Welsh Headlines — 20 Nov 2026

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? Top Story: Reform take Risca East from Labour — and push Plaid into third

Reform UK has won its first seat on Caerphilly Council, taking Risca East from Labour with 43.8% of the vote — and pushing Plaid Cymru into third place in a valleys ward Labour held outright in 2022. Darren Crandon, who posts as "Brunte", finished well clear of Labour's Marcus Leonard on 28.5% and Plaid's Brandon Ham on 13.9%; independent Peter Heathcote took 9.1% and Conservative Ceithin Dennes 4.6%. All three seats in the ward went Labour at the last election, when Reform did not stand a single candidate.

The win landed six months before the next full council elections and was greeted by Reform's deputy leader Richard Tice as a "great Reform gain from Labour in Caerphilly" — in a ward that forms part of the Casnewydd Islwyn Senedd constituency where Reform topped the May poll. Labour and Plaid will both be alarmed at the result, which came in the party's third week of boycotting the Senedd chamber. Crandon's campaign was not a clean one: earlier this week he was accused of "fearmongering" over a leaflet telling residents their street would be turned into HMOs for "so-called" asylum seekers unless they voted for him, when no such conversions are planned. Nation.Cymru has also documented his praise for Tommy Robinson — "a breath of fresh air", whom he urged to "unite the right" — and a stream of abuse aimed at MPs including Diane Abbott and Jess Phillips.

?? FM to Burnham: put the single market and customs union on the table

Rhun ap Iorwerth has urged the Prime Minister to use today's UK-EU summit in Brussels to push for Britain to rejoin the single market and customs union, after Andy Burnham ruled both out. In a Welsh Government statement issued at 23:00 last night, the First Minister said there was "overwhelming evidence that Brexit has saddled Wales with a damaging legacy" — staff shortages in care, falling exports and restrictions on travel.

"I have always recognised that the people of Wales voted to leave the EU a decade ago, but they did not vote to make themselves poorer, nor to limit their own or their nation's opportunities," he said, urging Burnham to "go further and faster" and warning it would be "a missed opportunity not to put membership of the single market and customs union on the table". He had welcomed the PM's "warmer language on Europe" in Glasgow last month.

? Data centres: watchdog calls for a pause until safeguards exist

The Future Generations Commissioner has called for a halt on approving new AI data centres in Wales until national guidance is in place. Derek Walker said decisions on large-scale projects should not be taken "without fully understanding the long-term consequences and involving communities directly", warning that the developments "will place significant demands on our energy and water resources, with implications for our environment, the communities living nearby and for our climate commitments".

It follows the Welsh Government's decision to call in a contested scheme on a hospital park-and-ride site in Cardiff, citing "substantial controversy", and plans for another centre between Caernarfon and Y Felinheli in Gwynedd. Ministers are drafting a national planning policy, with an update promised before the end of the year, and Enterprise Minister Adam Price says he is creating a "Made in Wales" version of the UK's data centre covenant — which targets 6GW of AI capacity by 2030. The government said it believed in a "balanced approach".

?? Senedd: Reform MSs turn on female politicians as the boycott drags on

Two Reform MSs have directed personal abuse at female politicians from other parties on social media, in a week when their group has been boycotting the chamber. Joe Martin — barred from speaking until he apologises for offensive remarks about ethnic minorities —

attacked Welsh Conservative Janet Finch-Saunders over her ITV *Sharp End* appearance, calling the 68-year-old, who has won ten consecutive elections in 31 years, a "glorified county councillor" who contributes "nothing of value" and treats her staff "appallingly". Reform's Cai Parry-Jones shared the post approvingly.

Finch-Saunders called the insults "disgusting", "factually incorrect and potentially libellous", and said they were "tantamount to a breaching of several points in our Senedd code of conduct". She has written to Martin and to Reform's Welsh leader Helen Jenner and is reviewing "further action". Separately, Reform's Jason O'Connell suggested Plaid Cymru's Sarah Cooper-Lesadd — elected for Reform in May before defecting — was "unwell" and needed "help", after she revealed that senior party figures had given members a list of journalists they are told not to speak to. "A party that only wants to hear friendly questions doesn't really believe in free speech — it believes in a captive audience," she said.

