Welsh Headlines — 12 Nov 2026

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? Top Story: Reform boycotts the Senedd over Joe Martin's speaking ban

Reform UK withdrew from most of Wednesday's Senedd proceedings in protest at the speaking ban on one of its members, returning only to vote in the evening. Party leader Helen Jenner said Joe Martin's ban followed "undue pressure" from governing party Plaid Cymru and was "an infringement on freedom of speech". Reform is by far the Senedd's largest opposition party.

Martin was ruled out of order by Presiding Officer Huw Irranca-Davies after claiming white people are being "replaced", and has been told he will not be called to speak until he apologises. He refused on Wednesday: "My voters sent me to the Senedd to speak on their behalf. I am being blocked from doing so, and now it's clear that I have fewer rights than the people who elected me." Asked whether he genuinely believed white people were being "replaced" in the UK, he said: "That's obviously a fact."

Nigel Farage called the ruling "ridiculous and outrageous" and asked "why is it only Reform that's targeted like this?" Restore Britain leader Rupert Lowe also backed Martin. Aliya Mohammed, chief executive of the charity Race Equality First, said the "replacement" idea is "linked to a conspiracy theory that creates division and wrongly portrays people from minority ethnic backgrounds as a threat", adding: "Immigration can and should be debated, but language that fuels fear and hostility has no place in public discourse."

Jenner confirmed the boycott on the Senedd steps, saying every Reform MS would instead be "in their Senedd office working hard for our constituents". Martin, who was formally warned in

September over earlier conduct, said the party would not back down and that he would not apologise.

?? Senedd & politics

Andrew RT Davies has accused Plaid Cymru ministers of "lying" to Covid bereaved families, and refused to withdraw the claim when asked to reflect on it. Opening a Tory-led debate calling for a statutory judge-led public inquiry, the Conservative MS said Health Minister Mabon ap Gwynfor had promised the families a review with legal powers to compel evidence and then "reneged". Reminded by the Presiding Officer to consider his words, Davies said: "I believe they have." The row turns on messages sent before May's election: Heledd Fychan told a bereaved campaigner she had "communicated badly" in an interview, while ap Gwynfor said on X that Plaid "wouldn't" do the dirty on the families and described a "focused inquiry with a clear, concise terms of reference". Last week the government confirmed its Covid review will lack compulsion powers, citing its manifesto.

Senior NHS bosses have called for multi-year health funding settlements ahead of next week's draft budget. The Welsh NHS Alliance — formerly the NHS Confederation — told the Senedd health committee that annual budgeting "can constrain longer-term transformation, where benefits often require multi-year investment", and warned that cutting one part of an "highly interconnected" system simply displaces costs into urgent and emergency care. Health takes almost half of the Welsh Government's £27.5bn budget. Tuesday's draft spending plans will need at least one opposition party's support; talks were ongoing.

The Welsh Government has frozen the student loan repayment threshold at £29,385 between 2027 and 2030, so Welsh graduates will start repaying sooner. NUS Cymru president Jennifer Taylor said "a bank could not get away with this"; deputy minister Cefin Campbell said he had "little choice" because the UK-wide system "cannot support different repayment thresholds for Welsh and English borrowers", and confirmed ministers are "considering" raising the £9,790 tuition fee cap within weeks.

Deputy First Minister Sioned Williams has set out a plan for a Welsh welfare system, calling again for powers to be devolved. In a Senedd statement she said "poverty rates in Wales are among the highest in the UK" but "too often the key levers rest with the UK Government", and pointed to the *Cynnal* child payment pilot as the test case — still awaiting Treasury assurances it will not cut recipients' other benefits. She also confirmed 12.5 hours of funded childcare for all two-year-olds is now running in 19 of 22 councils.

Ministers want the share of public spending going to Wales-based suppliers to rise from about 55% to nearer 70%. Finance Minister Elin Jones launched a draft procurement policy statement for consultation, covering £11.4bn a year of public spending, aimed at removing barriers for small firms and social enterprises and using contracts to require jobs, apprenticeships and training. Responses are due by 28 January 2027.

