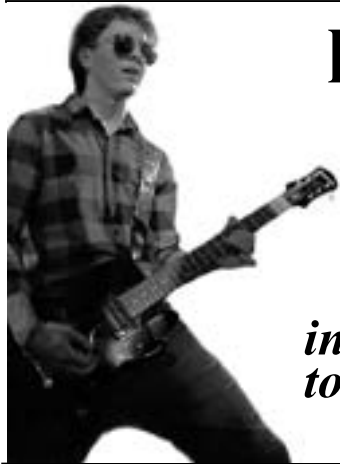


“We’re going into an election next year, which isn’t an election about independence”

Read our interview with Plaid Cymru Leader Rhun Ap Iorwerth on page 12.



Rock, Rage and a Weeknight Stage

The Student Band Revamping Grunge

By Rachel Bedding

“Zero are surely an exciting addition, and their growing identity in the Cardiff grassroots music scene is proving to be one to watch.”

To read, turn to page 4.



Check out our Instagram for news and updates

Stop the Pool Lobby!

Says Oliver Hanlon

“The proposal, if successfully lobbied for, would see Cardiff students, paying the University to swim in their tuition fees”

In the wake of significant budget cuts to the university, due to a £31 million deficit, which saw courses cut and a mass exodus of university staff through resignation and redundancy, an AGM motion for our students’ union to lobby Cardiff University to build a swimming pool has gained significant traction.

The motion to build our very own “big beautiful” pool was proposed on behalf of the various watersports societies’ calls for the VP Sports to lobby Cardiff University to

acquire one, due to the “high cost” of renting external pool space, as opposed to the meagre cost of the university using tens of millions of pounds of our tuition fees to build a swimming pool. This motion, frankly, is tone-deaf and would see...

To read, turn to page 10.

Israel’s Unknown Consul in Cardiff

James Roberts
Editor-in-Chief

Despite the war in Gaza having become an enduring concern for many people in Cardiff over the last two years, it is probable that not one in a thousand Cardiffians know that Israel has an active diplomatic presence in

the city. And that for over a decade, Mr Phillip Stephen Kaye, a Roath businessman and “Honorary Consul of Israel” has been lobbying Welsh politicians on their behalf...

To read, turn to page 3.

The Young Person’s Guide to Fighting Reform UK

Isaak Hewit
Contributor

In a political climate characterised by division and disagreement, one thing seems unanimous: this country needs a reform. With experts fearing an

economic crisis, government officials regularly facing scandal, and frustration on all sides of the political spectrum at seemingly an all-time high, something needs to be done...

To read, turn to page 18

Welsh Teenager Charged with Murder After Hitting Pedestrian with Car

Lottie Oldrieve
Contributor

In a tragic incident that has shaken the community of Cardiff, eighteen-year-old Kian Bateman has been charged with murder for the death of a pedestrian struck by a car in the early hours of the 27th of September 2025. The victim, Shelley Davies, thirty-eight, succumbed to her injuries after being hit outside the 4th Glamorgan Home Guard Club in Caerau, a residential area in the capital, the BBC reported.

According to the South Wales Police, emergency services were called to Heol Trelai at approximately 12:30 a.m after receiving a report of a vehicle that had struck several pedestrians. Shelley Davies was rushed to the University Hospital of Wales where she later died. Two other individuals were also injured in the incident, though their conditions have not been publicly disclosed.

Bateman was arrested shortly after the crash and has since been formally charged with murder. He is also facing additional charges related to dangerous driving and grievous bodily harm. The case prompted widespread concern over road safety and youth behaviour behind the wheel.

Shelley Davies was described by friends and family as a kind-hearted woman who was deeply involved in her local community. Tributes have poured in from neighbours and colleagues, many of whom gathered at a candlelight vigil held near the site of the crash. Floral tributes and handwritten notes now line the pavement where the tragedy occurred.

“Our thoughts are with the family and friends of Shelley Davies as they come to terms with this tragic loss”, said Detective Inspector Mike Healy from South Wales Police. “This is a deeply distressing case, and we are committed to ensuring a thorough investigation”.

Bateman appeared before Cardiff Magistrates Court on the 24th of October where he was formally charged. He was remanded in custody

and is expected to appear at Crown Court later this month. The murder charge indicates that prosecutors believe that the act was intentionally carried out with reckless disregard for life.

The Crown Prosecution Service has yet to release full details of the evidence, but sources close to the investigation suggest that CCTV and eyewitness accounts played a critical role in shaping the charges.

The case has reignited debates around young drivers and road safety in Wales. According to recent statistics, drivers aged 17–24 are disproportionately involved in serious road collisions. Advocacy groups are now calling for stricter licensing requirements and better education around responsible driving in response to the incident.

The death had a profound effect on the Caerau community. Residents have voiced concerns about the safety of pedestrians in the area, especially during late hours and in poorly lit streets. While measures such as improving lighting, clearer signage, and traffic-calming initiatives may help reduce the risk.

“The tragedy is a wakeup call”, said Rhian Morgan, a spokesperson for the Welsh Road Safety Partnership. “We need to ensure that young people understand the gravity of their actions when they get behind the wheel. Driving is a privilege, not a right”.

As the legal process unfolds, the community continues to grapple with the emotional aftermath of the incident. Schools in the area have offered counselling services, and local leaders are urging residents to support each other in this difficult time. For the wider community, it reinforces the need for vigilance, caution, and accountability on the roads; however, for Shelley’s family, the pain is still raw.

The case is expected to proceed to trial in the coming months, and authorities are encouraging anyone with additional information to come forward. The incident stands as a sobering example of the devastating consequences that can follow a single moment behind the wheel.

Plaid Win Senedd By-Election After a Head-to-Head with Reform UK

Kyle Bright
Contributor

Caerphilly has taught a lesson for the rest of the UK to learn—Reform UK may not always be the unstoppable force that is often portrayed right now in our politics.

October’s by-election, set at the southern end of the Rhymney Valley, defied expectations and polling that predicted a Reform UK win after a close race with Plaid Cymru. Instead, Plaid’s candidate Lindsay Whittle came out on top by a considerable margin, garnering 47.4% of the vote, leaving Reform UK’s Llŷr Powell trailing behind at 36% of the vote.

Voters came out in their droves for this by-election. At 50.43%, it broke a record as the highest turnout ever for a devolved by-election in Wales. Previously, the highest turnout in a Senedd by-election didn’t even break 50%, totalling 45.2% in Blaenau Gwent nineteen years ago.

For Lindsay Whittle, the win was particularly euphoric. After standing thirteen other times in Caerphilly elections, it was fourteenth time lucky. In his victory speech, he made light of the situation: “Ladies and gentlemen, you will forgive me, I’m not used to speaking first in these election counts.”

However, he balanced his elation with a poignant tribute to the tragic circumstances which triggered this by-election: the sudden death of the previous MS, Hefin David. He continued: “[Hefin] will be a hard act to follow. I will never fill his shoes. But I promise you, I will walk the same path that he did. And I can pay no finer tribute to an excellent man.”

