



ISSUE 4 – 7-13 SEPTEMBER 2026

IN THIS ISSUE

- £72 Million In A Day: Reform's Donor Bonanza
- MPs Vote Down Assisted Dying Bill
- Up For Grabs: The Battle For Starmer's Old Seat
- Stormont Says: Show Us The Money
- Plaid's Power Play
- Swinney's Big NHS Squeeze
- The Budget Countdown Begins

Welcome aboard the cart. This week Nigel Farage went from police case number to record-breaking cheque book in the space of 72 hours, MPs quietly killed off a bill years in the making, and Stormont asked Westminster to check down the back of the sofa again. Meanwhile a First Minister of Wales who isn't Labour tried to nationalise the wind, and John Swinney rearranged the NHS and gave you a cheaper bus ticket in the same breath. Read on before the tumbril reaches your seminar.

WESTMINSTER



£72 Million In A Day: Reform's Donor Bonanza

WESTMINSTER · 12-13 SEPTEMBER

Just three days after the Metropolitan Police confirmed they were investigating Reform's funding, following an undercover Channel 4 News sting that caught senior figures discussing money from people posing as wealthy US backers, the party pulled in a record £72 million in a single 24-hour window, from entirely different donors. Thailand-based businessman Christopher Harborne gave £36 million, calling it “a philanthropic gift to our country”. Hours later, US-based Ben Delo, previously pardoned by Donald Trump over a cryptocurrency exchange conviction, matched it with another £36 million, saying he wanted to give Reform “a level playing field” against the other parties. Farage says the money exists “for one purpose only: to make certain we are ready to form a government”.

- Reform insists its donors “want nothing and will never be given a peerage, knighthood or a government contract”.
- Labour's Stella Creasy points out the sum beats her own party's trade union funding over the last five years combined.
- Transparency International UK's Duncan Hames says the donations make “an irrefutable case” for a cap on political donations.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR YOUR A-LEVEL: hold two facts in your head at once here, because they are not the same problem. The police investigation is about an alleged breach of the law, foreign money is banned under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The £72 million is different: it is entirely legal, because the UK simply has no cap at all on how much a permissible UK-based donor can give. One story shows the rules being (allegedly) broken; the other shows how little the rules restrict in the first place. A strong evaluation essay on party funding controls should use both, not just one.

SPECIFICATION LINKS Edexcel 9PL0 1.2 (Political parties); 1.1 (Democracy and participation); AQA 7152 3.1.2.3 (Political parties); 3.1.2.1 (Democracy and participation).



MPs Vote Down Assisted Dying Bill

WESTMINSTER · 11 SEPTEMBER

MPs voted 286 to 270 against the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill on Friday 11 September, ending, for now, the attempt to legalise assisted dying for terminally ill adults in England and Wales. It is a striking reversal: an earlier version of the same bill passed its Commons vote by just two votes in 2025, only to run out of parliamentary time in the House of Lords in April 2026 before it could become law. Kim Leadbeater, who steered the bill through that first vote, said she was “very sad” as the reintroduced bill, this time carried by Lauren Edwards, fell at the second attempt.

- Dignity in Dying called the result “a devastating setback for dying people”, but insists “this is not going away”.
- Care Not Killing said MPs had “seen through the pernicious pretence that this draft legislation was safe”.
- Commentators now think assisted dying is unlikely to return to Parliament before the next general election.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR YOUR A-LEVEL: this is a genuinely useful worked example of a free vote, where MPs vote by conscience rather than on a party whip, common for morally contested issues like this one. It also shows something textbooks rarely spell out clearly: a Private Member's Bill can die from running out of time in the House of Lords, a purely procedural cause, just as easily as from actually losing a vote on its merits. This bill did both, in the opposite order, which makes it a sharp case study for any answer on how fragile backbench legislation really is compared to government bills.

SPECIFICATION LINKS Edexcel 9PL0 3.2 (Parliament); AQA 7152 3.1.1.2 (The structure and role of Parliament).