A former Welsh Liberal Democrat leader turned Reform member has been named in a data leak as one of 500 westerners who appeared on Kremlin-backed outlet RRN. Lembit Öpik, MP for Montgomeryshire from 1997 to 2010, told the site "it's obvious that the west cannot win in Ukraine". The investigation, led by OCCRP and reported by The Nerve — co-founded by Welsh journalist Carole Cadwalladr — followed a hack of Recent Reliable News, which mixed interviews with AI-altered video, counterfeit documents and deepfakes.

?? Planning & environment

The Welsh Government has "called in" the planned Cardiff East data centre — less than 24 hours before councillors were due to decide it. Cardiff's head of planning emailed committee members on Wednesday evening to say the meeting would not go ahead; a letter dated 11 November says housing and planning minister Siân Gwenllian has directed the hybrid application be determined by Welsh ministers under section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Ministers concluded the scheme raises issues of more than local importance: potential conflict with national transport, energy and flood-risk policy, the scale of environmental impact, and public controversy beyond the locality. The plan would close a park-and-ride serving the University Hospital of Wales, with up to 30,292 sq m of floorspace, a 49.9MW temporary energy centre and a bridge over the Rhymney. Independent Llanrumney councillor Keith Jones called it "victory tonight for the community and East Cardiff. It's not over."

Plans for 250 homes at Leiros Parc in Bryncoch, Neath Port Talbot, have been refused after 697 objections and four letters of support. Officers said the Codi Group scheme failed to show a safe and resilient highway network, with the scale putting "unacceptable pressure on the natural topography". Councillor Jo Hale told the committee: "Planning is about development in the right place and this is the wrong place for a scheme of this nature."

Two men believed to be gamekeepers on the Ruabon Moor shooting estate are to be prosecuted over alleged illegal snaring, prompting Wildlife Poisoning Research UK to press the Welsh Government on whether it will licence gamebird shoots. Dr Ed Blane said the incidents are part of a "sickening catalogue of attacks on wildlife", including poisoned birds and vanishing hen harriers. Ministers said a review of the evidence by Environment Platform Wales is due "shortly" and will inform "the case for a future licensing regime".

? Food & farming

Wales must grow far more of its own fruit and vegetables or stay at the mercy of wars, drought and climate change, an expert has warned. Only about 0.1% of Welsh agricultural land is in horticulture and just 6% of the fruit and veg served in Welsh schools is grown in Wales, according to Duncan Fisher of Our Food Trust, which wants to build 100 horticulture farms for local markets. He said the UK's "incredibly centralised" just-in-time food system — 95% bought from nine supermarkets — has "no resilience in it". Growers at Wern Farm near Newtown said a wet then

scorching year had been brutal; the trust has built three temporary farmworker homes on council land in Powys with three more under way, after planning rules proved a barrier.

? Health

Free seasonal affective disorder (SAD) lamps are being lent out from libraries in 11 council areas across Wales. The scheme, launched as the clocks change and daylight shrinks, lets people borrow light boxes that mimic sunlight to lift mood, energy and sleep cycles. Skewen branch librarian Rachel Dineen-Mabe, 38, who has SAD, said the condition "takes depression and heightens it to a whole new level", and that a lamp "feels like just a little bit of sunshine in a day where maybe you've seen nothing".

?? Justice

A teenage drug courier has been found guilty of murdering a 17-year-old with a zombie knife in Abertridwr. Georgie Mears, 19, from Cardiff, stabbed Tristan Kerr with a 13.5cm blade in February; Kerr ran into the street and collapsed, telling a friend "I'm hurting, I love you bro" before an off-duty nurse's attempts to save him failed. Conor Palfrey, 25, who went to the flat armed with a stick, was cleared of murder but convicted of manslaughter; two other men were acquitted. Mears, who admitted stabbing Kerr but claimed self-defence, said: "I'm terribly sorry. I didn't mean to kill him." Sentencing is on 18 November.

