

Welsh Headlines — 21 Aug 2026

???????? Welsh News Roundup — 21 August 2026

? Top Story: Heatwaves drive record-breaking demand on NHS services in Wales

The summer heatwave has pushed Welsh NHS waiting lists up for a third consecutive month and driven emergency departments to record attendance, new performance data shows. There were just under 698,400 patient pathways in June (up ~8,700), covering an estimated 547,500 individual patients; A&E saw a record average of **3,357 attendances a day in July** — over 104,000 in the month, the highest on record. Welsh NHS Confederation director **Darren Hughes** said hot weather contributed to "record demand" and put staff "under considerable strain", citing falls caused by dehydration, dizziness and low blood pressure — though average A&E waits fell to 2h57m. Cancer performance improved despite a 17% rise in suspected-cancer referrals (62-day treatment starts at 59.2%), and the number waiting over a year fell 3% to just over 12,100, down from more than 100,000 in 2022.

Health Minister **Mabon ap Gwynfor** called the statistics "stark" and said "performance on overall waiting times is nowhere near where it should be", announcing an extra **£145m** for the NHS and promising "a plan in the coming weeks" for a "fundamentally different approach" — "not more of the same... a decisive shift" — with tackling the waiting-list backlog his "absolute number one priority".

☐ BBC Wales (Jenny Rees) — 20 Aug; GOV.WALES minister response — 20 Aug

?? Politics

Glass deposit scheme operator confirmed after months of wrangling The Welsh Government has appointed **Exchange for Change** to run Wales's deposit return scheme (DRS) from launch in **October 2027**, ending months of wrangling largely over glass. Wales is the only UK nation to include glass in its DRS; Exchange had wanted to launch with just 100 glass-capable reverse vending machines against a Welsh Government requirement understood to be 3,500 — a key sticking point. Sustainability Minister **Llŷr Gruffydd** declined to cite figures but said the number of return points "would obviously increase", and noted glass will carry a zero-pence deposit during a four-year transition under the 2026 regulations. British Soft Drinks Association director general **Andy Bagnall** welcomed the appointment as "a crucial milestone" but warned "there can be no further delays", saying glass "from day one" adds "significant additional operational complexity".

📺 *BBC Wales (Huw Thomas) — 20 Aug*

Plaid Cymru Chair candidate admits joining union 'about two weeks' ago A candidate for the national Chair of Plaid Cymru has admitted she only joined a union "about two weeks" ago, despite standing as the nominee of the party's trade union section. Cllr **Elin Hywel** of Gwynedd council — daughter of former Arfon MP Hywel Williams — is standing for the Chair post, nominated by Plaid's union section Undeb, with nominations closing today. A party source flagged that her Gwynedd council register of members' interests recorded that she wasn't a union member. Hywel called it "a total oversight", confirmed she'd been a Unison member for about two weeks, and said she'd contact the council to record it: "I haven't been trying to hide anything." Former BBC Radio Cymru producer **John Rowlands** is thought likely to also stand; the winner is announced at Plaid's conference in Llandudno in October.

📺 *Nation.Cymru (Martin Shipton) — 21 Aug*

Reform MS misspells 'emissions' and 'aluminium' in swearsy net zero rant Caerdydd Penarth Reform **MS Joe Martin** used a video of hand-drawn whiteboard diagrams and profanity to attack UK net zero policies, spelling "emissions" as "emmissions" and "aluminium" as "aliminium". He argued cutting UK emissions would push carbon-intensive industry overseas, chiefly to China — "Then you can blame everything on the Chinese" — and mocked Greta Thunberg: "the Chinese do not give two shits what she thinks." He called nuclear power "carbon neutral" and "safe", the "long term solution". The video's comments drew praise from extremist group Voice of Wales, which Martin acknowledged with a salute emoji. Green Party MS **Paul Rock** responded that nuclear is "not the straightforward solution that Joe suggests", arguing Wales can become "self-sufficient with renewable energy" — context: the Welsh Government this week announced a 2040 net zero target, a decade ahead of the UK's 2050 goal.