Success for the Welsh nationalist party demonstrates a progressive bloc of voters forming to keep Reform out, partly resulting from tactical voting. The incentive to tactically vote will reduce under the new proportional voting system in next year’s Senedd election, but the result still positions Plaid as the leading force for left-leaning voters to unite behind in 2026.

Meanwhile, a ruinous night unfolded for Reform. Despite confident beginnings with senior figures like Nigel Farage and Zia Yusuf visiting on polling day, this began to dwindle as time drew closer to the result. By the time of the declaration, Reform supporters had largely left the count, and their candidate Llŷr Powell refused to give a speech.

Clearly, Reform was disappointed. After all, substantial resources went into this by-election, from visits by senior MPs, to their own Caerphilly headquarters set up on the town’s high street.

However, there is a silver lining for the party. 36% of the vote is not insignificant, and similar numbers in the Senedd election will see them win seats. Just like how Plaid has been positioned as a leading force, Reform have proved themselves as the right-wing alternative. Their real challenge will be combatting the progressive voting bloc, and finding parties open to a coalition if they were to form a government next May.

For the traditional stalwarts of UK politics, the result was more predictable—and it was as damning as expected. Labour’s more than century-long dominance in Caerphilly came to a crashing halt, attracting just 11% of voters, while the Conservatives didn’t even break double digits, only managing 2%.

These catastrophic results only reiterate the electoral oblivion which awaits these parties in future elections. Welsh Labour’s heartlands are no longer dependable—they’ve become disillusioned with the party, as proven by approval ratings which suggest that over half of Welsh adults disapprove of their government.

As work gets underway for Lindsay Whittle as the newly sworn-in Member of the Senedd for Caerphilly, so too does the work towards the wider contest for the whole of Wales.

Inmates Told to Stop Speaking Welsh

Soanna Khan
Contributor

Welsh-speaking prisoners at Wales’ largest prison have been told to stop speaking Welsh, according to former inmates. HMP Berwyn in Wrexham holds the largest number of Welsh-speaking prisoners of all of Wales’ prisons, with 84 inmates registered as Welsh speakers in 2024, according to Ministry of Justice figures. As such, former inmates at HMP Berwyn thought the prison would demonstrate respect for Welsh language rights and accommodate towards inmates’ language needs. Yet, inmates report being punished for speaking Welsh and being forced to speak in English, with prison staff displaying an alleged hostility towards the language.

The findings emerged from a report written by Robert Jones of Cardiff University and Gregory Davis from the University of Liverpool, titled “Rights, Pains and Illusions: The Experiences of Welsh-Speakers at Wales’ ‘Flagship’ Prison”. In this report, the researchers claim that the Welsh language at Berwyn was not treated with the same respect or equality as the English language. They also conducted several interviews with Welsh-speaking former inmates who had served at Berwyn between 2018 and 2022. In these

interviews, they found a consistent theme of the Welsh language being policed by staff at Berwyn.

In response to this report, a spokesperson for the prison said “there are occasions when prisoner communications are restricted to English for security reasons”. Prisoners in Wales have a right to speak in Welsh. The Welsh Language Act of 1993 gave the Welsh language equal status to English in public business and the administration of justice. According to its Welsh language scheme, HM Prison and Probation Service is committed to “promoting the rights of Welsh-speaking prisoners”.

Yet, several individuals report being confronted by prison staff whilst speaking Welsh with fellow prisoners in communal spaces and prison corridors. In some cases, staff had interrupted prisoners’ conversations, asking them to explain what they were saying. In other cases, staff explicitly instructed prisoners to switch to English. According to former inmate Gwilym, incidents such as these happened on a “daily basis”. Several other inmates also remarked that they had experienced a greater acceptance of the Welsh language in English prisons.

One former inmate interviewed by Jones and Davis, Ieuan, revealed that an officer banned him from speaking Welsh during a private meeting with his solicitor and threatened to use force if he didn’t switch to English. “I was on videolink

with my solicitor, and I was speaking Welsh with him, and the officer come in and told me to stop speaking Welsh, or else I’d get done for it. I’d get a nicking for it”, Ieuan told the researchers. “And I was, like, shocked, and even my solicitor was... So, obviously, we had to speak English then”. “Berwyn is meant to be a Welsh-speaking jail”, Ieuan also said, “And it’s far from that. It’s 100% not a Welsh-speaking jail”.

Welsh-speaking prisoners also experienced significant delays in sending and receiving letters written in Welsh. Former inmate Hefin told the researchers “[My] pad mate, he sent a letter [in English], and it arrived within two, three days. My letter [in Welsh] takes two weeks, three weeks, and if not [it will] go missing. It was pathetic. I stopped writing letters in the end”.

The Welsh Language Commissioner, Efa Gruffudd Jones has told BBC Wales in a recent article that the findings from this report “causes concern”, suggesting that “the basic rights of Welsh speakers are not considered sufficiently”. She also said that she agrees with demands from the two researchers that “linguistic rights [of inmates] are fully respected”. Ms Gruffudd Jones is scheduled to meet with the prison management team at Berwyn, which she hopes will be an “opportunity to discuss these matters and ensure that there is significant improvement in the provision [of Welsh language needs] in the future”.



Cardiff University Feminists in Conversation: The Rise of the Far Right

Ella Simmons
Head of News

On November 4th, 2025, Cardiff University Feminist Society, in collaboration with South Wales Women Against the Far Right, ran an event. An event that had over 70 attendees from different backgrounds, four passionate speakers from different realms of activism and one shared goal: to fight the far right.

The event spoke about how in recent years Reform UK, whilst claiming to be the party of the British people, have created a party that fuels division, normalises prejudice, and erodes trust in democratic institutions. In the current social and political landscape it is more important than ever that public discourse reflects empathy and evidence, not fear and falsehoods.

South Wales Women Against the Far Right said that the aim of the recent event at Cardiff University was to have a “discussion surrounding how to tackle misinformation and ways to combat Reform UK in our communities” and share with CU Feminist Society how to stay safe around campus. The event was put on by Iona Hamilton, President of Feminist Society, at Cardiff University and Suwaba Hussein, from South Wales Women Against the Far Right. The pair shared the sentiment that “we must show love where the far right look to hate, and we must show unity where the far right show division”.

First speaker at the event was Deity Evans, a trans rights activist who helped to organise the largest Welsh protest for trans rights with over 3,000 people in attendance. She shared that “one identity cannot be more important than others” and the creation of “trans exclusion” is becoming more prominent with the rise from the far right. Statistics show that in Wales half of trans people have experienced a hate crime due to their gender in the last 12 months, and 82% of trans people in Wales have experienced a hate crime they

did not report. This hate is only spiralling with the rise of the far right, with those higher up “pulling the strings in the situation to build transphobic rhetorics as a weapon of division”.

“The ideas from the far right that white women and girls need protecting is rooted in the idea that women are less than in some way that is then used to rationalise racism, islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia and anti-asylum rhetoric”.

Deity shared that she believes these issues cannot be seen as separate; they must be fought together to fight against far-right ideology.