? NHS: "strongest pre-winter position ever" — as waiting lists rise for a sixth month

Health minister Mabon ap Gwynfor says the Welsh NHS is better prepared for winter than it has ever been, but the latest performance figures show 11,830 patients waited 12 hours or more in emergency departments in October and overall waiting lists rising for a sixth consecutive month. In September 721,400 people were waiting for planned treatment, up from 714,200 in August, while 4,900 pathways had waited more than two years — a fall of 160. Just 61.1% of A&E patients were seen within four hours.

Ap Gwynfor, visiting Llandough Hospital, pointed to £145m invested earlier this year and the extra £500m — including £25m for surgical hubs — announced in this week's draft budget, but conceded emergency care "isn't what it should be". Prof Jon Barry of the Royal College of Surgeons called the sixth monthly rise "disappointing… especially as we head towards the depths of winter". Reform's Benjamin Hodge McKenna highlighted cancer performance falling to 57.1% against a 75% target; Welsh Labour's Ken Skates said Plaid had "failed to get a grip"; the Tories' Natasha Asghar said the NHS was "on its knees".

? Budget: Price defends the plans as business groups cry foul

Enterprise Minister Adam Price has defended Plaid Cymru's draft budget after the CBI and the Federation of Small Businesses said it does too little for growth. Price pointed to £22m next year for a new development agency and a rise in core economic development spending

from £52m to £70m — around 30% — arguing critics were looking at individual budget lines rather than the total. "We're building the tools in the toolbox that we need," he said, adding that some days "you've got to have a qualification in Excel" to follow the detail.

The CBI's Katie Spackman said firms would be "left disappointed" by a budget that "does little to tackle the high costs and uncertainty" holding back investment, though she welcomed the innovation agency and a £1.5bn capital package for housing. The FSB's Joshua Miles said halving Business Wales funding "raises serious questions about the future of business support". The final budget vote is in February.

?? Coal tips: two sites moved up to category C

Two disused coal tips in Neath Port Talbot have been moved into category C — meaning they have the potential to affect public safety and must be inspected at least annually — in the Welsh Government's autumn safety review, published today. They are near Bryncoch, north of Neath (map reference T78030), and near Ystalyfera in the Swansea Valley (T94958); both were previously category A and were the only two tips in Wales to move up. The report records the changes but does not say what inspectors found.

The upgrades came during a two-year programme, begun in April 2025, to inspect every category A tip in Wales — for most, the first inspection by the Mining Remediation Authority on the Welsh Government's behalf. Residents can check both sites, their boundaries and last inspection dates on the Welsh Government's public coal tips map.

? Bird flu: compulsory housing for poultry from Monday

All keepers of 50 or more birds in Wales will be legally required to house them from noon on Monday 23 November, as the risk of avian influenza escalates. The rule also covers flocks under 50 where eggs or poultry products are sold or given away. It extends the all-Wales Avian Influenza Prevention Zone declared on 16 November.

"Since the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone was introduced on Monday, the risk of disease has increased further," said Wales' Chief Veterinary Officer Dr Richard Irvine, urging keepers to check housing is structurally sound and to use the mandatory biosecurity checklists.

? Upskirt photographs: 219 complaints in three years, 18 charged

Girls as young as five have been targeted for upskirting in Wales, with 219 complaints to the country's four forces between January 2023 and June 2026 — and only 18 people charged. Where ages were recorded, 11 victims were under 10, 67 were aged 11 to 17, 35 were 18 to 24 and 12 were over 55; the oldest was 87. Dyfed-Powys recorded by far the most reports (159), while Gwent had six.

The Crown Prosecution Service said charges almost doubled between 2022 and 2026 and that upskirting "often forms part of a wider pattern of sexual offending". Students from the Cardiff-based campaign group Time to Act said the offence is still treated as a joke — "I was wearing shorts under skirts in school… that is still ingrained in me," said Rowan Stanger, 21. A former North Wales Police detective, Lee Harshey-Jones, 45, is due to be sentenced later this year after admitting taking pictures beneath a child's clothing.

?? Michael O'Brien: police "didn't tell me of death threats"

One of Wales' most prominent victims of a miscarriage of justice has complained to South Wales Police after officers failed to warn him that credible death threats had been made against him and his 15-year-old son. Michael O'Brien spent 11 years in prison after being wrongly convicted of murdering Cardiff newsagent Phillip Saunders; his conviction was quashed by the Court of Appeal. The threats were texted to his ex-wife, who reported them and expected police to pass the warning on.