📺 *Nation.Cymru (Emily Price) — 21 Aug*

South Wales Fire and Rescue reforms praised, but funding questions raised Audit Wales says South Wales Fire and Rescue Service has made a "good start" addressing the culture of sexual harassment and misogyny flagged in a 2024 review, after the Welsh Government appointed four commissioners to replace councillors on the fire authority in February 2024. But Auditor General **Catherine Mealing-Jones** said the authority hasn't identified how it will fund transformation plans

estimated to cost up to **£19.4m** — potentially exceeding the £17.6m held in unrestricted reserves. The reforms followed an ITV News investigation and surveys of 450+ staff that found "serious deficiencies". Commissioners are expected to remain until after next year's local elections.

☐ *BBC Wales (Adrian Browne) — 20 Aug*

- **BAE Systems expansion bid at Glascoed:** the arms giant has applied for permission for a major expansion of its munitions factory between Usk and Pontypool — 18 new buildings and a 30-space car park, with plans withheld from public view on security grounds. BAE supplies bombs to the MoD including for Ukraine and has faced pro-Palestine protests; the plant was rocked by an explosion in April, investigated by the HSE. Comment deadline: 3 September. (*Nation.Cymru, Twm Owen LDR — 21 Aug*)
- **Kernewek could join Welsh on UK road signs:** Cornwall Council says it lacks the legal power and has written to the Government to allow Cornish on signs, with Liberal Democrat cabinet member Dan Rogerson arguing "absolutely Cornish should be there too" given its 2025 Part III status under the European Charter. (*Nation.Cymru — 21 Aug*)
- **£50k-£250k SMART innovation grants open:** the Welsh Government's capital equipment fund is accepting applications to 25 September; 171 organisations have shared £20.1m since 2023, says Enterprise Minister Adam Price. (*GOV.WALES — 20 Aug*)

? Health

NHS probes Welsh Gender Service over high referral rates NHS Wales is investigating the **Welsh Gender Service** (WGS) after revelations it refers three to four times the per-head number of people for irreversible gender-related surgery than the UK average. A report for the Quality, Safety and Outcomes Sub-Committee flags the service "as a potential Service of Concern", citing "higher rates of surgical referral than seen in comparable services". Journalist Nick Wallis's FOI research on the WGS — based at Cardiff's St Davids Hospital — found it sees ~800 patients a year (average age 26), referred 207 patients for masculinising chest surgery in 2025 (16.2% of all UK referrals despite Wales having 4.6% of the population), and averaged 156 men a year for feminising genital surgery (18.6% of UK referrals). Welsh Conservative health spokesperson **Natasha Asghar** has written to Mabon ap Gwynfor calling for "a full independent review... as a matter of urgency". Cardiff and Vale UHB says an independent assessment is expected by end of 2026, with recommendations in 2027.

☐ *Nation.Cymru (Martin Shipton) — 20 Aug*

Second meningitis jabs rolled out as thousands urged to complete vaccination Young people across Wales are being urged to get the second dose of the **MenB meningitis vaccine** as the next stage of the time-limited rollout begins — over 17,000 came forward for the first dose in its first four weeks. The free vaccine covers those born between 1 September 2007 and 31 August 2008, plus under-25s starting higher or residential further education this autumn, because first-time students are seven times more likely to develop meningococcal disease. Deputy Minister for Public and Preventative Health **Nerys Evans** visited a clinic at Maelfa, Cardiff: "I urge every eligible

young person... to go back for that vital second dose." Public Health Wales's Dr Christopher Johnson called uptake "a really positive start".