Kavi Susee, anti-racism officer at Cardiff Students’ Union attended the event as a member of a panel who shared her views on what students can do to fight far-right ideology. In her role at Cardiff Students’ Union, she fights for the idea that it “has never been enough just to not be racist, but that we must be actively anti-racist”. She uses her platform to fight against those who “continue to be silent” which she argues mirrors the far right. Those in charge reap financial rewards whilst they twist narratives to blame immigrants instead of those in power who can actually make change. This attitude is rooted in the far right’s (informal) manifesto, and Kavi encourages students to be loud and never scared to speak out and get involved in activism.

Co-host of the event Suwaba Hussein, shared how we as students can fight against the overwhelming rise of Reform in all our communities, especially with a recent “shocking escalation of violence”. This view was shared by final speaker Kate Pierce, a proud anti-racism unionist.

With recent protests from Tommy Robinson, we can see how Reform is growing at unprecedented speeds. The far right claim to be looking out for women and girls, but Suwaba said “they only mean when the victim is white and the perpetrator is black or brown”. Kate argued that the far right are using women to change narratives “as a weapon for racism”. This deeply racist rhetoric of asylum seekers being violent demonstrates the true undertones of Reform UK. Suwaba shared the statistic that in the UK one woman is killed every week, but this is by someone they know, often an intimate partner. Further, asylum seekers get as little as £9.95 per week, costing the UK less per year than tax evasion, according to recent statistics.

Finally, to end the event panel, Pierce shared to those in attendance that “I, for one, do not need to be protected, and I definitely do not need to be protected by the far right.” She argues the far right feeds on isolation: “They tell people ‘No one cares, nothing can change, so blame the powerless.’ But we know better.” Among the rest of the panel, Pierce stands for compassion and solidarity where we as a community need to make sure Wales uses “classrooms, workplaces, and all of our voices to spread a different message: one of courage, compassion, and connection. Not one of hate”. The panel made sure the event was a reminder to everyone who attended to say “not in my community”.



Do you have something you want to tell us? Use the QR code to access our ‘tell us’ form

Cardiff University Makes Ties with Universities in War Zones

Kani Abdullah
News Editor

Cardiff University has taken an important step forward in the current educational and political landscape, strengthening academic collaboration with Palestinian institutions. Is this signalling a commitment to global engagement and educational solidarity?

Cardiff University, along with the Arab American University of Palestine (AAUP), has offered educational aid to medical students in Palestine by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The aim of this is to hope that the medical students can complete their studies in times of a genocide. Essentially, the MoU is a way to add AAUP onto Cardiff University’s “Conflict and Catastrophe Route” for overseas medical students. There has been a similar success in Cardiff’s partnership with National University Zaporizhzhia Polytechnic in Ukraine.

This program is designed to help Ukraine’s universities to make it through war and come out stronger so they can play an important part in rebuilding the country afterwards. Cardiff University are aiming to show their ongoing commitment to supporting education worldwide.

AAUP is facing serious challenges that could interrupt the education of entire year groups of medical students

due to the conflict in the region. The pro vice-chancellor for the College of Biomedical and Life Sciences at Cardiff University, Steve Riley, said “The potential impact that conflict can have on education is profound. It becomes particularly acute when a delay in the training of medical students could potentially mean life or death for some communities. As a global university, I’m confident that offering educational aid where we can via our “Conflict and Catastrophe Route” is the right thing to do, both for AAUP and other educational institutions caught up in conflict zones around the world”.

The president of AAUP, Dr Bara Asfour said “we are delighted to deepen our partnership with Cardiff University. This agreement will provide our students and faculty with unique opportunities to collaborate internationally, exchange knowledge, and make impactful contributions to global research”.

The MoU will attempt to set up a structure that allows both sides to look into working together. This can include joint research, student and staff exchanges, and sharing or creating academic materials.

The collaboration certainly seems to be a successful decision, one that students have been protesting for the university to begin to involve themselves in. Could this be the step forward to a safer, fairer university that we can trust?



Zaporizhzhia Polytechnic National University after Russian attack
State Emergency Service of Ukraine (via Wikimedia Commons) / CC BY 4.0 / Image Cropped

Israel’s Unknown Consul in Cardiff

James Roberts
Editor-in-Chief

Despite the war in Gaza having become an enduring concern for many people in Cardiff over the last two years, it is probable that not one in a thousand Cardiffians know that Israel has an active diplomatic presence in the city. And that for over a decade, Mr Phillip Stephen Kaye, a Roath businessman and “honorary consul of Israel” has been lobbying Welsh politicians on Israel’s behalf. Kaye is participant to a scheme devised in 2010 aimed at increasing Israel’s influence through more hybrid and unofficial channels: via people both connected to their community, but also aligned to the Israeli state, as he said himself: “I was born and bred in Wales, I work and act for Israel.”

Whilst “honorary” would suggest a more ceremonial role, *Gair Rhydd* has identified that on at least four occasions Mr Kaye has

accompanied Israeli Officials on visits to the Senedd. In November last year, Mr Kaye was photographed with Deputy Ambassador of Israel to the United Kingdom Daniela Grudsky in a private meeting with then leader of the Welsh Conservatives Andrew RT Davies. It would appear that this was part of a trip that included meeting a cross-party group of Senedd members chaired by Alun Davies and Darren Millar, where Grudsky engaged in “constructive dialogue on the situation in the middle east”.

In April this year, Grudsky, along with Hoyada Avzada, also from the embassy, visited the Senedd again, with Kaye photographed welcoming them from their train at Central Station wearing a train driver’s hat. Yet, despite Grudsky posting a picture showing a view of the Senedd out of window in Ty Hwyl, *Gair Rhydd* has not been able to determine who met with the delegation or what was discussed, beyond Grudsky’s mention

of “having important discussions with friends across the aisles”. Yet, still present was Kaye, presumably as a bridge between the Israelis and Welsh parliamentarians.

Private meetings, even those on the Senedd estate, are not subject to the same transparency as other activities. When *Gair Rhydd* asked the Senedd last October if Mr Kaye would be returning in the future, we were told that, whilst no public event was scheduled, this did not preclude the possibility of a private meeting, of which they would have no record.

The lack of transparency around foreign, and specifically Israeli, lobbying in the Senedd makes it impossible to know for certain how many times Grudsky, assisted by Kaye, has met with elected officials. Nonetheless, her X profile bears testament to her active engagement with British politicians, from the prime minister, to Kemi Badenoch, Richard Tice, Nigel Farage, and Andrea Leadsome.

Her X profile likewise attests to her views on the Gaza conflict, such as her denial of both food shortages and Israel’s well-attested war crimes, such as the shooting of nine unarmed civilian in June of this year. Whilst last month she reposted an AI-generated picture claiming to depict a wounded Israeli soldier. It may concern some to learn someone with her views has been welcome discreetly into the halls of Welsh politics.

As for Kaye’s other activities as consul, far less is known, and he maintains a scant presence online. Thus, beyond a vague mention of offering “consular assistance”, *Gair Rhydd* has not been able to determine whether he conducts Visa services or assists in the recruitment of Soldiers into the IDF, nor whether he engages in diplomatic efforts from his shop in Roath. We contacted Mr Kaye for comment, but received no reply.

