Welsh Headlines — 29 Oct 2026

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? Top Story: Wales' £450m Budget share — "a real-terms cut dressed up as a windfall"

Wales gets an extra £450m over three years on top of its £27bn budget — and the Welsh Government says that, once inflation is counted, it is a cut. Finance minister **Elin Jones** confirmed that households in council tax bands A–D will get the same **£100 cost-of-living payment** as England, reaching about a million homes (70–75% of Welsh households). Then came the verdict: "This is a real-terms cut dressed up as a windfall… Our fiscal position is worse than it was before the chancellor stood up, and that has direct consequences for our own budget on 17 November." She warned of "tough choices" and further "efficiency" in public services. **The row is over what the £450m actually is.** Treasury minister **Torsten Bell** said it was only a real-terms cut "if you think it's bad that the Welsh government was given shed loads of extra money last year" — a reference to £322m of one-off special educational needs cash in 2025-26. Plaid's Treasury spokesperson **Ben Lake** said just **£30m** had been offered towards a promised **£14bn** rail programme, against Wales' £1bn up-front ask, and that removing gas standing charges does nothing for the homes off the gas grid paying Britain's highest electricity standing charges. Lib Dem MP **David Chadwick** called much of it money for projects "we already knew about"; Conservative leader **Darren Millar** said there was nothing for the M4, A40 or A55 and no U-turn on the family farm tax.

? The Budget fine print: Cynnal still waiting on the Treasury

Plaid's flagship child poverty payment is stuck behind a tax ruling the Budget did not deliver. The Welsh Government wants to trial **Cynnal** — £10 a week for 15,000 children under six in households on universal credit — but says it cannot start until the UK government exempts it from taxation and disregards it in benefit calculations. Welsh Secretary **Stephen Kinnock** told BBC Wales that officials at the Department for Work and Pensions and the Welsh Government are "working together" on it: "We are absolutely positive about that. We need to make sure that the numbers work and there are no unintended consequences." Jones said: "It was in the UK government's gift to confirm a decision on that in the Budget. They've not done so… I don't see any reason why the UK government can't move reasonably quickly now." **The wider picture is weaker than the headline cash suggests.** The OBR nudged this year's growth forecast up from 1.1% to 1.2% but cut next year's from 1.6% to 1.0%, and forecast no real earnings growth in 2027 as energy costs push inflation up; household disposable income is expected to fall in the near term and, even by 2030-31, sit only 2% above pre-pandemic levels. **TUC Cymru** general secretary **Laura Doel** welcomed the targeted energy help but called for public sector pay rises and lower household costs. The Welsh Government has not said how it will administer the £100 payment — the last similar scheme, in 2022, ran through councils. **Business is still absorbing the detail.** Rate relief and the English business-rates cut trigger consequential funding for Cardiff Bay rather than Welsh policy choices, and the Welsh Government's own Budget lands on **17 November** with the finance minister already flagging cuts. Charity and retail bodies spent Wednesday warning that the £100 is untargeted: general allocation, not needs-based, was Jones' own criticism of it.

? Health: a mother denied hospital meals because she was not breastfeeding

A first-time mum was refused hospital food while her baby was "fighting for her life" because she was formula feeding. Sophie Price, 22, from Newport, had given birth at **Grange University Hospital** in Cwmbran five days before returning with daughter **Florence**, who had stopped breathing and was diagnosed with bronchiolitis, a rhinovirus and a blood infection that left her lungs unable to work on their own. Told she was no longer classed as a patient because she was not breastfeeding, Sophie said she went about 28 hours without eating at one point and that the family spent more than **£1,000** on canteen and takeaway food over a three-week stay. "It was just an awful experience. I just needed a hot meal to keep going for my daughter." **Aneurin Bevan University Health Board said it was "sorry to hear about Sophie's experience" and was "committed to supporting families throughout their child's stay".** Sophie, who was still recovering from a dislocated hip and oedema after the birth and whose husband's paternity leave had ended, said she relied on relatives finishing work to bring her food. She praised the staff who saved Florence's life. The case lands days after the same hospital publicly rejected online claims that it was "dangerous" and "dreadful".