☐ GOV.WALES; *Nation.Cymru* — 21 Aug

- **DPJ Foundation marks a decade of farmer mental-health support:** Mali Picton-Jones, whose father Daniel died by suicide in 2016 prompting the charity's creation, says the DPJ Foundation has helped over 3,000 people in three years and now sends a lorry fitted with a counsellor to agricultural shows — a second lorry went to north Wales this year. "Mental health isn't something that's discussed much in the farming community... it's very important that people, farmers or not, talk." (*BBC Cymru Fyw* — 20/21 Aug)

? Local & Crime

Judges reject bid to increase sentences for teens convicted of racist murder The Court of Appeal has rejected a bid to treat as unduly lenient the sentences of two teenagers convicted of murdering **Kamran Aman** — a grocery delivery driver stabbed once in the heart in Barry in an unprovoked racist attack after he was spotted leaving his mother's home. **Marcus Staniforth**, 18, had received 17 years; a 16-year-old, unnamed for legal reasons, received 15 years. Lord Justice Popplewell paid tribute to Aman's family at Thursday's hearing, finding trial judge Justice Griffith had not underestimated the offending's seriousness. Staniforth — who tried to wash the knife with bleach — was described as having "exceptionally low intellect" (IQ 60) and being "pathetically keen to support his friend"; the younger boy was drunk and high on cocaine.

☐ *BBC Wales (Colette Hume)* — 20 Aug

Tinder conman who stole thousands pretended to be multi-millionaire cancer patient **Joseph Gibson, 35**, of Ruthin, Denbighshire, has been jailed for **three years and two months** at Bristol Crown Court for four counts of fraud by false representation, taking almost **£68,000** from four victims — two of whom he met on Tinder and one he convinced he was in a relationship with. He claimed to be special forces, worth hundreds of millions, with homes in Sandbanks, Bath, Dubai, Singapore and Mayfair: "I am trading a five million account on my phone from a hospital bed", and "In January I was valued at 440m if you need me". One victim lost £21,000, another £18,000 net, and a retired super-yacht captain invested £23,350. Judge Jaron Crooknorth called the offending "serious, sophisticated and sustained... Joseph Gibson, you are simply a fraudster". A proceeds of crime hearing is set for March.

☐ *BBC Wales (Sarah Easedale)* — 20 Aug

Drivers hurl bottles of urine at Menai Bridge workers Traffic management staff working on the 200-year-old **Menai Suspension Bridge** — one of only two crossings linking Anglesey to the mainland — have faced bottles hurled from cars, one full of urine, plus aggressive driving, verbal abuse and intrusive filming. Workers have withdrawn over safety concerns while enforcing a 7.5-tonne weight limit during repairs first flagged in October 2022; work is expected to run into 2027. Operative Gary Roberts: "We are just the guys on the front line... we are just trying to keep people

safe." Deputy Transport Minister **Mark Hooper** said there is "no place for harassment and bullying" and will give a Senedd statement in the autumn.

☐ *BBC Wales/LDRS (Dale Spridgeon) — 20 Aug*

Blow for Cardiff Airport as Vueling pulls winter flights Low-cost airline **Vueling** has withdrawn all services between Cardiff Airport and its Spanish destinations for winter 2026-27 — a planned three-times-weekly Alicante service plus a short Malaga season over Christmas/New Year, both ending after 24 October. Vueling said it has "no plans to operate flights to and from Cardiff for the winter season". Cardiff Airport said it was disappointed but stressed "Alicante remains a popular destination from Cardiff, with TUI and Ryanair continuing to offer direct flights this winter". Affected travellers are already receiving cancellation notices.

☐ *Nation.Cymru — 20 Aug*

- **Married councillors lose seats for not turning up:** Jules and Bob Rogers, who represented Labour for Abersychan and Cwmavon on Pontypool Community Council, lost their seats after failing to attend meetings for at least six months; a by-election needs 10 ward voters to request one by 25 August, or the roles are filled by co-option. (*BBC Wales — 20 Aug*)
- **Tribute to 'loving grandmother' killed in motorbike crash:** the family of **Lynne Trump, 45**, of Greunant, who died after a crash on the A4109 near Cefn Coed Colliery, Neath on Sunday, described her as "an incredibly special person who lit up the world"; police are appealing for witnesses. (*BBC Cymru Fyw — 20 Aug*)
- **Flying club tribute to Trawsfynydd crash couple:** Sherwood Flying Club chairman Martin Olley paid tribute to **Ketan and Sheetal Swali** — "Ketan was a very popular member and loved to talk about flying" — following the 14 August crash of their Piper PA28; the inquest (covered 19 Aug) heard they died of major impact trauma. (*BBC Wales — 20 Aug*)