Protest Outside Senedd for Transgender Rights

Alicia Tariq
News Editor

A protest was held outside the Senedd in Cardiff Bay on the 1st of November after the Welsh government was accused of “defying” a Supreme Court’s ruling on the definition of a woman. This comes from the #199DaysLater dispute where a decision was made for the ruling of “sex” to be referred to as biological sex in the Equality Act 2010. Protesters were calling out the government to fully implement the ruling, arguing that failing to do so undermines women’s rights and legal clarity. The protest not only took place in Cardiff, but was also organised across the UK. Protesters held signs that said “save single-sex spaces” and raised concerns over trans people in gendered public toilets. However, protests were disrupted by a counter protest that advocated for transgender rights.

Owen, who was an attendee to the protest that day, spoke to *Gair Rhydd* about his thoughts on the ruling and what it means for trans people now. “The protest had a wonderful sense of community on our side, but because the transphobes brought their own private security, it felt more aggressive from them than it would otherwise have done”. He stated that politicians and journalists have “failed the public strongly”. Many people, like Owen, feel that it is the same repetitive argument for trans rights and that the issue is swamped with misinformation and disinformation. “Anyone who has ever spent any real time with trans people knows that they are just the same as the rest of us; anyone who grew up

queer living through the ubiquitous homophobia of the 1980s and 1990s can see the same tired arguments and disinformation being repeated about trans people”. Owen shared how this new ruling has “real-life consequences, not just for trans people but for anyone who doesn’t conform to narrow views of gender presentation” and that “trans rights are clearly being treated like a political issue rather than a legal one”.

There are several concerns on how this new ruling could expose trans people to heightened risks, including exclusion from gendered spaces such as public toilets, and through increased discrimination in schools, workplaces and public life. The UK has seen a rise in hate crime against trans people and protests in recent years. According to Home Office data and reports from Stonewall, over the past five years, anti-trans hate crimes in the UK have nearly doubled, rising by 88%.

It’s clear that for many in attendance, the protest was an act of solidarity rooted in decades of queer activism. Owen noted that “if the Welsh government doesn’t change its approach, clearly protests will continue to be important, as will legal actions that have already started”.

The demonstration reflects a broader national debate over trans rights and the role of government in defining gender and access to public spaces. While opinions on the ruling remain sharply divided, the turnout highlighted the growing visibility of trans and queer voices in public discourse. With further legal and political developments expected in the months ahead, the issue is likely to remain a focal point in the conversation on equality and rights.

Hospital Order Given to Man who Attempted to Strangle Fellow Patient

Jack Pawson
Court Reporter

A mental health patient was sentenced in Cardiff Crown Court last Friday for attacking a fellow patient and leaving him unconscious in the toilet. Aeron Gingell, 22, pleaded guilty to causing grievous bodily harm and in late October was sentenced under Sections 37 and 41 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

The attack occurred in January 2024. CCTV footage from St Cadoc’s Hospital, a mental health facility, showed Mr Gingell entering the toilets carrying bootlaces. He is seen exiting the facilities twelve minutes later and seemingly goes about his day in an ordinary fashion.

Shortly after, staff at the hospital discover the unconscious victim lying on the floor with two bootlaces tied tightly round his neck. Witnesses report the victim was gurgling and had a purple face; a bloody eyebrow indicated he had been struck hard in the head.

The immediate assumption of the staff was that it had been a suicide attempt; however, this was disproved

shortly after the incident when Gingell stated “there are voices in my head telling me I killed him”.

Dr Qurashi, a consultant forensic psychiatrist who has had oversight of Bengell’s treatment, stated that this case of schizoaffective disorder is the worst he has seen in 25 years of practice. He explained that the offender was experiencing somatic hallucinations in which the victim was sexually harassing him.

The victim did not sustain any long-term physical injuries, but it has been reported the assault has exacerbated his poor mental health and schizophrenia.

Section 37 of the Mental Health Act allowed the court to send the offender to Ashworth Hospital as opposed to prison. The judge held that further restrictions would also apply under Section 41 of the act, as she was satisfied that Gingell poses a serious risk to the public as demonstrated by this incident and a further eight previous offences.

SU Respond to Time to Act: “We Are Sorry”

Gabriela Hunt
News Editor

Sexual violence and misconduct are an issue here at Cardiff University and have been for a while. In December 2023 the BBC spoke to a co-founder for Time to Act, Bethia Tucker, who said that “sexual violence had become an accepted part of life” here at the University, particularly during Students’ Union club nights. Now, almost two years, later Time to Act has become even more influential in their demands for the university to tackle this issue.

A recent three-month BBC investigation revealed that fewer than half of UK universities could provide up-to-date sexual misconduct data, with Cardiff University having few to no records and centrally held statistics prior to 2017. Within the records that are accessible, sexual misconduct and violence are prominent—with available figures from 2019–20 highlighting 219 sexual misconduct tip-offs, with over half of those reports of incidents of assault and rape.

Time to Act is a student-led campaign aiming to tackle sexual misconduct, focusing on social media outreach, who have addressed both the need for the SU and CU societies to do better in regard to supporting survivors

and mitigating sexual violence. Their recent movement “Don’t be a shitty committee” encouraged societies to pledge alongside Time to Act and show support for active bystander-ship, creating a culture of consent and holding their individual members

“It is up to us as students to push for the University to make changes.”

accountable. Around 75+ societies on Instagram shared their support for this movement and pledged to follow these values.

On the 17th of October 2025, Time to Act called for the SU to “step up” in an Instagram post introducing their proposal for the upcoming AGM. The caption criticised the SU’s priorities, highlighting how the “sabbatical officers get paid £25k a year to post TikToks rather than protect their students from sexual violence” and that the SU is not doing enough to work on this issue. The post addresses the requests of Time to Act since 2023 that the Students’ Union hadn’t completed, such as data collection on sexual violence statistics and acknowledgement of failings and mandatory consent and bystander training. It called for the

Students’ Union to make these issues a priority.

One week later, the SU took to Instagram to post a response—an update from the officers regarding their commitments and progress tackling sexual violence on campus. The post opened with an apology and accountability of the previous failings of the Union and declared that “tackling sexual violence is a top priority” for the team this year. The SU has begun conversations with the University for a review of student conduct procedures and with Public Health Wales for the development of workshops on the topic. The post also outlined their achievements, such as a commitment from the University for mandatory consent training as a part of student induction from 2026/2027.

Time to Act responded to this apology on Instagram, saying “Cardiff SU stepped it up, now it’s Cardiff University’s turn”. Time to Act is proposing a third AGM motion, representing students and aiming to tackle sexual violence. If this is a matter you feel strongly about, please show your support by voting on Thursday 20 November 2025.

An apology, recognition for survivors and the new proposed actions are a great start from the Students’ Union but more still needs to be done, and it is up to us as students to push for the University to make changes.

Careers Fair: Who’s Welcome?

James Burns
News Editor

Career fairs have acted as just one of the avenues to answer ever-growing worries and concerns of students. From law to logistics, management to medicine, from small startups to colossal corporations employers from every sector are expected to be present at any careers fair promising to serve the masses. However, as we live in a world forever increasing in political uncertainty, like every facet of society, the careers sold by educational institutions face the same discussion and judgements.

