UK Headlines — 23 Sep 2026

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Wednesday. Burnham meets Trump at the UN and comes home with the Chagos deal in doubt, the Kremlin's disinformation machine gets a British counter-hub — and scientists warn a "Godzilla-level" El Niño could kill 450,000 people in six months.

? Top Story: "We can do business" — Trump praises Burnham, then sinks the Chagos deal

Andy Burnham's first face-to-face meeting with Donald Trump, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York, produced warm words for the Prime Minister — and a blunt wrecking-ball for his own party's Chagos Islands deal.

- **What Trump said.** He believed he could **"do business"** with Burnham, calling him a **"natural business person"** and saying he would be a **"great prime minister"**. Trump also claimed "a lot of momentum" existed on other fronts, but the mood turned on the Indian Ocean.
- **The Chagos hit.** Trump called the agreement to cede sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to **Mauritius** — while the US and UK retain the joint base at **Diego Garcia** — **"terrible"** and **"ridiculous"**. He stressed the base is "strategically very important", particularly to US operations in the region, and complained that the US is left "paying for a lease" of a base it built.
- **Burnham bows — partly.** The PM agreed to **"review"** the deal and pledged to do "everything possible to find a resolution to the issue", a reversal of position that the Telegraph summarised as "*Burnham bows to Trump on Chagos*". The Times framed it as "*Trump wins review of* '*ridiculous*' *Chagos deal*"; the Independent as **"Chagos deal in doubt"**; the Mail as **"Burnham wobbles on Chagos as Trump hits out"**, reporting the PM looking "stony-faced" as Trump rounded on Labour's deal.

- **Farage's fingerprints?** The Telegraph reports it "understands" that **Nigel Farage had lobbied the US government** over the Chagos deal in the past week, hoping it would come up in the meeting.
- **BBC verdict.** Political editor Chris Mason's read-back — "*From inside the room, how Burnham survived first Trump meeting*" — reports the PM emerged with credit: the Mirror called it a "tricky meeting" handled well, the i Paper called the exchange **"magnanimous"**.
- **The papers:** "Burn to be mild" (Daily Star, quoting Trump's "can do business"), "Don well?" (Mirror), "Burnham warns world over AI — and sets UK on collision course with America" (i Paper), "Donald's attack on 'terrible' handover" (Express), "Pulp fiction" (Sun, a Diana story — see below).

?? UK Politics

Burnham at the UN: a new disinformation centre and a fight with Washington over AI

- **National Centre for Information Defence.** In his first major international speech at UNGA, Burnham announced a new UK centre to **detect and disrupt AI-enabled disinformation campaigns by hostile states**, working with intelligence agencies, government departments, law enforcement and social media.
- **The Russia charge.** Burnham accused the Kremlin of spending **around £1.3bn a year** on manipulating information, using "bots and fake websites, falsified newspaper articles" and **forged branding of 28 British organisations, including universities and the BBC**. He described "an insidious campaign that reaches into people's homes and twists what they feel about their own country" — "creating a narrative of decline, stoking division and sowing despair" — and referenced the 2019 general election. A Russian representative sat in the room; Moscow has previously dismissed such allegations as "Russophobia".
- **The AI split.** Burnham pitched the UK as an **"honest broker"** on AI, wanting a **"single set of global principles"** to guard against rogue AI. Trump pushed back hard, saying the US **"rejects any attempt to construct a globalist scheme"** to control the technology — and, per the i Paper, rebranding AI **"super intelligence"**. Lavrov, speaking in Moscow on Tuesday, accused Western media of embracing "anti-Russian cliches and fantasies".

Lib Dems conference: Davey promises £15,000 tax-free allowance — if the UK rejoins the single market

- **The pledge.** Sir **Ed Davey** told the Brighton conference the Lib Dems would raise the **personal allowance to £15,000** and the **40p threshold from £50,270 to £56,000**, a **£17bn package** funded by the economic boost he says would follow **rejoining the EU single market and customs union**.
- **The numbers.** A **£680 cut for "most taxpayers"** — but not in full effect until the **fifth year** of a Lib Dem government, potentially up to eight years away, and contingent on negotiating a closer trading arrangement within 12 months. Personal allowances would be unfrozen (rising with inflation) in year two.
- **The attacks.** Davey drew the dividing line with Reform UK, which promised the same £15,000 allowance within 100 days: "*the difference between us and Reform*" is that "*their tax cut is paid for through cruelty*" — claiming Reform would fund theirs by **"ripping £22bn of crucial support away from disabled people"**.
- **The sceptic. Stuart Adam of the Institute for Fiscal Studies** told BBC Verify the package would cost **"much more"** than the £17bn quoted.