? Tech: AI tools "erased" the faces of people with visible differences

A BBC Wales investigation has found mainstream AI image tools will remove scars, birthmarks and other visible differences when asked to make a person look "normal". Rhiannon Morgan, 30, from Bridgend, discovered an image of her in a work newsletter had been auto-retouched — her skin colour and the hard skin on her hands smoothed away — after Canva was asked only to rearrange photos. "It eradicates all the obstacles I've had to overcome to be the person I am today. In literally seconds, AI can eradicate the hospital appointments and bullying I've been through," said Rhiannon, who has the rare skin condition epidermolytic ichthyosis. **In tests with the prompt "make this person normal", Gemini 3.6 Thinking, Grok Fast and ChatGPT 6 all erased the facial difference on the first attempt** — while leaving clothes, hair and background untouched. Anthropic's **Claude Opus 5.5** refused, saying it would not edit "a real identifiable person". Canva said it does not automatically retouch photos and was looking into the case. The issue was raised in July by campaigner **Katie Piper**, who asked what right AI has to define "normal"; charity **Changing Faces** estimates about five million people in the UK live with a visible difference.

??? Education: only nine Welsh-medium secondary teachers trained last year

Just nine students trained to teach through the medium of Welsh at secondary level at Bangor University last year — and this year's intake of 20 is still skewed towards PE. Dr **Lowri Mair Jones**, who runs the secondary PGCE course, said last year was "heartbreaking" and described a "vicious circle": sparse subjects make it harder to place trainees with subject specialists, and schools say they lack staff to support them. Of this year's cohort, more than half are PE; only two are training to teach Welsh as a subject, one maths and one design and technology. "It's time for answers now, because it is the future of our children, our young people and our future workforce that is at stake," she told BBC Cymru Fyw. **The Welsh Government has raised the training grant for priority subjects, including Welsh, from £5,000 to £20,000 from September 2026. Ioan Rhys Jones** of the teaching union UCAC said the situation was a "crisis" and questioned whether the incentives were sufficient or being used effectively, arguing ministers should cut workload, tackle pupil behaviour and offer more workplace flexibility. Students at Cardiff University said other career options — journalism, presenting, PR — and the visible strain on their teacher parents were pushing them away from the classroom.

? Farming: bluetongue passes 490 cases as dog-attack DNA testing begins

Confirmed bluetongue (BTV-3) cases in Wales have reached 493, up from just over 100 when the Welsh Government issued its last statement on 11 September — a near fivefold rise in under two months. The figure is correct to 26 October and officials expect it to pass 500 shortly. Chief veterinary officer **Dr Richard Irvine** said vaccination is "the only practical measure to protect livestock from bluetongue in the long term" and warned the disease will persist over winter, making spring readiness essential. The midge-borne virus affects sheep, cattle, deer, goats and, if they eat infected material, dogs; suspect cases must be reported. **Separately, police in north Wales have begun using DNA sampling to identify dogs that attack livestock.** Powers in force since March allow officers to take DNA samples from suspected dogs, issue unlimited fines and keep animals indefinitely. NFU Mutual estimates more than **£350,000** of Welsh livestock was killed or seriously injured by dogs last year, with about 300 attacks reported. Farmer **Daniel Jones** of Gogarth near Llandudno, who has lost sheep repeatedly, said the change "sends a message", though prevention remains his priority. Farmers across Wales are also receiving sampling kits for a Liverpool John Moores University study into the best way to collect DNA evidence after an attack.

?? Politics: Robinson's Swansea newsroom footage, and a Reform candidate's "years ago" defence

Hours before he was convicted of harassing two journalists, Tommy Robinson posted footage of himself storming a Welsh newspaper's offices. Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, 43, was found guilty at Southwark Crown Court on Wednesday of harassing freelance reporter **Andrew Young** and Daily Mail editor **Jacob Dirnhuber**, hiring private investigators to find their home addresses; the pair left their homes or took on extra security. The three-and-a-half-minute clip he reposted to X was filmed in 2017 at the **South Wales Evening Post**'s Swansea office, where he confronted former assistant news editor **Jack Pitts** over being described as "far-right", told journalists he would "come and knock at your front door" and threatened to visit an editor's home. Nation.Cymru notes it is unclear why he resurfaced the footage as the jury deliberated. **A Reform UK by-election candidate has dismissed his support for Robinson as being from "years ago" — despite calling him "a breath of fresh air" in February. Darren Crandon**, known as "Brunte" on X, is Reform's candidate in the **Risca East by-election on 19 November**. Nation.Cymru found posts from 24 February this year urging Robinson to "unite the right" and praising him for being "one step ahead of everyone", plus June posts defending people arrested after Robinson-led disorder in Southampton. Crandon says agreeing with someone on some issues "does not mean endorsing everything they say or do".