Gair Rhydd can confirm that in a recent survey released to Cardiff University students from the Students’ Union and Student Futures, stated they are trying to gain “insights on the types of employers and industries you want to see at careers fairs”—in other words, to understand who is welcome and who is not. They suggested that this plea for opinion comes after a year of increased “student protests targeting employers in the Middle East”. This is compounded with the alleged “Students’ Union motion to ban fossil fuels and mining companies from campus”. The survey brief went on to note that “we know that some employers raise ethical concerns for students, particularly in sectors such as fossil fuel, mining, and defence, or companies linked to international conflicts”, where many students are concerned about having such companies on campus.

A detouring of future employers to such an important sector may raise

questions of the extent of responsibilities Cardiff and other higher education institutions have over the careers we are sold and those we are denied or pushed away from for political reasons. While the unspeakable actions in Gaza are undoubtedly reason to lose faith in the actions of high-profile militaries around the world, this may open some up to the debate of higher defence. But the idea that educational institutions can deny potential sectors from their students could make some, especially those students who have hoped for careers in such sectors, feel betrayed and disregarded. For, while, the majority of students hold negative stances, perhaps for once the democratic majority may not prevail.

“The denial of opportunity to few could potentially be seen as discriminating.”

A Cardiff University spokesperson told *Gair Rhydd*: “We are currently asking students for their views on the types of employers they want to see at our careers fairs which will help guide our future direction.” They went on to say “however, for now, decisions about who is allowed on campus for recruitment purposes are made in line with Student Futures Code of Impartiality. The Code has been updated and was approved by the Senate at its meeting in June 2025. They acknowledged that “whilst we appreciate that some of our students and staff will disagree with

our approach, to meet the full range of aspirations it will, occasionally, include engagement with some sectors and employers that some disagree with. Our aim is to provide our students and graduates with the freedom, information and support needed to make their own career choices.”

“Gair Rhydd was informed, that mining companies met with students in a local pub last month, suggesting that despite the university’s attempts to block their engagement with students, ways are being found around their policies.”

Some argue that the university should hide politically unfavourable careers in the corner like the black sheep of opportunity, and push students towards more progressive careers such as renewable energy. Yet, while such careers are widely available, to hide such large sectors could be seen as deceiving the employees of the future.

Bringing the Sŵn to Cardiff

**Harri Turner,
Contributor**

At the time of writing, it is now two weeks since Sŵn festival came to a close, and I'm still reeling from the brilliant time I had. Sŵn (pronounced s-on) is a multi-venue inner-city music festival in Cardiff that has been up and running since 2007, when it was founded by Radio 6 DJ Huw Stephens and local promoter John Rostron. The current incarnation of the event took place over three days from the 17th to the 19th of October, and included ten venues from across Cardiff.

Said venues were as diverse as St John's Church in the city centre, to the basement of Jacob's Antiques at the bottom of St Mary's Street. I was lucky enough to be volunteering as an artist liaison at Clwb Ifor Bach, a venue that holds the title of my favourite club in Cardiff. I had applied a few months prior after considerable encouragement from a mate of mine (who had volunteered there the previous two years). They also tipped me off to write my application in Welsh. Given the festival's pro-Welsh-language attitude (reflected by the numerous Welsh acts performing across the festival), that decision paid off, and I was given my shifts a few weeks before the festival began.

For six hours on the Friday and Saturday of the weekend, my time was spent carrying gear, going on food runs, and making the artists performing as comfortable as possible. It was pretty low-maintenance work, and I had no problem doing it, though at times it did feel a little draining to be standing around with little to do. However, chatting with my "co-workers" made that small downside a breeze. The position also came with a lot of flexibility. I found myself able to attend several gigs across the course of the festival, both alone and in the company of friends who had also been volunteering. This bonus came completely free with the help of my trusty, complementary wristband.

"I was introduced to a plethora of exciting up-and-coming bands..."

and on the first day of my volunteering, after four hours of odd jobs and conversation, I saw my first performance, Piss (an appropriately transgressive name), recommended by a friend who found their harsh sound

challenging yet intriguing. Backstage, I brought them beers and complimented their music, they were lovely people. The four-piece noise/punk outfit hailed from Vancouver, and it is safe to say they had not travelled here in vain. Indeed, from the moment their frontwoman gave a trigger warning for their performance, I knew I was in for an experience. Their explosive, rage-fuelled set combined ear-splitting instrumentation with bleak explorations of sexual assault, via incensed vocals and audio samples of rape survivors and feminist scholars.

"I was captivated and moved, horrified and impressed, all in one."

It was also one of the loudest gigs I have seen in a while. All things considered, it was a fitting introduction to the festival, and set the tone for the rest of the weekend. Riveting soundscapes, dance, energy, emotion, fun, passion, and conversation flowed. As I volunteered, and wandered around Cardiff's main street, I was raptured by a buzz, an excitement, something

that was quite simply a joy. Seeing people of all ages and cultures united in a common love for music was nothing short of awe-inspiring. All in all, it's safe to say; if you have any interest in Cardiff's flourishing live music scene (and beyond!), get yourself to Sŵn next year...



Rock, Rage, and a Weeknight Stage: The Student Band Revamping Grunge

**Rachel Bedding
Head of Spotlight**

Zero—the year-old lovechild of Cardiff Uni students Joel, Luke, Lily, and Toby. I was first introduced to their sound (self-described as "aggressively put-together") through mutual contacts, and they live up to that moniker through a mix of grunge and alt rock that gives an idea of the kind of young sound that is taking over Cardiff's extensive music scene.

Live at rock nightclub Fuel on Cardiff's Main Street, they gave an electric performance, sinking claws into an audience with their energetic and fast-paced set, on a stage that is favoured by the likes of Iron Maiden's Bruce Dickinson. "It's easy to perform to a crowd that matches your energy", lead singer Luke says, looking just as comfortable in the studio than he did on the stage; mic in one hand and a shot in the other. The four members of Zero have tangible chemistry as a group, feeding each other's energy on and off the stage. They open with a cracking one-liner, and that pretty much sets the tone for the whole interview—thirty minutes of banter between friends with some raw honesty in the middle, much like the set that introduced me to them.

Starting a band as a student, at least for these guys, seems to have come around by fate—or maybe a knack for being in the right place at the right time. Toby and Luke both doing a master's in sustainable engineering after geography for undergrad, Joel, a third-year physics student, and Lily, studying sound engineering. A shared passion for music and some well-placed rehearsal times brought them together. They might seem an unlikely ensemble, but coming from "having done nothing before", their dive straight into the Cardiff music scene seems seamless, playing their first gig at Tiny Rebel last February in support of the School of Music.

Since Tiny Rebel, they have played at Paradise Gardens, Fuel, and the Foundry Social (formerly Gassy's) open mic night. Admitting that they were probably too sober for their liking at Paradise Gardens, one of their least favourite live appearances, they spoke of the challenges to balance their commitments to uni work and the band: "we wore ourselves out".