Westminster briefs

- **Sick notes to end? Sir Charlie Mayfield**, the ex-John Lewis chairman who now advises the government, told the Times that **"calling in sick with a text or email must end"** — he wants to change the "culture of fear" that stops managers holding proper return-to-work conversations with staff.
- **Reform's week:** Reform UK conference pledges earlier this month set the tax battleground the Lib Dems are now answering.

?? UK News

Two arrested over alleged plot against Manchester's Jewish community

Two men **in their 30s** were arrested in Manchester city centre on **Sunday — the eve of Yom Kippur**, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar — on suspicion of **Section 41 Terrorism Act 2000** offences. The **Metropolitan Police** is leading the investigation. Sources told the BBC the suspected plot was **"fairly imminent"** and in the later stages of planning. Home Secretary **Shabana Mahmood** said the government would "continue to do all in our power to address threats against our Jewish community", adding: "*We cannot expect our Jewish community to live behind higher walls. We must also tackle antisemitism at its source.*"

51 migrants reach Dover after 33 hours at sea

51 migrants arrived in Dover at **00:30 BST** after more than **33 hours** on a small boat that left the Normandy coast on Monday morning. The French coastguard, which shadowed the vessel, said those aboard were in **"precarious conditions"** and **refused help**, being "determined to take all risks to reach" the UK. **RNLI** lifeboats were tasked by HM Coastguard "out of concern for their safety and deteriorating health"; those rescued were transferred to **Border Security Command**. About a dozen protesters had gathered in **Gosport**, Hampshire, on Tuesday evening after it was initially believed the boat would land there (local MP Dame Caroline Dinenage had said the Home Office called Portsmouth "increasingly likely").

Tim Westwood charged with two more sexual offences

The former BBC Radio 1 DJ, **68**, has been charged with **one count of indecent assault on a girl aged 16 or 17 in 1991** and **one count of sexual assault in 2004**, Scotland Yard said. He is **already charged with nine counts of indecent assault, two of sexual assault and four of rape** relating to reported non-recent offences between **1983 and 2016**. He will appear at **Westminster Magistrates' Court on a date to be fixed**.

Piers Morgan demands Earl Spencer's Diana book be pulped

Earl Spencer has **apologised** to Piers Morgan over a passage in his Princess Diana memoir wrongly describing Morgan as the editor of the Daily Mirror at the time the Mirror Group published "highly intrusive photographs" of Diana in 1993. Morgan says he is **suing over "demonstrable lies"** and has called for remaining copies of the book to be **withdrawn from sale**. The Sun leads on it as "Pulp fiction".

Other UK lines

- **"Knifed for saying no":** the Metro leads on a 13-year-old girl **stabbed ten times by a schoolboy she rejected** — the paper draws the parallel with the TV drama *Adolescence*. It follows the sentencing of a 14-year-old boy over a knife attack on a teenage girl in a **Cirencester** shop earlier this year.
- **Child ketamine harm:** young users describe **"peeing a jellyfish"** as they suffer bladder damage.
- **"Poison seller":** a mother says the man who sold her daughter deadly drugs **"should rot in hell"**.
- **Police conduct:** a man's body found in a river sparks an **IOPC inquiry**.
- **Eyelid surgery warning:** women describe **open wounds and eyes that can't close** after cheap "bleph" procedures abroad.
- **IRA murder report:** the daughter of a solicitor murdered by the IRA says "all anger has been taken away" as a report is published.

- **Hotel fall:** a father **admits causing the death of his son** in a hotel fall.
- **Cost of living:** "I don't have a buoyancy aid" — living without the Bank of Mum and Dad.

? Wales

FM accused of moving goalposts on NHS waits

First Minister Rhun ap Iorwerth said on Tuesday that the **longest NHS waits — two years or more — will be down to zero in "less than a year"**, i.e. within the first year of his government. Plaid ministers had previously promised to eradicate them within a **"matter of months"** without giving a date. The Welsh government published its **Programme for Government 2026–2030** on Tuesday, vowing action on NHS waits, the cost of living, child poverty, jobs and school standards. **Reform's Wales leader Helen Jenner** responded: "*The goalposts keep moving while patients continue to wait.*" Recent figures show **4,700 cases waiting two years or more — a 15% rise in a month and 82% higher than at the end of March**. The **Welsh NHS Confederation** urged ministers to "be honest with the public about what financial pressures could mean for services".

