Welsh Headlines — 31 Oct 2026

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? Top Story: "How and when" — ap Iorwerth wins ground on Welsh fiscal powers

Rhun ap Iorwerth says there has been a "significant step forward" on Wales' spending and borrowing powers after Friday's National Economic Council summit in Glasgow with Andy Burnham and Scotland's John Swinney. "On fiscal flexibility, the ability for us to use our funding better in Wales, use our reserves better in Wales — and on borrowing powers, I was told clearly that it was now a matter of how and when," the First Minister said. "That is a significant step forward." No timescales were announced.

The detail is where the argument will be fought. Wales' reserve is capped at £385m, with only £137.5m of resource and £55m of capital drawdown permitted a year, and infrastructure borrowing is limited to £1.1bn overall and £165m annually — limits ap Iorwerth wants lifted. Burnham called the meeting "positive" and said officials on both sides will now work up "regional empowerment" arrangements, but he also pressed both first ministers to devolve "deeper" to the regions; they replied that any further devolution inside Wales is a matter for the Senedd alone. Welsh Secretary Stephen Kinnock said fiscal flexibilities remain on the agenda for talks with No 10 North, but "I can't give you a specific time frame".

Beyond the headline, ap Iorwerth said Burnham gave a personal commitment to look at the £14bn rail pledge, that he pressed the Treasury to unblock the *Cynnal* weekly child payment pilot, and that he urged the PM to go further in pursuing a stronger relationship with the EU.

?? Politics: Kinnock — winter fuel cuts turned Wales into "active dislike"

Lord Kinnock says UK welfare decisions turned disillusionment with Labour in Wales into "active dislike". In a Newyddion S4C special on Andy Burnham's first 100 days, the former Labour leader said governing "at both ends of the M4" before May's Senedd election had been an extra burden: "If there is any opposition or resentment to the government on either end of the M4, the other lot are going to pay as well." He said "alienation… had been creeping up" and that "what turned that into active dislike" was "the withdrawal of the winter fuel allowance, the threats to the welfare system" and the slow scrapping of the two-child benefit cap. Labour returned just nine MSs in May after 27 years in government.

He also broke with his party's Welsh government on justice devolution, a key Plaid demand: he would back it only if it meant Wales was "better protected", streets were "safer" and the system "more efficient" — "but those guarantees are absent at the moment… there would be more downsides than upsides."

The first ministers have told Burnham that local devolution is their call, not Westminster's. After the Glasgow talks, Swinney and ap Iorwerth said decisions on devolving power further rest solely with Holyrood and the Senedd. Downing Street called the discussions constructive, but Defence Secretary Wes Streeting had earlier accused the Scottish government of hoarding powers it acquired from Westminster rather than passing them on.

? Health: three urgent care centres under threat in north-west Wales

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board is consulting on ending Urgent Primary Care Centre services at three sites — Ysbyty Penrhos Stanley in Holyhead, Ysbyty Alltwen in Tremadog and Ysbyty Gwynedd in Bangor — under a letter to staff that says the service could close before **31 March 2027**. The centres, staffed by senior nurse practitioners, GPs and physiotherapists, were set up in 2022 to treat same-day urgent cases and take pressure off GP surgeries and A&E. The board cites "a combination of challenges": funding uncertainty, recruitment and retention problems and growing reliance on temporary staffing. Services in the east — Mold Community Hospital and Wrexham Maelor — are unaffected.

Local politicians have written to the board in opposition, among them Ynys Môn MP **Llinos Medi** and MSs **Helen Jenner** and **Janet Finch-Saunders**. Finch-Saunders said the centres "help reduce the pressure on our A&Es"; Penrhos Stanley lost its four-bed Dewi Sant hospice unit in 2025.

? A swimmer, 69, has died after being rescued at Caswell Bay

A 69-year-old man from the Mount Pleasant area of Swansea died after being pulled from the sea at Caswell Bay near the Mumbles on Thursday afternoon. Coastguard teams were called after reports that four swimmers were in difficulty and one person was missing, with police attending at about **15:45**. The coastguard helicopter, a rescue helicopter and the Wales Air Ambulance were all scrambled. The man received medical treatment from paramedics and coastguards but was declared dead at **16:18**. His family has been informed and South Wales Police said there are no suspicious circumstances.

? Teddy's "final chapter": no active disease, and a flight to New York

Almost a year after doctors warned he might not survive surgery, three-year-old Teddy Sloman's scans show no active disease — and his family are preparing to fly to New York next month for a vaccine trial. Teddy, from Griffithstown near Pontypool, was diagnosed with high-risk neuroblastoma, a rare and aggressive childhood cancer. His mother **Sarah Sloman**, a paediatric nurse, said the trial has given the family "a glimmer of hope" and hopes it will be "the final chapter" and "the end of this ridiculous nightmare". "We've now given him the absolute best chance that we could possibly have in the world of medical science," she said. The family had been racing to raise £250,000 for treatment in America.