For them, gigs are "crowd dependent", their night at Fuel upping the energy compared to their last gig. They are a band who like to feel in tune with the mood, saying "if the audience is feeling it as well then you get more confident".

Despite a united front, when it comes to venues, Zero finds room for disagreement. Lily names Tiny Rebel as her favourite, stating the intimacy and close proximity of the crowd creates stronger connections with their performance. Luke, Toby, and Joel, however, prefer Fuel, despite its sticky floor. The historic bond between the Fuel stage and rock music is deeply forged, making it a natural home base for the band, and the proper stage also gives them a sense of professionalism and ups the performance when playing.

Looking to the future, Luke said: "we are all so close—I see us hopefully getting more gigs, and me and toby have spoken about releasing an EP or an album, I think it will be a case of seeing where that goes, seeing what happens with that, seeing if we can get on some radios and try to start playing festival—that's one of my dreams." And as they develop as a band, Zero say we can expect fewer covers and more originals. "I'd like for us to get to the point where we're only playing our own music, with the odd cover here and there as a crowd pleaser kind of thing", says Toby. Currently, their sets consist of mostly covers, but the one of their two originals I heard was definitely reminiscent of their musical inspirations, Alice in Chains and Guns N'Roses enclose a '90s grunge feel.

So why should people pay attention to them? "Listen to us because we are currently a niche", they say. "In Cardiff right now there's a lot of indie bands and a lot of heavy bands but there's nothing in the middle—there's not many bands that play what we play", says Lily.

With a developing sound and confident identity, Zero are surely an exciting addition, and their growing identity in the Cardiff grassroots music scene is proving to be one to watch. You can see them live at their next performance on the 21st of November at Fuel, and decide for yourself.

Images, Front Page and Below by @kbc_cams



My Body Hates Me: Invisible Illness Table for Two?

**Olivia Nilsen
Head of Design**

I have the greatest pleasure on Earth of having not one but two chronic and incurable illnesses despite looking like I am in perfect health. Until a couple years ago, I was very active; I went to the gym, played tennis, and walked everywhere I went. Then, I got smacked down with the iron hammer of disability and have been just having a whale of a time...

Unexpectedly, my health started to decline. I started having a lot of medical issues arise concurrently and pain whenever I walked around for more than five minutes. Since childhood, I complained about joint pain, but never to the point of being bed bound for days. It is an uphill battle getting a diagnosis; in fact, it was harder than getting my bachelor's degree. Eventually, after making myself the biggest pain in the arse for every single doctor at my GP surgery, I got sent to specialist after specialist. I had the joy of discovering that I not only have ulcerative colitis, but I also have fibromyalgia.

You, like most people, probably don't know what either of those mean. In a nutshell, my body hates my intestines, and my brain hates my joints. Living with two separate chronic and invisible illnesses poses some issues, socially and practically. It's awkward explaining to a stranger why your joints hurt or the fact your brain fog is making everyone sound like their speaking in tongues or any number of other issues.

Getting used to being chronically ill takes adjusting, and many people, including myself, go through periods of grieving because it's hard to accept how your body has changed. Remembering to laugh helps; I often consider myself to be a 23-year-old stuck with the innards of an 83-year-old. Being immobile and horizontal is my best friend, lying down—even for fifteen minutes—can help temporarily during a flare up. Patience for yourself is key, I often struggle with giving myself

grace and acknowledging that I have more limitations than others. Saying no to things when you don't feel well will save you many hours of pain or discomfort, pushing through helps no one.

"I do have a few tricks of the trade, some sage advice if you will, of how to get through to doctors."

Whenever I visit a doctor, I come in with a list of symptoms and questions I want to ask. If it's a continuous issue, try to record your day to day, so you have tangible information. Be prepared to defend yourself, as intimidating as it is you know your body, a doctor you've just met for the first time and have ten minutes with is not going to know what you're feeling better than you. If you don't think the doctor you spoke with really listened, go back to see another one... and another... and another. For me it took five doctors to find one that didn't say "you're too young to have joint problems" or "you're probably just tired" or the classic "have you considered going on the pill". It takes just one to listen to you, to really hear you to get help.

Genuinely, it's tough sometimes to remember that I am not as physically able as I once was and to really know my limits. But I will leave you with this: you don't realise what a blessing free healthcare is. Advocate for yourself—if you think something is wrong, then something is probably wrong—and take the help you are given. Even if we are working with a broken healthcare system, it is better then continuing to suffer; your pain is worthy of care, and so are you. This is just a slice of what it's like when your body decides it's time to unionise against its host.

Rise In Tuition Fees—Not Another One!

Eve Yates
Spotlight Editor

It was announced at the end of October that tuition fees will rise again across UK universities starting from 2026. According to the BBC, tuition fees will continue to increase every year from 2026 in line with inflation. The exact amount tuition fees will rise by is unknown, but if it follows current rates, fees could be as high as £9,900 for those enrolling in 2026/2027. So what does this mean for everyone already enrolled at university?

“Will this continuous rise mean less students can afford to enrol at university?”

With University UK stating that this rise in fees is a “much needed reset for the university system”, this increase, unfortunately, is

nothing new. Just this September, fees rose from £9250 to £9535. While this increase is supposedly meant to stabilise the university funding model, what does it mean for those hoping to enrol next year and the years to come? After researching, the government have stated that the maximum loan can only be charged for universities providing “high-quality teaching”. This somewhat, ambiguous term, doesn’t really provide an insight into what is classified as “high-quality teaching”. Surely, all universities are expected to provide a quality education, worthy of the thousands students spend every year?

Elitism is a prevalent issue across UK universities, and tuition fees increasing for universities providing “higher quality education”, could deepen this already embedded issue. The Independent reported that 42% of Oxbridge students come from private schools, and The Sutton Trust found that a disproportionate number of students from private schools attend Russell Group Universities. With the tuition fees increasing, this could mean students from lower income backgrounds cannot afford to go to a top university due to the higher fees. This in turn may further broaden the issue of

Redbrick elitism across the UK, with those “higher quality” universities having the privilege of charging higher fees. 88% of students interviewed agreed that some universities being more expensive will create elitism within the UK university system.

After surveying a number of students at Cardiff University, it was clear that the increase in fees will impact what university people choose to go to. 88% said that having a higher tuition fee will ultimately impact the university they attend, with one student stating “A significantly higher tuition fee would definitely impact my choice of university”. However, others felt that if the quality of education was high, they would consider paying higher fees;

“I am happy to pay more if the extra money I am paying will benefit me and improve the quality of my degree.”

In regards to student life, 83% of those interviewed who don’t have a job at university would consider getting a part-time job to sup-

port themselves financially. This raises another issue of part-time work while at university: could having to work to afford university fees have an impact on your degree?

A benefit of tuition fee increases, could be more stability across all UK universities. The Tab stated that the rise in tuition fees is supposed to help with job cuts and the cutting of courses. Cardiff University experienced its own plethora of issues last year, including job cuts and course cuts being rife. These fee increases could potentially help this from happening again, giving students the peace of mind that their course won’t be cut within the next few years.