Reform Wales' new leader

Helen Jenner, the **Bangor Conwy Môn MS**, is the new leader of Reform Wales — she took over after **Dan Thomas quit** following his arrest on suspicion of assault and controlling or coercive behaviour (he denies wrongdoing). A former English teacher at the **Brit School**, where Adele and Amy Winehouse studied, she told BBC Walescast that facing the Senedd was "*nothing compared to year 11 last lesson on a Friday*".

Other Welsh lines

- **"Pigs Village" name change will go ahead.**
- **Data centre fight:** campaigners warn "terrifying" **101-acre data centre plans** would be "heartbreaking".
- **Wrexham:** Ryan Reynolds and Rob Mac **buy the club's historic football pub**.
- **Transport & justice:** a driver jailed for killing a "devoted" mum at 70mph in a 20 zone; a motorcyclist's family describe a "painful" wait for justice as the driver is jailed.
- **Vaping:** rates among schoolchildren appear to have **dropped**.
- **Culture:** first look at **The Other Bennet Sister** Christmas special; Catherine Zeta-Jones says "nepo baby" is a "horrific term".

? World

Iran: US and Iran hold mediated talks at the UN as Hormuz stays shut

On the UNGA sidelines, the **US and Iran held hours of indirect talks through mediators** — though accounts differed on whether officials met directly.

- **Witkoff:** mediators **"shuttled between"** the delegations all day Tuesday, completing a round of discussions he hoped would "prove constructive and promising".
- **Trump:** said **Witkoff and Jared Kushner held a three-hour meeting with Iranian officials** — "a very good meeting, a very productive meeting" — with "a lot of momentum". The White House later clarified **Trump did not attend**.
- **Tehran:** Iranian state media confirmed a meeting between Foreign Minister **Abbas Araghchi** and Witkoff. Iran says it is **ready to reopen the Strait of Hormuz within days** if Washington **lifts its maritime blockade, releases frozen Iranian assets and ends military operations** — conditions it says were sent at the American side's request and insistence.
- **Background:** the US-Israel war on Iran is now past **day 200**. Trump has publicly threatened to **"annihilate"** Iran and warned of "hell"; Tehran has promised a **"painful" response** to any new US attack. A UK minister has warned of the **impact of Trump's Iran war on next month's Budget**, with the Strait of Hormuz — ~20% of world oil — still largely bottled up.

"Godzilla-level" El Niño could kill 450,000 in six months

More than **450,000 people are projected to die from the additional heat** brought by the **super El Niño** over the next six months, according to estimates by climate scientists at the **University of Chicago**, reported by the Guardian. The toll comes on top of the **~35,000 excess deaths** in Europe from back-to-back heatwaves this summer, and will strike from **Indonesia (19,300 projected deaths) to India and Nigeria to the US (South Sudan: 5,600)** — before counting deaths from the droughts, wildfires and flooding El Niño brings. Researchers said the event is a **"postcard from our future"**, pushing temperatures to levels the climate crisis is projected to deliver in 20 years, and urged better heat forecasts, cooling centres, extra medical staffing and protections for outdoor workers. Co-author **Dr Tamma Carleton** (UC Berkeley): "*Increasing emergency response and better targeting our efforts can save many lives this year.*"

Myanmar: women political prisoners "tortured and ill-treated"

Human Rights Watch says the Myanmar military junta subjects **women political prisoners to torture, sexual violence and life-threatening denial of medical care**. Prison authorities beat some detainees with **sticks, chains, metal pipes and slingshots**, with some subjected to **electric shocks** — underlining the chronic collapse of the country's prison health system.

Business and the world economy

- **Boehly's Lukoil swoop.** Financier **Todd Boehly** has secured the backing of the **US government and Gulf power brokers with ties to the Trump family** to bid for the **international assets of Lukoil**, put up for sale after the Russian oil giant was hit with US sanctions last year. The FT values the portfolio at **$20bn (£15bn)**.
- **Trump considers diesel export ban** — a direct threat to UK supply (Telegraph).
- **UK pharma warning: AstraZeneca and GSK** warn Europe's drug industry is "at risk"; **BMW faces a £600m hit** from a car mis-selling scandal.
- **Pakistan:** dozens of parents who took children to hospitals for routine care say their kids now have **HIV**; **at least six children have died** (NPR).
- **Scotland: Celtic report a £4.8m loss** as revenue drops 22.7%.

