Welsh Headlines — 27 Oct 2026

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? Top Story: A third of drug deaths among prison leavers — and Wales jails more of its people than any country in western Europe

More than a third of deaths among former prisoners supervised by probation in Wales were drug related, according to a new report from the Wales Governance Centre at Cardiff University — and the same research says Wales imprisons a higher share of its population than any other country in western Europe. Of the 52 prison leavers under Welsh probation supervision who died in 2024-25, 37% of deaths were drug related, against just over a fifth (21%) across England and Wales as a whole — 131 of 620. Nineteen of Wales' 52 deaths were drug poisonings where intent was recorded as "undetermined". Report author **Dr Robert Jones** said the figures pointed to "some systematic failures with incredibly tragic circumstances and consequences", and warned that criminal justice — controlled from Westminster — "can often fall between the gaps between debates in the Senedd and debates in Westminster". The report also found rough sleeping on the day of release rose 24% in 2025-26 to 695 people, that 39% of custodial sentences given to women in Wales in 2025 were for shop theft, and that 58 black people from Wales were in prison per 10,000 of population against 15 white people. **David Bennett** of homelessness charity Wallich said most drug-related deaths "are preventable if we treat drug use as a health, not criminal justice, issue": "The war on drugs hasn't worked." The Welsh Government said it was working to reduce "harms caused by substance misuse"; the UK Government said it is spending £3.4m to help prison leavers overcome addiction.

? NHS: Wales 88 radiographers short, with the north hit twice as hard

Wales needs 88 more radiographers to meet demand — a shortfall of 28% — with the gap almost twice as wide in north Wales as in the south, according to new data seized on by cancer patients. The Royal College of Radiologists says the shortage can leave patients facing "dangerous delays" before treatment. The Pwllheli and Pen Llŷn cancer support group says members routinely travel to Manchester, Liverpool or even London for scans and treatment; **Tony Williams** of Pwllheli, diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2021, said he keeps hearing "stories about the difficulties because of the lack of radiographers and specialist cancer doctors in north Wales". He added: "There's a general feeling that we don't get fair play on this side." The Welsh Government said it is "working on a general long-term workforce strategy for NHS Wales".

?? Senedd & government

Free school milk in Wales is under consultation, with ministers openly asking whether the scheme should continue at all. A 10-week consultation launched on Monday on the future of the School Milk Subsidy Scheme, which provides free milk to Reception to Year 2 pupils and subsidised milk in Years 3-6. The Rural Payments Agency, which administers it for the Welsh Government, stops delivering the scheme in Wales after 31 March 2027, so ministers are deciding whether to build a new Welsh scheme from April 2027 or discontinue free provision. Education minister **Anna Brychan** said milk "has long played a part in supporting the health and wellbeing of our youngest learners" and urged schools, parents, learners and the farming and dairy sectors to respond. Milk will still be available at breakfast clubs and through universal primary free school meals either way.

Wales' first debating chamber faces an uncertain future, Nation.Cymru reveals. Siambr Hywel in Tŷ Hywel, Cardiff Bay, hosted the Assembly's first plenary session after the 1997 referendum and has been a youth debating chamber since 2006 — but renovation proposals shown to Senedd Commission staff at a private meeting did not include retaining it. The plans are part of Bay 32, which is examining the Senedd's office needs before the 25-year Tŷ Hywel lease expires; slides showed upgraded education facilities, a grab-and-go coffee bar and a gym. No decision has been taken and the cross-party Commission must approve any scheme. The chamber was also where MSs sat temporarily in 2025 during the £4.2m refurbishment that expanded the main chamber to 96 seats.

Plaid MSs are pressing for a firm funding commitment to reopen the Abertillery rail spur, after the UK rail minister called it a priority without naming a penny. In a letter dated 12 October to **Delyth Jewell**, **Lindsay Whittle** and **Niamh Salkeld**, Lord Hendy said restoring services remained a priority for expanding the South Wales Metro and would be considered ahead of the next Spending Review — but confirmed no allocation or timetable, noting the Restoring Your Railway programme closed in July 2024. He pointed to £445m of UK rail

enhancement funding for Wales and advice due from the Wales Rail Board. The spur would branch off the Ebbw Vale line at Aberbeeg; Abertillery has had no passenger trains since April 1962. Whittle said the case for prioritising it "is very strong".