?? Councils: Shire Hall to go, and Wales' most-bashed bridge hit again

Flintshire's Shire Hall will be demolished early next year at a cost of about £4.9 million, along with the former central library next door. The council vacated its headquarters of six decades in February 2025 and hopes clearing the Mold site will draw developers; the wider campus has had significant recent investment, including the new Theatr Clwyd and a planned £13m joint archive. Heneb, the Welsh archaeological trust, requires a photographic record of both buildings inside and out before they go. **Trafle Mill bridge in Gowerton — officially Wales' most-bashed railway bridge — has been hit yet again.** CCTV from a nearby house shows a utilities lorry carrying wooden poles and a crane arm striking the 11ft bridge on Sunday 25 October with a loud bang; Network Rail said in 2020 it had been hit 33 times in a decade, and 12 strikes have been reported since 2023. Resident **Mark Needs**, who filmed it, said the flashing height-warning sign on the Fairwood Terrace side did not appear to activate, though Swansea Council says the sensor system is working.

? Sport: WRU explores England, Wrexham fined, and a 14-year-old takes on Littler

English rugby bosses have made clear they are expanding the Prem with English clubs, despite the WRU exploring a move south of the border. After reports the WRU is interested in an Anglo-Welsh league, the Professional Rugby Board was told on Wednesday that the union plans to explore a future in the English club game. Prem Rugby and the RFU responded with a joint statement targeting 12 teams by 2029-30, adding: "Resources are currently focused on supporting English clubs throughout the pyramid who aspire to join the league." The WRU says it remains committed to four teams in the URC until the end of 2027-28 and will settle its future operating model by the end of this season — while pitching **Brython Thunder** and **Gwalia Lightning** for Premiership Women's Rugby. New chair **Lyndon Faulkner** has said he is a fan of Anglo-Welsh competition. **Wrexham have been fined £75,000 — £25,000 of it suspended — for fielding ineligible players twice this season. Issa Kabore** came off the bench in the 2-1 defeat at Birmingham on 28 August before his Home Office right-to-work documents were uploaded; **Callum O'Hare**, signed the day before, was an unused substitute at Millwall on 2 September with his paperwork also incomplete. The club said it had reached an "agreed decision" with the EFL. **Wales have made five starting changes for Saturday's second WXV Test against Japan** (07:00 GMT, Kumagaya), rewarding the bench that closed out last week's 17-0 win in Tokyo: **Bethan Lewis** starts, co-captain **Alex Callender** moves to number eight, **Lleucu George** is preferred at fly-half, and **Courtney Keight** replaces centre **Freya Bell**, who has a serious knee injury. Wales are ranked 11th after beating Japan and South Africa. **And a 14-year-old from Wrexham is one**

of 24 contestants on Netflix's *Beat Luke Littler* on Friday night, chasing £501,000 for the first person to win a single leg of 501 against the world number one. **Makinley Cooper-Johnson**, who took up darts three years ago and was picked by a panel including Phil Taylor, wants the money to train as an undertaker: "He knows he's good — but he doesn't know how good I am."

? Culture: medieval manuscripts come home, and Lycett paints Anne Hughes

Three manuscripts produced at Llanbadarn Fawr near Aberystwyth will be reunited for the first time in almost 1,000 years at the National Library of Wales from 20 November. The **Ricemarch Psalter** (Trinity College Dublin), St Augustine's *De Trinitate* (Corpus Christi, Cambridge) and Macrobius' *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* (British Library) join *Vitae Sanctorum Wallensium* and the Book of Taliesin in *Normans: The Welsh Perspective*, an exhibition telling the Norman Conquest through Welsh scholarship and resilience. Chief executive **Rhodri Llwyd Morgan** called it "one of the most significant medieval exhibitions ever presented by the Library". **Joe Lycett has painted the Welsh grandmother who went viral after being hoisted into the air by shop shutters. Anne Hughes** was left dangling 7ft above the ground outside the Best-One she worked at in Rhondda Cynon Taf; the CCTV clip was viewed tens of millions of times. Lycett's tribute hangs in his *Everything Must Go* exhibition at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. Anne died in 2025; her granddaughter **Lilly Hughes** said the painting meant her nan's legacy lived on and she would "have it on my wall any day".