?? Sextortion: coroner's warning after teenager's death

Ministers have promised action after an inquest into the death of an 18-year-old who took his own life after an online sextortion scam. Cai Davies, from Pontypridd, died in June 2025 after scammers operating from Africa demanded money and threatened to send intimate images to his friends and post them on YouTube; the images were sent to at least one of his Facebook friends. Assistant coroner **Rachel Knight** concluded suicide, saying it was "more likely than not" that personal stresses and the scam "more than minimally contributed" to his death. She issued a Regulation 28 preventing future deaths report to the UK and Welsh governments, noting Cai was "bombarded with video calls and messages via Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp over a very short period".

Online Safety Minister Ian Murray called the circumstances "profoundly troubling" and listed measures including criminalising the taking of intimate images without consent and requiring platforms to remove them. Welsh education minister **Anna Brychan** and culture minister **Heledd Fychan** said telecoms and internet are reserved to Westminster but that Wales is considering the implications of UK proposals on young people's access to social media.

?? Courts: petrol bomb charge, and a seven-year trafficking enterprise

A 38-year-old man from Aberfan has been charged with making an explosive substance with intent to endanger life or injure property after suspicious items were found on the Taff Trail in the town on **17 October**. He appeared before magistrates in Merthyr Tydfil accused of making a "homemade petrol bomb", was remanded in custody and is due back in court on **5 November**.

The "architect and organiser" of a gang that trafficked Romanian women into the UK for sex work has been jailed for eight years and two months. George Filip, 45, led an organised crime group responsible for at least **16 victims** between June 2015 and October 2022, with women working in Cwmbran, Hereford, near Alton Towers, Stoke-on-Trent, Aberdeen and Inverness. His wife **Ionela Filip**, 35, described as "a senior trusted manager", got a three-year suspended sentence; **Leonard Banica**, 41, was jailed for three years and nine months and **Alexandru Moco**, 27, for one year and three months. Judge Francis called it "a substantial and sophisticated criminal enterprise that operated over seven years"; the men face deportation and a proceeds of crime hearing follows in 2027.

A 73-year-old man from Maesteg has been jailed for 11 years and nine months for sexual offences against multiple victims over three decades. **Christopher Williams** admitted 15 offences, including nine counts of indecent assault on a girl under 14, and was sentenced at Cardiff Crown Court on 21 October. He was also given a restraining order.

? Transport: M4 junction closures, and a fortnight of rail works

Caerphilly councillors have joined opposition to possible M4 junction closures in Newport, warning that drivers from Risca could be funnelled onto a single route. The Welsh Government is considering partially or fully closing three junctions to ease congestion around Newport — including a full closure of **Junction 27 at High Cross**, which would leave Risca traffic more reliant on Junction 28 at Tredegar Park. The council's highways cabinet member **Amanda McConnell** has requested a meeting with deputy transport minister **Mark Hooper**. A government report calls junction closures the "fastest and cheapest to deliver" option while conceding they

"would likely be unpopular", alongside options to widen the Brynglas tunnels and the A48; ministers have promised 18 months of research into "roads-based solutions".

Rail passengers in west Wales face disruption through November. The Whitland–Pembroke line closes from 23:30 on Friday 6 November until 05:45 on Saturday 14 November while Network Rail renews about 1,800m of track, 500m of additional rail and the points at Tenby, with replacement buses running. All lines west of Carmarthen also close from 00:01 on Sunday 1 November to 01:45 on Monday 2 November, and again from 00:01 on Sunday 15 November to 01:45 on Monday 16 November.

? Culture: a Porthcawl institution closes, and a strip show pulled

The 1832 Restaurant in Porthcawl will close tomorrow (Sunday 1 November) after what management called "the incredibly difficult decision" to shut a small independent business facing "rising costs" and "the current economic climate". In a statement the restaurant thanked customers, the local community and its team, and said all reservations after Sunday would be contacted.

Swansea Council has apologised after cancelling a Magic Mike-style strip show for being "too raunchy". The Magic Men Australia World Tour was due at Brangwyn Hall on Friday; headliner **William Parfitt** said he found out about the cancellation a week beforehand and was not officially told by the venue or council. The council said it acted "following concerns raised with us" and was "sorry for the disappointment this will cause".

Gŵyl Cefni will return in 2027 after a year off, running 4–5 June in Llangefni, with a smaller **Gŵyl Cefni Bach** in the town centre on 5 December this year. The festival, which began in Llangefni in 2000 as part of Menter Môn's work, spent 2026 planning how it evolves.