Reform's disgraced former Welsh leader was back on the by-election trail at the weekend. Casnewydd Islwyn MS **Dan Thomas** — who quit as the party's Senedd leader in September after being arrested on suspicion of assault and controlling or coercive behaviour — joined Risca East candidate **Darren Crandon** leafleting, praising him for being "determined to bring some common sense to Caerphilly Council". Crandon, who has repeatedly praised Tommy Robinson on social media, thanked him publicly. The by-election is on 19 November.

? Budget eve: what Wednesday means for Wales

Chancellor John Healey delivers his first Budget on Wednesday — the first of Andy Burnham's premiership — and BBC Cymru Fyw has been asking shoppers in Swansea market what they want from it. Energy bills, support for small businesses, pensions, spending cuts and "fair funding for Wales" top their list. For Wales the political stakes are immediate: the Welsh Government's own draft budget follows, and the minority Plaid Cymru administration still has to get an annual budget through a Senedd where its £300m supplementary budget was defeated in July. Finance minister **Elin Jones** warned on Monday that next year's settlement could be the worst since before Covid, with day-to-day spending facing a real-terms cut of about 0.7%.

?? Justice & courts

A 66-year-old man has admitted murdering a mother of four by stabbing her in the back after a fight in Newport. Albert Williams, of Ruperra Street, Newport, pleaded guilty at Cardiff Crown Court on Monday to killing **Charlene Dowsell**, 41, who died outside a property in St Vincent Road near the city centre on 18 July. Armed Gwent Police officers were called at 01:37 and found her a short distance away near Chepstow Road; she was pronounced dead at 03:15. Judge Tracey Lloyd-Clarke told him the only sentence available is life imprisonment. He will be sentenced on 21 December. Her family, in the public gallery, said four children without a mum was "just heart-breaking". **A person has died after a single-vehicle collision on the A483 in Powys.** Emergency services were called to the A483 near the Laura Ashley roundabout in Newtown at 13:10 on Sunday; the driver of a grey Dacia Sandero died at the scene. Dyfed-Powys Police said there was no evidence another vehicle was involved. **A 65-year-old man has been charged with wounding with intent and possessing a knife after an incident in Trefor, Gwynedd. Steven Parry**, of Hen Ysgol, Trefor, appeared at Llandudno Magistrates' Court on Monday following an incident at about 18:00 on Friday 23 October in which another man suffered serious injuries. He was remanded in custody and is due at Caernarfon Crown Court on 23 November; a second man arrested has been bailed. Councillors in Trefor are organising a public meeting this

week. **The family of a "loving dad" killed in a crash in Gwynedd have paid tribute to him. Chris Johnson**, 58, of Rhyl, died at the scene of a two-vehicle collision on the A494 at Llanuwchllyn shortly before 19:35 on 15 October; he was driving a BMW 240i which collided with a Mitsubishi L200, whose driver was taken to Wrexham's Maelor Hospital with serious injuries. **An investigative journalist has asked the Parole Board to hold a public hearing before it decides whether a notorious murderer should be released. Satish Sekar** has written to the board over **John Pope**, now 77, who was convicted for the second time in 2011 of the 1996 murder of **Karen Skipper**, 34, whose body was found in the River Ely. Pope, sentenced to life with a 19-year minimum tariff, becomes eligible for a hearing in December. Sekar argues the public cannot understand parole decisions from a summary alone, citing the Jeffrey Gafoor case in the Cardiff Five saga.