Up For Grabs: The Battle For Starmer's Old Seat

HOLBORN & ST PANCRAS · 7 SEPTEMBER

Keir Starmer swapped Number 10 for the backbenches back in June, and now he has swapped Parliament for nothing at all. Having resigned as an MP on 1 September, the fight for his old seat kicked off properly this week, with the writ moved and campaigning under way. Labour has picked Sagal Abdi-Wali to defend a constituency it has held since 1983. The Greens want to turn it into a genuine contest, with leader Zack Polanski putting himself forward for the nomination.

- Polling day is set for Thursday 8 October.
- Deputy Labour leader Lucy Powell says the party has been “out every day” on the doorstep already.
- Independent Andrew Feinstein, who challenged Starmer here in 2024, has ruled himself out this time.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR YOUR A-LEVEL: notice what actually happened when Starmer “resigned”. MPs cannot simply quit: under the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 they apply for a nominal paid office, the Steward of the Chiltern Hundreds, which disqualifies them from sitting. It is a 260-year-old legal fiction still doing real constitutional work today, a sharper example of Parliament's odd customary rules than anything your textbook's summary of “by-election triggers” usually gives you.

SPECIFICATION LINKS Edexcel 9PL0 1.3 (Electoral systems); 1.2 (Political parties); AQA 7152 3.1.2.2 (Elections and referendums); 3.1.2.3 (Political parties).

NORTHERN IRELAND



Stormont Says: Show Us The Money

BELFAST · 7-11 SEPTEMBER

Westminster turned up at Stormont this week with a chequebook. Stormont took one look and asked for a bigger one. Northern Ireland Secretary Chris Bryant offered around £350 million a year for three years to break the ongoing budget deadlock, a figure reported to have crept toward £500 million a year as talks continued through the week. DUP leader Gavin Robinson said the offer “falls well short of even some of the pressures in one department, let alone across the Northern Ireland Executive”. First Minister Michelle O'Neill promised to “hardball” the Secretary of State for a fairer settlement.

- Alliance's Naomi Long says the parties are “a long way from completion”.
- TUV leader Jim Allister blames Stormont's own “dysfunctionalism” for the impasse.
- SDLP's Claire Hanna does not want funding turned into “a negotiating tactic” by either side.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR YOUR A-LEVEL: a Stormont budget row is never just about money. Because the Executive is a mandatory, cross-community coalition of the DUP and Sinn Féin under the Good Friday Agreement, First Minister O'Neill and deputy First Minister Little-Pengelly hold equal rank and neither can act alone. A funding dispute here is simultaneously a fiscal argument and a live stress test of whether power-sharing itself can function under pressure, a structural difference from Scotland's or Wales' single-party-led devolved governments worth naming explicitly in any answer comparing the three.

SPECIFICATION LINKS CCEA 4830 3.1 (Unit AS 1: The Government and Politics of Northern Ireland); Edexcel 9PL0 3.4 (Relations between the branches); AQA 7152 3.1.1.5 (Devolution).

WALES



Plaid's Power Play

CARDIFF · 7 SEPTEMBER

Wales' first-ever Plaid Cymru government wants to own the lights, the turbines and the profits. This week energy minister Adam Price, himself Plaid's former leader, launched a 12-week consultation on folding Wales' existing public energy projects into a single new Welsh Public Energy Company. The pitch is blunt: stop watching the profits from Welsh wind and solar sail off to shareholders elsewhere, and keep more of the money, and the control, at home.

- The company would be built to be “owned by Welsh people”, covering onshore and offshore wind, solar, batteries and local heat networks.
- Consultation closes 30 November 2026.
- Price argues Wales must “build more of the clean energy it needs, own more of it, and benefit more directly from it”.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR YOUR A-LEVEL: don't reach straight for “Welsh independence” when you see a Plaid government story, this is a sharper, more testable example. A state-owned energy company is banal nationalism in action: using economic policy and public ownership to assert national control, quietly and without a referendum in sight. It's a genuinely useful case for showing how nationalist ideas can be pursued through devolved economic policy, not only through the constitutional question your textbook usually jumps straight to.

SPECIFICATION LINKS Edexcel 9PL0 3.4 (Relations between the branches); 4.1-4.5 (Nationalism, if studied); AQA 7152 3.1.1.5 (Devolution).