? Culture

Green Man opens to sold-out 2026 festival in the Brecon Beacons Wales's largest independent festival opened its gates for its 24th edition with a sold-out 25,000 crowd in the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park — all tickets gone within an hour of release in September 2025, before any line-up was announced. Headliners include Jeff Tweedy-led **Wilco** (Friday), **Four Tet** (Saturday) and **Wolf Alice** (Sunday); **Mogwai** headline opening night at the Far Out stage, with Charlotte Church's Pop Dungeon also returning. Green Man Rising winner Zha Gandhi opens the Friday Mountain Stage; the comedy line-up is headlined by Joe Lycett, Bridget Christie and Stewart Lee, with a screening of *Submarine* introduced by Welsh actor Craig Roberts.

☐ *Nation.Cymru (Amelia Jones) — 20 Aug*

The Welshman who played the French horn on Star Wars soundtracks BBC Cymru Fyw profiles **Terry Johns**, born in Hirwaun in 1944 to a miner father, who started on flugelhorn in the

Tower Colliery band, studied under Barry Tuckwell at the Royal Academy, and in March 1977 played on the score for *Star Wars: A New Hope* — at the time the most expensive film score ever recorded at over £1m. He played on all three original Star Wars films, including the French-horn solo in the Darth Vader funeral scene of *Return of the Jedi*, joking: "yes, well, I performed at Darth Vader's funeral!" He also played on *Superman* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, arranged music for Richard Burton's 1984 memorial, and did session work with Deep Purple, Shirley Bassey and Tony Bennett. He died in 2025 at his home in Spain.

☐ *BBC Cymru Fyw (Huw Griffiths) — 20/21 Aug*

- **Suffragette Christmas card from 1910 found at Mold roadshow:** a rare WSPU card in purple, white and green — combining seasonal greetings with campaign slogans — has been valued at **£2,500** by WeBuyVintage, with specialist Matt Case calling such cards "pieces of political campaigning that helped fund one of the most significant social movements in British history". (*BBC Wales — 20 Aug*)
- **Welsh novel translated into Galician:** Gareth Evans's trilogy about 6th-century Britons in northern Spain — sparked by a shop sign reading "MAELOC" — has its first volume, *Y Pibgorn Hud*, out in Galician as *A Cornamusa Máxica*, published by Boadicea in June; the third volume is due 2027. (*BBC Cymru Fyw — 20/21 Aug*)

? Sport

World's best on Welsh roads as Tour of Britain Women hits two Welsh stages The Tour of Britain Women — the UK's biggest women's road race, extended to five days for the first time — takes in two Welsh stages this weekend: stage three runs **104.7km from Mold to the Great Orme, Llandudno**, and stage four **138.3km from Llanidloes to Hay-on-Wye** with the toughest climbs and 2,280m of ascent. Welsh headliners include British champion **Zoe Backstedt** (51st, fresh from her Tour de France Femmes debut) and sister Elynor, with father Magnus in a sport-director role; **Anna Morris** is best-placed Welsh rider in 10th after a stage-two crash. Safety dominates after **Finlay Tarling's** death at the Volta a Portugal — riders wore black armbands with a minute's applause on Wednesday, and stage two was neutralised for half an hour.