O'Brien says the force breached its duty under Article 2 of the Human Rights Act and the "real and immediate risk" test established in Osman v UK. A sergeant apologised for how the matter had left him feeling but said a message sent online to a third party "wouldn't, in itself, signify an immediate risk to life" — a claim O'Brien disputes, saying the man "certainly did know where I live". The suspect has been charged with threats to kill and other offences and is in custody awaiting trial.

? Business and in brief

- **Primark has chosen Haverfordwest for its next Welsh store**, taking the former Wilko unit at the Riverside centre — bought by Pembrokeshire council in 2020 — with an opening planned for 2028.

- **Plans for 50 affordable homes on greenfield land at Crabtree Green, Llandrindod Wells, are back before Powys planners**, the third request to extend a 2013 outline consent; council leader Cllr Jake Berriman has objected.
- **The pensions dashboard will launch publicly in summer 2027**, Pensions Minister Torsten Bell said, with 2,400 schemes and around 75 million records already connected.
- **Sixteen defibrillators donated by Save a Life Cymru will be fitted to traffic officer vehicles** across Wales, split between north and south and covering the M4, A55 and A470 — following the rescue of a man who had a cardiac arrest in the Conwy Tunnel in 2023.
- **Caerphilly Castle closes to visitors over the winter** to replace a wooden bridge that has reached the end of its life.
- **FIR, the 14-course restaurant run by 25-year-old Matt Sampson in a converted chapel, has entered the Michelin Guide** less than six months after opening.

? Culture

The Welsh-language dub of Star Wars had its premiere in Cardiff last night, with Matthew Rhys and Rhys Ifans among the voices in *Star Wars: Gobaith Newydd*. The 1977 film, dubbed to mark its 50th anniversary, airs on Christmas Day — and the occasion reached the ITV News at Ten bulletin, where Bridgend-born presenter Paul Brand introduced the item in Welsh for the first time in around twenty years. "Welsh can tell any story," the Guardian wrote.

The National Eisteddfod has raised "serious concern" that the BBC could stop broadcasting from the festival because of cuts in Wales; its chief executive Betsan Moses said the impact on "the representation and broadcasting of Welsh culture" was worrying. BBC Cymru said it remained "fully committed" to broadcasting the Eisteddfod, as it has for decades. Separately, **S4C's chief executive Geraint Evans said cancelling *Y Pennaeth*, its three-part drama about the paedophile headteacher Neil Foden, was "not an easy decision"**, with the welfare of victims and survivors his primary consideration.

? Sport

Rugby: Steve Tandy has made four changes for Saturday's match against Australia from the side that beat New Zealand 35-28 — a first Welsh win over the All Blacks since 1953. Aaron Wainwright returns at number eight, Alex Mann replaces James Botham (awaiting the birth of his first child), Ben Carter comes in for the injured Adam Beard and Josh Adams returns on the wing, with Joe Hawkins on the bench after Dan Edwards was hurt in training. Tandy praised his family's sacrifices after the All Blacks win, with his wife and children at the Principality Stadium.

Boxing: Lauren Price fights Michaela Kotaskova in Cardiff tonight, with the vacant WBO welterweight title added to the WBA, WBC, IBF and Ring belts she already holds — victory would make her Wales' first undisputed world champion.

Football: Swansea City have finally confirmed Vitor Matos' departure, saying only that they "acknowledge" Strasbourg's announcement, with around £5m in compensation expected. Wales' women have named a 26-player squad for the World Cup play-off final against Norway, with Ceri Holland, Hayley Ladd and Olivia Clark back from injury — the first leg is at Cardiff City Stadium on 1 December (19:15), the second in Oslo on 5 December (16:00).

?? Weather

No weather warnings are in force for the UK. BBC Weather has Cardiff on a high of 9°C and a low of 4°C today, with light cloud and light winds; Saturday turns misty (9/7), Sunday brings light rain and a breeze (8/4) and Monday stays largely dry (8/7). Sunrise was 07:39, sunset 16:17.

? Also worth knowing

- **Senedd:** the budget's £300,000 cut to the Welsh Language Commissioner and the colleges funding warning were covered yesterday; the Finance Committee begins scrutiny of the draft budget this month, with the final vote on 23 February.
- **Aberporth:** Saturday's protest at the West Wales Airport weapons testing site goes ahead as trailed, with the Welsh Conservatives attacking organisers in advance.

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