??????? Cymru Fyw: a television producer dies at 48, and a retired policeman's ghost stories

The television producer and director Meinir Siencyn has died aged 48, after treatment in Germany for stage 4 breast and bone cancer. Originally from Mold and living in Llanberis, she documented her own diagnosis for S4C and in 2026 led a fundraising appeal for experimental treatment not available on the NHS. She worked on *Priodas Pum Mil*, *Prosiect Pum Mil* and *Jules Peters: My Cancer Journey*, and co-founded the production company Snapyn TV with her partner Emyr Davies. She was first diagnosed with breast cancer in 2013, aged 34.

A former policeman is trying to keep local ghost stories alive before they are forgotten. **Huw Hughes**, who retired from the force in 1996 and chairs the Seiont, Gwyrfai and Llyfni anglers' association near Llanrug, has collected dozens of stories from people he met on the beat and recorded them in a booklet. His worry is social change: "The biggest problem is that people have stopped going out for a pint or meeting socially like they used to. Most of the local pubs around here have closed, and that's where people used to tell these stories to each other."

? Sport: Wales' women make it three from four, Wrexham's wobble

Wales beat Japan 29-5 in the WXV Global Series at Kumagaya Rugby Stadium, a third win in four matches for Sean Lynn's side. Nel Metcalfe, Kelsey Jones, Amy Williams (twice) and Sisilia Tuipulotu scored the five tries, with Lleucu George adding two conversions; Wales led 19-5 at half-time after Moe Nagaoka replied for Japan, who have now lost all four of their matches.

Phil Parkinson has called for "honest" self-assessment after Wrexham's 1-0 defeat at Sheffield United, Ben Brereton Díaz scoring on 30 minutes. Wrexham have won three of 13 Championship games and face Middlesbrough on Wednesday: "The first 45 minutes, we made them look a really good side." **Newport County thumped Chesterfield 4-1** at Rodney Parade to keep their home run going.

Llanybydder Rugby Club is fighting for survival after 52 years because it cannot field enough players. Club manager **Nia Evans** said it was "heartbreaking" to be down to one team and often only "about 12" players a week, and urged the WRU to support grassroots clubs because "that's where all the rugby players come from". The WRU said its club development officers offer help to every club, including Llanybydder recently.

? Food: Wales' first bluefin tuna goes on sale

The first five bluefin tuna landed at Milford Haven under a Welsh Government commercial-scientific trial have been processed and sold locally. Fishers in the trial must use rod and reel only — no chumming — record every catch in detail (location, weather, hours fished, bycatch) and land at Milford Haven or Holyhead. The fish were processed at a premises in Burry Port; most were sold at a Saturday walk-in fish market, with fins, frames and heads going out through a UK-wide home delivery service. Fishers hope to land more, weather permitting.

?? Local democracy: a data centre, a byway row and a £60m school

Residents of a new Cardiff estate say they would never have moved in had they known a data centre could be built nearby. Nick Richards, 38, of Maple Fields — built with the council and Wates Residential — is opposing Curtis Hall Ltd's application for the East Cardiff Park and Ride site, submitted in January, which would put on-site gas turbines beyond the houses where children play. The scheme has drawn objections from councillors, MSs, residents and campaigners.

The chairman of Powys' Local Access Forum has resigned after a disagreement with the council over an ancient byway. Graham Taylor, also co-chair of Ramblers Cymru, stepped down over Powys Council's proposals for the Monk's Trod, a 24-mile medieval road across the Cambrian Mountains linking Strata Florida and Abbey Cwmhir, running over peat moorland important for rare birds.

"Keep clear" markings have been painted outside a Holywell school that closed 10 years ago. The 30ft bilingual markings appeared outside Ysgol y Fron after Welsh Water dug up the road and was told by Flintshire council to reinstate it "on a like-for-like basis". Resident **Russell Price** called it "the talk of the town" and "a classic case of departments not talking to each other"; the council admitted the markings were "no longer appropriate" and is rectifying it.

Plans have been submitted for a £60m special school in Bridgend. Heronsbridge School would move from Ewenny Road to a site on Island Farm — a former WWII prisoner of war camp — with room for up to **300 pupils** aged three to 19, plus a swimming pool, hydrotherapy pool, sensory rooms, a 4G pitch and a community games area.

Opposition councillors in Bridgend have called for an investigation into how community project funding is handed out. Cllr Amanda Williams, who leads the Bridgend County Independents, points to discrepancies in Community Infrastructure Fund recommendations, unanswered questions over Pride in Place Impact Fund allocations and a Community Asset Transfer steering group meeting behind closed doors.

