to replace Thomas. Deputy leader Richard Tice says Cooper-Lesadd "lied" about her beliefs during vetting; Plaid rejects the claim.
- **Michael Sheen and the National Library** — Sheen has teamed up with the National Library of Wales to tell the story of Wales. He also held a "constructive" meeting with the First Minister over the toxic dumping claims in his BBC documentary *Buried*.
- **Cardiff Agreement** — Plaid Cymru, the SNP and Sinn Féin signed a memorandum of understanding in Cardiff on 14 September, calling on the UK government to prepare for constitutional change. It argues "our nations have the right to self-determination".
- **£121m NHS hub** — A further £121m is being invested in a major south Wales health facility, adding six new operating theatres.
- **Coal tips** — Wales has nearly 2,600 monitored coal tips; with a new safety regime on the way, questions remain over who makes them safe and who pays.
- **Swansea tram-train** — Ambitious plans for a £1bn tram-train link between valley communities and Swansea are unlikely to proceed.

- **Health visitors** — Unite has called on Plaid to honour election promises and end the long-running health visitor dispute.
- **Rail fares** — Train passengers could be overcharged by a new pay-as-you-go scheme, a council has warned.
- **Emergency food aid** — Welsh councils are to share £5m as living costs rise.
- **Constituency names** — New Welsh constituency names could be changed again.
- **Crime** — A family has unanswered questions after a woman's partially-clothed body was found next to a river.
- **Culture** — Matthew Rhys made Emmy history as the first person to win two lead acting prizes in one night, for Apple TV's *Widow's Bay* and *The Beast in Me*; his sister says she is "so proud". Catherine Zeta-Jones says "nepo baby is a horrific term". A hit BBC period drama filmed in Wales returns for a three-part Christmas special. A Welsh food festival has been named among the best in Europe. A giant jellyfish with "40ft tentacles" was captured on camera off Wales.
- **Wildlife** — A young dolphin was given first aid after becoming stranded on a beach.
- **Community** — Eight people and organisations were recognised at the BBC's Wales unsung community hero awards. Conjoined twins living in Wales have been able to stand upright for the first time using an innovative harness.
- **Property** — Wales' most expensive apartment comes with jaw-dropping views of Cardiff Bay.

?? Weather

Late-summer warmth is returning. **Temperatures could peak at 26C next week**, with southern areas seeing the highest values, though most locations will be warmer than normal for late September. The warmth could last all week for some in England and Wales, but may be short-lived for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

High pressure will also mean little rain for places still in drought. The recent autumnal feel was down to a brisk, straight jet stream across the Atlantic; the jet will buckle north of the UK over the coming days.

? Sport

- **Premier League** — Tottenham 2–3 Aston Villa. Villa's first win of the season leaves Spurs winless and in the relegation zone; pressure is mounting on Roberto De Zerbi, who said he was "disappointed, sad and angry" with his players. Liverpool travel to Bournemouth today.
- **Rugby** — Wales set themselves a "new standard" after clocking up a half-century of points in their WXV opener against South Africa, ending a nine-Test losing run.
- **Running** — The Swansea Bay 10k takes place today — the 45th running of the race.

- **Cricket** — Glamorgan sealed Division One status by beating Surrey earlier in the week.

? Polling

Source	Finding
PollCheck 7-poll average (Westminster VI)	Labour 27% · Reform UK 24% · Conservatives 20%
YouGov (Sept 2026)	24% favourable view of Nigel Farage — net −24; 25% of Britons favourable
YouGov favourability	Ed Miliband 27% favourable, up 4 points after the West Bank settlements trade ban
YouGov for Best for Britain	All but four UK constituencies would support reversing Brexit and rejoining the EU
Lib Dem internal concern	43% of respondents unclear what the Lib Dems stand for; just over half describe them as "weak"

?? Feel-Good Roundup

- **70 years of letters** — Two transatlantic pen pals who have written for seven decades say they are now "more like sisters".
- **A stranger's gift** — A mum's Facebook plea for a kidney prompted a "mind-blowing" gift from a total stranger.
- **A lift, literally** — "Get in" — a woman joined a police chase by giving an officer a lift in her Nissan Micra.
- **Standing tall** — Conjoined twins in Cardiff have stood upright for the first time thanks to an innovative harness.
- **A life at the heart of the community** — A retiring bishop, often stopped in the street for confessions, reflects on his ministry.
- **Unsung heroes** — Awards recognise those making an "incredible difference", from a heroic big sister to a diva dog.
- **Camilla on books** — The Queen praised the "life-enhancing power" of reading amid the Spencer row.
- **Dolphin rescue** — A stranded young dolphin was given first aid on a Welsh beach.

? Quick Summary

Story	Status

Earl Spencer vs the Palace	Spencer accuses the King of "gaslighting"; Sunday Times reports allies calling him a "hypocrite"
Badenoch vs Burnham	"Fiddling while Europe is at risk of burning" over Putin's hybrid war
Moscow drone attack	2 dead, 6 injured; 249 downed over the region, 450 over the capital, oil refinery damaged
Ukraine	8 killed in Russian strikes on Kyiv and Sumy regions, including 3 children
Greenland	US–Denmark security deal welcomed by NATO; no text released, to be signed next week
Riyadh	Houthi missiles and drones; first air raid alerts since July
Ratcliffe	UK "on the slide"; warns of winter gas shortfall
Lib Dems	Davey casts party as the "firewall against Farage" at Brighton conference
Electoral Commission	Considering slashing spending limits, with Reform's £72m in crypto donations in view
Folkestone	Grand Burstin Hotel fire treated as suspicious; 280 evacuated
Youth justice	Parents could lose benefits or face prison for their children's crimes
Scotland	Michael Marra elected Scottish Labour leader (4,266 votes to Joe Fagan's 2,485)
Markets	FTSE 100 closed Friday at 10,659.1, down 1.45%
Weather	26C possible next week; drought continues in places
Football	Tottenham 2–3 Aston Villa — Spurs in the relegation zone

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Compiled 08:05 BST, Sunday 20 September 2026.

Sources: BBC News (UK, Politics, World, Business, Wales), BBC Sunday papers review, The Guardian, The Sunday Times, The Sunday Telegraph, Mail on Sunday, The Observer, Sunday Mirror, Sun on Sunday, Sunday Express, Sunday People, Daily Star, The Independent, Nation.Cymru, WalesOnline, Sky News, Variety, ESPN, BBC Weather, Yahoo Finance, TradingEconomics, PollCheck, YouGov.

Note: social media sections (Reddit, Nitter/X, Phice) are not included — those integrations are currently offline as agreed.

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