So far, all of this is speculation. No one is sure how these tuition fee increases will impact the university system or student life. With some students saying they would pay more for higher quality education, maybe the government’s hopes of sorting out the university system will come true. With elitism across universities and more students having to work as important concerns, only time will tell if these issues will arise.

Ones to Watch: Cardiff University’s Second Film Festival

Ellie Evans
Spotlight Editor

In association with Cardiff Students’ Union, Film Production Society introduced Cardiff University’s second annual film festival on Thursday, 23rd October at Y Plas. With six short films, each presenting a unique and thought-provoking storyline, these screenings celebrated the dedication and passion behind cinematic projects. Each director took to the stage to deliver a speech before their film was played. Sharing their gratitude to the team behind their project, there was a palpable sense of community that was impossible to miss.

“Beginning with The Gaffer...”

directed by Samay Dixit, who revealed he was inspired by his two loves: “football and filmmaking”, the audience was immedi-

ately hooked with sharp, fourth-wall-breaking humour that landed every time. Followed by *The Audition*, directed by Liam Bryan, a dark, psychological exploration into the price of chasing perfection, the atmosphere of the room was transformed into something more reflective. Joseph Cohen, winner of Best Actor at the Chicago Filmmaker Awards this year, particularly stood out to me as one to keep an eye on.

“Detective satire, The Adventures of Eskel McLaughlin...”

written and directed by Ben McElfarick, welcomed the second half of the night. With a sharp wit, its flair earned some of the night’s biggest laughs from the audience. The comedy continued with Shayan Fouladi: *Nashat’s Late Night With The Storyteller*, an “egomaniacal tale” narrating

the consequences of being chronically online in today’s digital world.

“The first-ever animation piece, Lost Tapes of Hazy Memories...”

written, directed, animated, and edited by Samay Dixit, introduces a complete contrast to *The Gaffer*, with a haunting tale of a girl who discovers deeper meanings of life through cassette tapes from her past self. Another thought-provoking piece was *See You Next Year*, written and directed by Lydia Tilston and Beatrice McGarvey, which delved into the feeling of nostalgia between old childhood friends; “will the ghosts of the past come back to haunt them?”.

The evening also supported a meaningful cause, with all raffle proceeds donated to MEDICINEMA. Alongside the exciting announcement that the Film Production Society is launching the Dragon Awards, celebrating standout student talent, with voting closing on Saturday 25th October!

Cardiff University’s student filmmakers have proven themselves as ones to watch, impressing many, not only me, with their dedication and passion for the craft.



Molly Spencer
Spotlight Editor

The Foundry and Owain Glyndwr’s, two local treasures, are back and better than ever!

After a three week closure, the Owain is open again and raring to go. Open seven days a week from 11am–12am, later on Fridays and Saturdays, the Owain Glyndwr is in the centre of Cardiff—opposite the castle, making it perfect for a night out on the town. The Foundry, on the other hand, is toeing the line between central and Cathays, staking its claim as a perfect stop-over pub.

The three weeks of closure for Owain Glyndwr’s was a busy one, with a wide range of inside refurbishments and painting being done inside. Not only this, a new mural has been painted on the outside of the pub for all to admire so make sure you check it out! For all the sports fans, the Owain Glyndwr is continuing its persona as a sports pub, with large TV screens placed all over playing football, rugby, tennis, and even the NFL. The upstairs has been decked out as well, with two brand new dart boards and scoring systems, alongside the well-known pool table.

“Brand new student offers accompany this...”

£5.80 for a pint of inches cider, and the Mixr app is in full usage with discounts on drinks and the opportunity to collect points! Still offering a range of food menus, the Owain is a perfect place to hit up in the daytime as well.

The Foundry has followed suit; the



introduction of the Nyx app offers a rotating set of discounts throughout the week, and standing offers like their Wing Wednesday, which start at 40p per wing—the cheapest around! The refurb has treated the pub well, rustic decor keeping the cosy atmosphere that Gassy’s was known for, with the new scenery adding a little bit of polish. Screens on the top floor show a variety of sports, and live music is still at work in keeping the friendly vibe that was previously in these walls.

The reopening of the Owain and Foundry mark the beginning of, hopefully, a new set of student staples. Both have perfect atmosphere and locations, leaving them an ideal place for a pint and a catch up before a night out on the town. Building their character and making it as accommodating for students as possible, these locations are perfect for celebrating a deadline, or simply for unwinding after lectures.



Everything On Offer at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama

Eve Yates
Spotlight Editor

There is an endless list of things to do in Cardiff, from food, drink, nightlife, and entertainment. But if you're looking for something relaxing and cheap, then the Royal Welsh College may have some events that you're interested in.

Situated by Bute Park, The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is a national conservatoire, training more than 900 actors, musicians, designers, and technicians. This thriving hub of the arts describes itself as attracting the best talent from around the globe. And, thankfully, they are willing to share this talent with the rest of Cardiff for the public to enjoy. From live music, opera, and stage performances, there is something for everyone, if you're looking for a night away from studies.

"After attending a free jazz night at the college, the passion and talent was evident in the performers and the crowd."

With no cost of entry required, I was able to enjoy jazz music while watching the sun set over

Bute Park. With a bar serving drinks, snacks and food to go alongside exquisite music, it was the perfect way to escape from the stress of studies. These jazz nights are every Friday at the College and purely an avenue for students at the conservatoire to perform their music. A mix of original songs and some classic tunes, was a wonderful accompaniment to showcase both talent for performing, and for original song writing. Alongside jazz, on Thursday evenings classical music is available to listen to for free. Opera nights are available, with tickets being as little as £9 to see talented performers display their passions. It is a wonderful break away from the hustle and bustle of the city. If live music isn't quite your cup of tea, the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama also host a variety of plays all year round. For only £9.00, I was able to see *Hamlet* with the Richard Burton Company, which is the conservatoire's inhouse theatre company. The plays are described as "classics through a modern lens" which "reflects society today". Other upcoming performances include *Pomona*, *Tartuffe*, *The Imposter*, and *The Adventures of David Copperfield*. After watching *Hamlet*, it was evident the range of talent that is on offer. For only £9.00, I was able to see incredible acting, sharp sets, and a polished all-round performance. The small and atmospheric theatre added to the intense ambience and allowed full immersion into the performance. Despite never seeing a Shakespeare play in the flesh, I left feeling cultured and moved. Don't feel daunted by the idea of

Shakespeare; the play was presented in a digestible tone, with modern quirks added to bring a renowned play like *Hamlet* into the modern day.

Whether it be live music, opera, acting, or even just to grab a drink and admire the view of Bute Park in autumn, the Royal Welsh College for Music and Drama is more than just a conservatoire.

"If you're looking to have a cultural evening enjoying the arts from little to nothing, I couldn't recommend it more."

You can cosy up with a hot chocolate while listening to classical or jazz music, before watching an extremely well performed play. What more could you want?



Provided by Wikimedia Commons (Outside the Dora Stoutzker Hall, RWCMD, Cardiff).