? Economy: a stronger summer, but operators aren't celebrating

A third of Welsh tourism businesses had more visitors than last summer, with 32% reporting more overseas customers — but a busy season has not translated into confidence about profits. The Wales Tourism Business Barometer, based on 900 interviews between 2 and 22 September, found 34% up, 45% level and 21% down, with the weather the most-cited reason for improvement and Germany and the Netherlands the strongest overseas markets. One north Wales caravan park said it "could have sold the units three times over"; a south-east attraction said the heatwave sent people to the beach instead: "People just don't have money."

?? Weather

Sunny intervals and light winds in Cardiff today, 15C/8C. Friday sunny intervals, 16C/6C; Saturday misty, 13C/5C; Sunday sunny intervals with a gentle breeze, 13C/6C; Monday variable cloud, around 12C. Patchy mist and fog redeveloping overnight into Friday morning. No weather warnings

are in force anywhere in the UK.

? Quick Summary

- Wales gets £450m extra over three years on a £27bn budget; Elin Jones calls it "a real-terms cut dressed up as a windfall", with her own Budget on 17 November now facing cuts.
- The £100 energy payment will reach about a million Welsh households in bands A–D; how it is paid has not been announced.
- Torsten Bell says the "cut" only exists because Wales got £322m of one-off SEN money last year; Ben Lake says £30m for rail is nowhere near the £1bn asked for.
- Cynnal — £10 a week for 15,000 under-sixes — still cannot start until the Treasury exempts it from tax and benefits; Kinnock says talks are "positive".
- Sophie Price, 22, was refused hospital meals at Grange University Hospital because she was formula feeding; the family spent over £1,000 on food in three weeks.
- BBC Wales found Gemini, Grok and ChatGPT erase visible differences when asked to make someone look "normal"; Claude refused.
- Only nine students trained as Welsh-medium secondary teachers at Bangor last year; 20 this year, over half of them PE.
- Bluetongue cases in Wales hit 493, up from just over 100 in September; police now use DNA sampling on dogs that attack livestock.
- Tommy Robinson posted 2017 footage of himself storming the South Wales Evening Post's Swansea office hours before his harassment conviction.
- WRU is exploring the English club game; Prem Rugby says its expansion will be English-only. Wrexham fined £75,000 over ineligible players.
- Three Llanbadarn Fawr manuscripts reunite at the National Library from 20 November; Joe Lycett paints viral nan Anne Hughes.

? Method note

Compiled in cron mode at ~09:20 GMT. SearXNG returned the usual index-heavy mix (BBC indexes, senedd.wales, WalesOnline, NewsNow) with only one usable lead — the Budget piece — so the sweep ran through the Playwright fetch service: 11 index/feed pages and 30 article pages, all successful. Nitter, Phice, Flaresolverr and Reddit skipped as instructed; WalesOnline, ITV and senedd.wales bodies remain unusable through the fetcher, and the Guardian's Wales feed had nothing newer than 27 October. De-duplicated against yesterday's Welsh file (Budget-eve asks, the Welsh-medium student outflow, Storm Boelo, Reform's Flintshire sanctuary vote) and this morning's UK file (Budget measures table, the £100 payment line, Roman ruins at Caerleon, the zombie-knife trial, the PIP case). Stale cards dropped on date: Jane Dodds' leadership announcement (20 Oct), the Senedd M4 relief-road vote (21 Oct), Reform's smart glasses (17-18 Oct), the TV-stars wedding (24 Oct), the Grange Hospital "dangerous" claims piece (25-26 Oct), Glamorgan's coach (12 Oct) and the WRU chair appointment (12 Oct). Bluetongue and Shire Hall were previously covered (100+ cases in September; demolition permission in August) and are

written here only as new developments — the 493-case total and the approved £4.9m demolition. BBC "Wales' papers" digests carry no article text and were skipped.

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