? Media & culture

S4C has cancelled a three-part drama about the paedophile head teacher Neil Foden, saying proceeding "would not be appropriate". *Y Pennaeth* (The Head Teacher) was due in 2027 with Mark Lewis Jones playing Foden, the former head of Ysgol Friars in Bangor jailed for 17 years in 2024. The channel apologised "for the distress this has caused" and said survivors had been made aware of the project. Former Plaid MS and child protection expert Helen Mary Jones welcomed the decision, saying she had thought it "wasn't appropriate at all to make a TV programme that placed someone like him at the centre" — and that any future telling should be called *Y Merched* (The Girls).

Barry's Joanna Page is heading into the *I'm a Celebrity* jungle, with the Gavin and Stacey star's arrival prompting a round of "you makes Barry proud" on social media.

? Sport

Wales name their team on Thursday for Saturday's Nations Championship meeting with New Zealand at the Principality Stadium (14:10 GMT), with Aaron Wainwright still a doubt after a leg injury and a protective boot. Centre Max Llewellyn, set to start at 12, says he grew up trying to copy Sonny Bill Williams' offloading game and sees no reason for a defeatist mindset despite 34 straight defeats by the All Blacks since 1953: "There's always the belief, especially when you come into work and you are in that Welsh jersey, that you can win."

Dan James says Wales will face a Norway side desperate to turn the tables in Oslo on Saturday (17:00 GMT). Wales beat the World Cup quarter-finalists in Cardiff last month, ending a six-game winless run; Norway have since lost four in a row and are in danger of dropping out of the Nations League's top tier. "They're a very hard team to beat and I think after having that win in Cardiff it's something that they've had to take — and they'll be even more up for this game," said James, who wins his 69th cap.

Gavin Gwynne — the Merthyr Mexican — fights Zelfa Barrett for the WBA intercontinental lightweight title at Wembley Arena on Saturday, four months after his upset win over the previously unbeaten Khaleel Majid. The 36-year-old, who left carpentry to turn professional, said: "I'm 36 but just feel like I'm getting better."

Marathon runner Josh Griffiths has been given a three-month ban after testing positive for benzoylecgonine, found in the body when it processes cocaine. The Carmarthenshire athlete, who was the first Briton home at the 2017 London Marathon, denied ever taking the drug; the Athletics Integrity Unit accepted any ingestion was out of competition and "unrelated to sport". His Belfast Marathon result and results up to the end of the ban were expunged.

A cross-party group on Welsh rugby has been formed in the Senedd amid the row over the WRU's plan to cut one of the four professional men's teams from 2028-29. Plaid's John Davies was elected chair and Labour's Jayne Bryant vice-chair; Davies said the message from players, coaches and fans was "they don't want rugby split down party lines".

?? Weather

No weather warnings are in force for the UK. Cardiff has a cold, dry and bright day with plenty of sunshine, high 8°C, after a frosty start; tonight is clear and cold with a low of -2°C. Friday is another dry, sunny and chilly day, 8°C by day and around 0°C overnight. Saturday stays largely dry and sunny with patches of cloud, 9°C, before Sunday turns cloudier and breezier with outbreaks of rain, heavy for some, and a milder 12°C.

Method: SearXNG for leads, then indexes and article bodies fetched via the Playwright service on MacBach (.100:8090) — BBC Wales, BBC Wales Politics, the BBC Welsh Parliament topic page, BBC Cymru Fyw, BBC Sport, Nation.Cymru (news, home, sport), the GOV.WALES news index and BBC Weather. WalesOnline and ITV remain walled or failing through the service; Nitter, Phice, Flaresolverr and Reddit were skipped. Items already covered — the National Commission for Wales, the Joe Martin ruling itself, the health visitor strike deal, the National Commission costs, and the Cardiff data centre campaigners' legal warning — are not repeated; the called-in decision and the

boycott are the new developments.

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