SCOTLAND



Swinney's Big NHS Squeeze

EDINBURGH & GLASGOW · 7-10 SEPTEMBER

John Swinney won May's election without a majority, and this week Holyrood made sure he felt it. MSPs pressed the First Minister over his Programme for Government's plan to scrap Scotland's fourteen territorial health boards and replace them with just two, billed as the biggest NHS shake-up since devolution began. Commuters got the gentler side of the same programme: the £2 bus fare cap rolled out across Glasgow and the west of Scotland from 7 September.

- Unite's Sharon Graham branded the NHS plan “a slash and burn programme”.
- The programme also proposes a food price cap consultation and 52 weeks a year of childcare support for children up to P7.
- Councils face a three-month reorganisation consultation, alongside plans to scrap Transport Scotland.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR YOUR A-LEVEL: Swinney cannot simply legislate any of this alone. Without a majority after May's election, every flagship policy here, the NHS boards, the food price cap, council reorganisation, needs Green or Liberal Democrat votes secured issue by issue. That's a live, current illustration of how the Additional Member System's proportionality constrains executive power in a way a Westminster PM with a Commons majority rarely has to worry about, worth using directly if you're asked to compare executive power across the UK's devolved systems.

SPECIFICATION LINKS Edexcel 9PL0 3.4 (Relations between the branches); 1.3 (Electoral systems); AQA 7152 3.1.1.5 (Devolution).

ECONOMY & BUDGET



The Budget Countdown Begins

WESTMINSTER · 9 SEPTEMBER

Chancellor John Healey delivers his first Budget on 28 October, and this week the warning lights started flashing amber. Borrowing in the first four months of this financial year reportedly reached £56.7 billion, £2.3 billion above forecast, with public debt sitting at roughly 94.1% of GDP and the tax burden at a record 37.4% of national income. The one piece of good news: no sign yet of a single dramatic “tax bombshell”. The catch is that frozen tax thresholds are quietly doing similar work anyway.

- Estimated fiscal “headroom” ranges from about £17bn down to a wobbly £7bn, depending on who's counting.
- Every 1% rise in gilt yields is reported to add roughly £15bn a year to debt interest by 2030.
- Already-confirmed changes include dividend tax rises and reformed pension inheritance tax rules.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR YOUR A-LEVEL: “fiscal drag” is the fresh angle here, and it's a genuinely sneaky mechanism worth knowing by name. Freezing the Personal Allowance and higher-rate threshold rather than raising them with inflation drags more of your income into tax, and into higher bands, without a single new law or a single vote framed as “we are raising your taxes”. It shows how the executive can reshape what people actually pay largely through inaction, a useful challenge to any answer that assumes tax rises always require a visible, votable decision.

SPECIFICATION LINKS Edexcel 9PL0 3.3 (Prime Minister and Executive); 3.2 (Parliament, re: scrutiny of the Budget); AQA 7152 3.1.1.3 (The Prime Minister and cabinet).

IN OTHER NEWS

Yusuf's Reform Rollercoaster: Reform's on-off chairman Zia Yusuf has quit and returned before; worth tracking whether the funding scandal triggers another exit, or another comeback.

Asylum Hotels Halve: The number of asylum seekers housed in hotels has reportedly fallen by half over the past year; worth digging into whether that reflects faster processing or people simply being moved elsewhere.

The Last Hereditary Peers: The House of Lords (Hereditary Peers) Act finished removing the remaining hereditary peers earlier this year; a solid one to research if you're covering Lords reform.

Reform Closing The Gap In Wales: Recent polling has put Plaid Cymru only narrowly ahead of Reform UK for the Senedd; worth watching whether Wales becomes Reform's next serious electoral target.

Burnham's Bumpy First PMQs: The new Prime Minister's first outing at the despatch box drew mixed reviews from commentators; a good case study in the theatre, and substance, of PMQs.

Half Of Welsh Voters Still Undecided: Ipsos found that over half of Welsh voters could still change their minds before the next Senedd election; a reminder that polls are snapshots, not predictions.



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A-Level Politics – The Tumbril

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