? Storm Boelo: warnings lapse but the clean-up goes on

Three flood warnings and 14 flood alerts were in force in Wales on Monday as further rain and strong winds followed Storm Boelo — with the Met Office yellow wind warning that covered Wales expiring at 03:00 today. Flooding was expected in tidal areas at Pendine, Cardigan and Carmarthen Bay Holiday Park in Kidwelly; gusts of 45-50mph inland and 60-65mph on exposed coasts were forecast within the warning area. Cardiff Council took 110 out-of-hours flooding reports and parks staff dealt with 130 fallen-tree incidents; one property suffered internal flooding near Ely Bridge, which reopened at 11:20 on Sunday, while Heol Goch and Main Road in Gwaelod-y-Garth stayed shut. Across the UK about 22,600 properties remained without power, and both storm deaths — a man in his 20s in north London and 60-year-old Logan Botanic Garden curator **Richard Baines** in Dumfries and Galloway — were outside Wales. No weather warnings are in force for Wales today; the only active yellow wind warning covers Scotland and Northern Ireland until 21:00.

? Housing & planning

Residents fighting 95 homes on the edge of Conwy have challenged Wales' heritage watchdog after it raised no objection. Beech Developments (NW) Ltd has applied on behalf of housing group Adra to build affordable homes on five hectares of agricultural land at Gyffin, and almost 60 objection letters have been lodged over road safety, wildlife and the setting of Conwy's World Heritage Site. Cadw told Conwy council it had "no objection" in relation to the scheduled monuments and registered historic parks and gardens it assessed. Resident **Steve Kilby** has written in to dispute that, arguing the estate would intrude into medieval view corridors from the town walls and dominate the backdrop to Grade I-listed Plas Mawr. **Porthcawl's seafront could host padel courts, crazy golf, surf lessons and street food from next summer** under Bridgend council plans to keep Coney Beach busy while the wider waterfront regeneration grinds

on. The site is due to be cleared by the end of March, and the council is inviting mobile food and drink operators, sports providers and container-based businesses to register interest; no operators have been chosen. Councillor **Colin Davies** said the aim was to keep the seafront "open and busy" while longer-term plans progress, after the 1930s Buccaneer building was saved from demolition. **Residents near the new £1bn Velindre Cancer Centre have renewed complaints about construction workers' parking**, with more than 200 people backing a petition demanding contractor **Sacyr** act. Locals describe double parking on a blind bend, pavements blocked and a refuse lorry unable to get through; Velindre University NHS Trust said the vast majority of the 750-plus staff on site comply, but that Sacyr will carry out ad hoc monitoring. Nation.Cymru first reported the row in August.

? Energy & business

An Anglesey technology firm has won the contract to watch marine wildlife at one of Wales' biggest tidal energy schemes. Ecodetect, based at M-SParc in Gaerwen, will supply underwater cameras, sonar and AI for **HydroWing**'s planned 30MW development at Morlais off Ynys Môn — 18 devices of 1.67MW each, with the first deployed in 2027 and completion due in 2030. The system is meant to tell seals, dolphins, fish and diving seabirds apart from seaweed and debris in real time. HydroWing's parent Inyanga Marine Energy Group has had £2m of Welsh Government equity investment (May 2025) and secured a further 10MW of Contracts for Difference support in February 2026; Morlais itself has a potential 240MW ceiling.

? Food & drink

A Pembrokeshire vineyard has become the first in Wales to win a trophy at an international sparkling wine competition. Velfrey Vineyard took the Winter Warmer Trophy and a gold medal for its Cuvée Reserve 2022 at the Glass of Bubbly Awards in London on 23 October, with silvers for its Rhosyn 2023 rosé and Velfrey NV. "Before this year, no Welsh wine had ever won a trophy at Glass of Bubbly," said **Fiona Mounsey**, who runs the family business with Andy Mounsey. The vineyard has recently installed a winery and plans Charmat-method sparkling wine alongside its traditional-method bottles.

? Sport

The FAW has set out a 10-year plan to grow Welsh football — and immediately asked the Welsh Government to pay for more of it. *Llunio Cymru* targets a return to the world's top 20 for the men's side, "quality" facilities within 15 minutes of every community, 100 new or upgraded pitches by 2030, 30% more registered players and a doubling of women and girls playing by 2035. Chief executive **Noel Mooney** was blunt about the funding gap: "We need a lot more support." **Joe Cordina says sharing a ring with Manny Pacquiao in Cardiff would be "an**

honour", with negotiations for the bout at an advanced stage. The fight would sit on the Anthony Joshua v Tyson Fury undercard in Cordina's home city on 11 December. Cordina, 34, the former IBF super-featherweight champion recently cleared of assault charges, said: "A legend like Manny Pacquiao will never come again." Pacquiao, 47, a 12-time world champion across eight weights, has not fought since July 2025.