?? Westminster: a committee chair row

Canterbury MP Rosie Duffield, now an independent, says Cardiff West MP Alex Barros-Curtis should not chair the Commons committee scrutinising the Conversion Practices Bill, describing him as a trans-rights activist. Writing on social media, she argued it was inappropriate for him to lead scrutiny of a bill opponents say would criminalise parents, teachers and doctors.

? Nos Galan Gaeaf: the ghosts behind Halloween

"Nos Galan Gaeaf" is not an ancient Welsh Samhain but "the night of the winter calends" — *calan* borrowed from the Latin *calends*, *gaeaf* meaning winter — writing in Nation.Cymru, Aberystwyth Celtic studies lecturer **Simon Rodway** traces the name to Latin loan words that entered Brittonic under Rome, with *Calan Gaeaf* on 1 November and the night before being its eve. There is no evidence Samhain was celebrated in Wales at all, he argues; the medieval references, in the Black Book of Carmarthen and the Welsh laws, are "disappointingly prosaic". The customs are another matter: in south Wales parties went door to door, boys in Glamorgan wore women's clothing, and in Powys the *gwrachod* — men in pairs dressed as an old man and old woman, or gangs in sheepskins and masks — drank heavily and demanded gifts. Bonfires (*coelcerth*) kept people safe from wandering spirits, though the walk home risked meeting the *Hwch Ddu Gwta*, the tail-less black sow, and the *Ladi Wen heb ddim pen*, the headless white lady.

And Welsh football grounds have gone viral, after Newport and Cymru fan **Sean Mills** posted his twelve favourite backdrops: Maes y Parc at CPD Penrhyndeudraeth, with Yr Wyddfa at one end and the Ffestiniog Railway above, and Abertridwr Park in the Aber Valley among them. The thread drew more than 15,000 interactions.

?? Weather

A yellow fog warning covering Wales is in force until 10:00 GMT, issued and started at 04:11 and also covering the East and West Midlands, East of England, London and the South East, North West England and Yorkshire and the Humber. The Met Office warns of slower journeys, delays to bus and train services and possible flight delays or cancellations. Cardiff: misty with light winds, **13°C**, low 4°C. Tonight starts clear and dry before mist and fog develop, becoming extensive and dense in places. Sunday stays cloudy with patchy mist, fog and drizzle in the morning, brightening from the north in the afternoon, 13°C/6°C. Monday is dry and settled with sunny spells, 12°C/5°C, with a cool start on Tuesday (13°C/8°C). *(BBC Weather, Cardiff, updated 08:55; warnings page checked 09:15.)*

? Quick Summary

- **Fiscal powers:** ap Iorwerth says borrowing and reserve limits are now a matter of "how and when" after Glasgow talks with Burnham — but no timescales, and the PM still wants "deeper" regional devolution.
- **Politics:** Lord Kinnock blames winter fuel and welfare decisions for Wales' "active dislike" of Labour, and doubts justice devolution.

- **Health:** Betsi Cadwaladr consults on closing urgent care centres at Holyhead, Tremadog and Bangor before 31 March 2027; a 69-year-old swimmer died at Caswell Bay.
- **Courts:** Aberfan petrol bomb charge; an eight-year sentence for the head of a 16-victim trafficking gang; 11 years nine months for a Maesteg sex offender.
- **Transport:** Caerphilly joins the fight over M4 junction closures; west Wales rail shut for engineering works in November.
- **Sport:** Wales' women beat Japan 29-5 in the WXV; Wrexham lose 1-0 at Sheffield United; Newport win 4-1.
- **Also:** Porthcawl's 1832 Restaurant closes, a Swansea strip show is cancelled, Gŵyl Cefni returns, and Wales' first bluefin tuna goes on sale.

? Method note

Indexes and article bodies were fetched through the Playwright service on MacBach (.100:8090) — BBC Wales, BBC Wales Politics, BBC Cymru Fyw, BBC Weather (Cardiff and the UK warnings page), Nation.Cymru (news, home, sport, culture), the GOV.WALES main news index and the Guardian Wales RSS feed. SearXNG returned an index-heavy mix with no usable article leads, so the sweep went to the indexes directly. WalesOnline's live blog was consent-walled, and Nitter, Phice, Flaresolverr and Reddit steps were skipped as instructed. Dates were read from each article's own dateline: items from the 30 October roundup (the pre-meeting rail row, the water and Ynyshir stories, Tom Jones, bluetongue, the fiscal analysis) were dropped, and the Glasgow summit is reported here for its outcome rather than its preview. Jamie Miller's chart-topper (24 October roundup), Fishlock and Coleman's Hall of Fame induction (24 October) and the probation drug-deaths report (26 October) were checked and left out as already covered.

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