☐ *BBC Sport Wales (Alexandra Richards) — 21 Aug*

Parents back Josh Tarling riding Vuelta a España in honour of brother Finlay **Josh Tarling, 22**, will ride the Vuelta a España — starting Saturday in Monaco, ending 13 September in Granada — after his brother **Finlay, 19**, died in a collision with a van on stage eight of the Volta a Portugal on 14 August. Parents Dawn and Michael said Josh "has chosen to do so in honour of his brother Fin, with the full support of his family... Finlay was so incredibly proud of his big brother. #forFin". Netcompany-Ineos director of racing **Geraint Thomas** said the team "fully support Josh in his decision". The opening Monaco time trial suits the in-form time-triallist.

☐ *Nation.Cymru/PA (Jim van Wijk); BBC Sport — 20 Aug*

Cardiff Arms Park stand renamed in honour of Sir Gareth Edwards Cardiff Rugby has renamed the north stand at Cardiff Arms Park the **Sir Gareth Edwards Stand**, sponsored by RSK, as part of its 150th-anniversary season. A new portrait of Edwards by artist Nicholas J Smith was unveiled, joining the late Peter Thomas's in the trophy room — MD Jamie Muir noting it's "incredibly poignant" the two friends are now "opposite each other in our stands". Edwards, a one-club man, made 195 appearances over 12 seasons for the Blue & Blacks, scoring 67 tries, alongside his Wales, Lions and Barbarians career.

☐ *Nation.Cymru — 20 Aug*

- **Charlton sign Wrexham keeper Okonkwo on loan:** Arthur Okonkwo, 24, the Nigerian international who kept 46 clean sheets in 121 Wrexham games, joins Championship rivals Charlton for the season — their eighth summer signing. (*BBC Sport/Nation.Cymru — 20 Aug*)
- **Jack Shore turns promoter with 'Stand and Bang':** the Abertillery former UFC fighter, 31, launches a striking-only show at Ebbw Vale Leisure Centre on Saturday with 23 bouts: "It would take a lot of money and a massive opportunity to pull 'The Tank' back in." (*BBC Sport Wales — 21 Aug*)
- **Wales appoint new kicking coach:** Leicester Tigers assistant **Alex Davies** joins Steve Tandy's coaching team from 1 September ahead of three home November Tests. (*Nation.Cymru — 20 Aug*)

?? Environment

Polluted River Tywi could end 300 years of coracle fishing Coracle fishers on the **River Tywi** say pollution has left "no fish" in the river, threatening a tradition dating back 300 years. Fifth-generation fisherman **Keith Elias**, whose family has fished the river for 300 years, caught just one fish in the May–July season; Carmarthen Coracle and Netsman Association chairman **Andrew Davies, 63**, said four coracle men caught 12 fish between them all season — "you'd catch that many in a night" years ago — calling it "a season as bad as this... there's no life in the river". Only four fishing licences were taken out this year versus 12 when he started. Campaign group Save the River Tywi found evidence of industrial, agricultural and human waste pollution, naming electronic-recycling firm Mekatek (which holds an NRW discharge licence) as a source — though Mekatek denies being a factor. Welsh Water is investing £889m in storm overflows (2025–30) including six Tywi projects; NRW has enforcement cases "progressing towards court proceedings". The Tywi River Festival was cancelled in July, and MP Ann Davies and Carmarthen mayor Russell Sparks warned coracle fishing could end.

☐ *BBC Wales (Sara Dafydd) — updated 21 Aug*

- **FBU: 65.4% of wildfire coverage ignores climate change:** a Fire Brigades Union analysis of top UK papers (22 May–31 July) found most articles failed to mention climate change — the Sun lowest at 5.8%, the FT (64.4%) and Guardian (63.7%) highest. FBU Wales council member Gareth Tovey warned reporting that treats fires "as isolated events

rather than part of a worsening climate crisis... risks making an increasingly dangerous situation look normal". (*Nation.Cymru*, Abby Neve — 20 Aug)

Compiled 21 Aug 2026 · Sources: BBC Wales, BBC Cymru Fyw, Nation.Cymru, GOV.WALES, BBC Sport · SearXNG in mixed/garbage mode (index hits only; GOV.WALES Milford Haven + grant scheme leads cherry-picked); all articles fetched via Hermes browser with parallel subagents.

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