? Culture

Sir Tom Jones has cancelled two US shows after "a bad case of the flu". The 86-year-old from Pontypridd rescheduled Sunday's Los Angeles date to 4 November and San Diego's to 3 November at The Rady Shell, following doctors' advice mid-way through his Come Gather Round tour: "I've had a great time these last few weeks, completing 20 shows... I'm truly sorry for any inconvenience caused." **A north Wales dancer whose family were told to say goodbye after a stroke now hopes to perform again before he turns 30. Daniel Parsonage**, 29, collapsed while preparing for a dance at Hawarden Summer Carnival on 12 July 2025 and spent four weeks in an induced coma after two emergency operations for bleeding on the brain. He can now form sentences and walk short distances with a mobility aid, and says: "I hope I feel normal again."

?? Weather

Light rain and a moderate breeze in Cardiff today, high 14C, low 9C. Wednesday light rain, 15C/9C; Thursday misty, 15C/8C; Friday sunny intervals, 16C/8C; Saturday misty, 14C/6C; Sunday sunny intervals, 13C/5C. No weather warnings in force for Wales.

? Quick Summary

- Wales Governance Centre: 37% of deaths among prison leavers on probation in Wales were drug related (21% across England and Wales), and Wales jails more of its population than any country in western Europe.
- Wales is 88 radiographers short — a 28% gap, nearly twice as bad in north Wales — with cancer patients travelling to England for scans.
- Ministers launched a 10-week consultation on whether to keep free school milk after the Rural Payments Agency exits in March 2027.
- Nation.Cymru reveals Siambr Hywel, Wales' first debating chamber, is not in Senedd renovation proposals.
- Plaid MSs want hard cash for the Abertillery rail spur after Lord Hendy called it a priority without an allocation.
- Albert Williams, 66, admitted murdering Charlene Dowsell, 41, in Newport; sentenced 21 December.

- Three flood warnings and 14 alerts on Monday; the wind warning expired at 03:00 and no warnings are in force for Wales today.
- Cadw raised no objection to 95 homes at Gyffin near Conwy's World Heritage Site, prompting a resident challenge.
- FAW's Llunio Cymru plan wants top-20 ranking, 100 pitches by 2030 and 30% more players — and more Welsh Government money.
- Sir Tom Jones rescheduled two US shows with flu; Velfrey Vineyard won Wales' first Glass of Bubbly trophy.

? Method note

Compiled in cron mode at ~09:55 GMT. SearXNG returned an index-heavy mix (WalesOnline, BBC Wales, ITV Wales, Nation.Cymru, senedd.wales) plus spam (a German "Welsh Pony" TV item, NSW news), so the sweep ran through the Playwright fetch service: ten index/feed pages (BBC Wales, BBC Wales Politics, BBC Cymru Fyw, Nation.Cymru home/news/sport, GOV.WALES main index, Guardian Wales RSS, BBC Weather warnings and Cardiff forecast), two BBC site searches and 41 article pages, all successful. A per-file date sweep dropped stale cards: the Nation.Cymru sport page still carried 12 October items (WRU chair appointment, Finucane worlds preview, Wales v Albania), the BBC PAWB/Wylfa "target for attack" piece duplicated the 22 October roundup, Penmynydd almshouses were covered on 25 October, and Aberfan 60th-anniversary coverage (24-25 October) was left alone. This morning's UK file carried an FM "lessons learned after summer budget defeat" line citing BBC Wales — a site search traced it to a 2 September article, so it was dropped as re-aged rather than repeated. Guardian Wales RSS had nothing new beyond the Land Registry consultation, which is England-focused. Nitter, Phice, Flaresolverr and Reddit skipped as instructed; WalesOnline, ITV and senedd.wales bodies remain unusable through the fetcher.

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