?? Weather & Seasons

- **Today (Wednesday 23 September):** the Met Office says **heavy rain moves across Scotland, Wales and England** with some heavy bursts at times and **perhaps some hail in the east**. **Warm in the south-east, fresher elsewhere.** London: dry, warm and rather sunny, **maximum 24°C**; cloudier further north with the odd heavy afternoon shower and brief strong winds. South-west Wales: light rain showers, high 18°C.
- **Week ahead:** unsettled and fresher — strong winds and persistent rain affecting north-eastern Scotland, with heavy, thundery showers across Scotland, Northern Ireland and northern England behind a cool north-westerly.
- **Long range (23 Sep – 2 Oct):** a **changeable period**, with Atlantic weather systems bringing spells of rain, showers and occasional strong winds; the **wettest and windiest conditions in the north-west**.
- **Context:** this follows a record-breaking UK summer; the Met Office has cautioned that late-season warm spells remain possible, though confidence in any further heatwave is low.

? Quick Summary

Story	Where	Key detail

□□□ **Trump meets Burnham**	New York	"We can do business"; "natural business person"; "great prime minister"
□□ **Chagos deal in doubt**	Indian Ocean / UK	Trump calls it "terrible"/"ridiculous"; Burnham agrees to "review"; Telegraph: "Burnham bows"
□□ **Farage lobbied US on Chagos**	UK / US	Telegraph: lobbying in the past week aimed at raising it with Burnham
□□ **National Centre for Information Defence**	UK	New body to disrupt AI-enabled state disinformation; Russia accused of £1.3bn/yr spend, forging 28 UK brands
□□ **AI split with Washington**	UK / US	Burnham wants "single set of global principles"; Trump rejects "globalist scheme"
□□ **Lib Dem tax pledge**	UK	£15,000 allowance, 40p rate to £56,000, £17bn — funded by EU single market rejoin; IFS says cost far higher
□□ **Sick notes to end**	UK	Work tsar Sir Charlie Mayfield: texting in sick "must end"
□□ **Manchester terror plot**	Manchester	Two men in their 30s arrested on eve of Yom Kippur; plot "fairly imminent"
□□ **51 migrants reach Dover**	English Channel	33+ hours at sea; refused French help; RNLI tasked; protests in Gosport
⚖ **Westwood charged again**	London	Indecent assault (1991) + sexual assault (2004); now 15 prior counts incl. 4 rape
□□ **Morgan vs Earl Spencer**	UK	Spencer apologises over Diana book error; Morgan suing, wants copies pulped
□□□□□□□□□□□□ **NHS waits row**	Wales	FM says 2-year waits gone "in less than a year"; 4,700 cases, up 15% in a month
□□□□□□□□□□□□ **Reform Wales leader**	Wales	Helen Jenner, ex-Brit School teacher, replaces Dan Thomas after his arrest
□□□□ **US-Iran UNGA talks**	New York / Gulf	Mediators "shuttled between" sides; Iran wants blockade lifted, assets freed to reopen Hormuz
□□ **Super El Niño warning**	Global	450,000+ projected heat deaths in six months; Indonesia 19,300, South Sudan 5,600
□□□□ **Myanmar torture report**	Myanmar	HRW: women political prisoners beaten with chains, pipes, slingshots; electric shocks

Boehly bids for Lukoil assets	US / Gulf / Russia	Backed by White House and Gulf billionaires; portfolio valued at $20bn (£15bn)
Trump diesel export ban threat	US / UK	Telegraph: ban under consideration, threatening UK supply
Heavy rain across UK	UK	Rain over Scotland, Wales, England; hail in the east; warm in the south-east (24°C)

Compiled 23 September 2026, 08:00 BST.

Sources: BBC News (UK, Politics, World, Wales, Business, Health, Weather), The Guardian (UK news, Environment, World), The Telegraph, The Times, The Independent, Daily Mirror, Daily Mail, Daily Express, i Paper, Financial Times, Al Jazeera, Reuters, Human Rights Watch, U.S. News & World Report, NPR, Metro, Sky News, Met Office, University of Chicago El Niño study (via The Guardian). Social media reaction sections omitted — Nitter, Reddit and Phice steps are offline in this pipeline.

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