Don't Be a Shitty Committee: Cardiff Students Take a Stand against Sexual Violence on Campus

Eve Harris
Spotlight Editor

Time to Act have recently launched their new campaign:

"Don't Be a Shitty Committee"

It is aiming to tackle sexual violence, misconduct, and coercion across campus. The student-led organisation have been active for three years now, calling out the University and Students' Union over their failures to protect women and students. In addition, they offer important advice and contacts regarding sexual violence, misconduct, abortion, and sexual health. Campaigning across the University, they have been an important voice for victims, also advocating for preventative measures. Some important achievements include a ban on staff-and-student relationships and the 28-day reporting period, allowing victims to speak up in their own time.

Their new campaign, aimed at student societies and sports teams, requires committees to make a pledge, ensuring "active bystander-ship, a culture of consent, and zero tolerance towards sexual violence and misogyny". With societies and sports at the heart of student life in Cardiff, this integrates positive action throughout student communities, reinforcing a zero

tolerance approach, and creating safe spaces. Founder of Time to Act, Becca, and head of campaigns, Rowan, have spoken about the importance of this pledge, stating it:

"Demonstrates solidarity between students against sexual misconduct, whilst creating community..."

which will hopefully have a long term impact in looking out for each other, and holding people accountable." Since the pledge campaign was launched, and they called out the SU over their failure to "step up", membership has quickly increased. This, in particular, highlights how their work has encouraged an increasing number of students to partake in active bystander-ship, and take a stand against violence and misconduct. On social media, the pledge has really taken off, with over 100 societies and sports teams signing in solidarity as of the 5th of November. From being on Instagram myself, I have seen firsthand the overwhelmingly positive response the campaign has had. Rowan has said that this is significant as it demonstrates committees are being proactive, which is particularly encouraging and comforting for new students joining Cardiff. Elise, President of JOME Netball expressed her pride in the campaign she played a role in initiating. Reflecting on her time as president so far, she shared that one of her

priorities was joining Time to Act, an initiative she has supported since her first year. "I'm so happy that Rowan and I came up with this idea, which has really made a difference at Cardiff University", she said, adding that she is equally proud that so many other societies have joined the movement, helping to create a culture that promotes safety, trust, and consent amongst members.

When asked about the role of the pledge in challenging sexual violence and misconduct, Elise explained that as a young woman in the society, she feels strongly about confronting sexual violence, not just against women, but against everyone. She emphasised that whether it's something we have experienced or not, it's so important to speak up. The success of the campaign so

"For me personally, seeing people speak up about their experiences really inspired me to speak about my own, which truly impacted my life in the best way."

far has highlighted how student-led initiatives have the potential to create meaningful change, raising awareness, but also inspiring action amongst students. By standing together, Cardiff

students are creating a culture where respect, safety, and consent are non-negotiable.



The Louvre Jewels Are not Apolitical Artefacts

Abby Neve
Contributor

Unless you've been living under a rock, you will have heard about the heist of the century: the theft of the Louvre's crown jewels, stolen right from the heart of France's capital city in broad daylight. Eight pieces were stolen in just seven minutes, worth a total of £76m. Despite four arrests, the jewels have not yet been recovered, and may never be. The headlines were as dramatic as expected: CNN dubbed the debacle a "national disaster", and the BBC called it "France's most shocking theft".

The popular art museum has been disgraced and is now facing criticism from all angles. Most damning of all were the security failures which amounted to embarrassing rookie errors. The camera, for instance, was simply pointing away from the thieves' entry point and didn't catch them climbing in through the balcony. Their financial choices have also been scrutinised, especially the choice to buy so

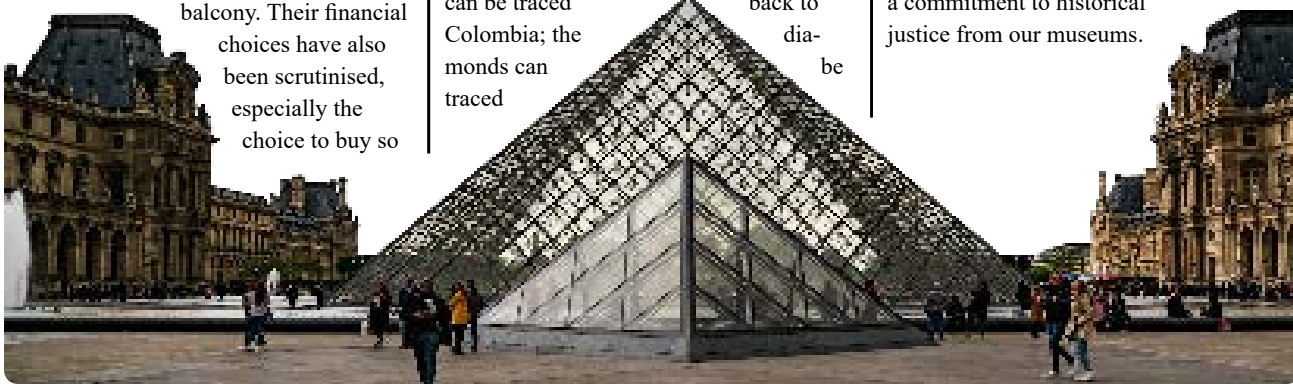
many new, expensive artworks over the past decades, leaving little room in the budget for important things like... security.

But while the Louvre picks up the pieces, the heist has exposed a historical irony that has sparked debate. France's own history of colonial theft has been under scrutiny in recent years: in 2021, France returned 26 treasures stolen during the colonial period back to Benin, and in 2025 returned three colonial-era human skulls to Madagascar. In this climate, it's easy to see how the items that were stolen were not apolitical objects, but rather important relics of an uncomfortable history.

The stolen artefacts were jewellery which once belonged to the upper echelons of society, those who greatly benefited from colonialism, including Napoleon III's wife Empress Eugénie. While the jewellery was made in France, the origins of the jewels were extracted from around the world. The jewellery's emeralds can be traced back to Colombia; the diamonds can be traced

back to Brazil and India; the pearls can be traced back to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean; and the sapphires to Sri Lanka. There is very little information about where exactly the jewels came from, but expert Pascal Blanchard told AP News that they were "products of colonial production" and "traded under the legal conditions... of the time", including, of course, slavery.

But did the thieves pull off this stunt as a political statement in an effort to right the historical wrongs? Absolutely not. While it's understandable that some are happy to bask for a minute in the karmic retribution of it all, it is delusional to romanticise this heist as some kind of Robin Hood-style statement. Those who suffered in the extraction of the jewels will never be compensated, and we shouldn't celebrate in the removal of artefacts from a national art museum for profit. That being said, rather than crying over stolen jewels, we should take this opportunity to demand a commitment to historical justice from our museums.



Cardiff Students Say "NO" to the Crown

Nancy Roberts
Opinion Editor

I asked Cardiff University students what their opinions are on the relevance of the royal family. The response was predominantly negative, with the majority taking the stand that the Monarchy is an outdated system, unrepresentative of British people, and a drain on national resources and taxpayer money. A small minority argued that they are a pillar of our history and a positive representation of patriotic values and tradition; however, even fans and supporters acknowledged it functions more as cultural entertainment than serious institution. Those fans seem to turn a blind eye to Britain's history of imperialism and colonialism, as well as all the racism and violence that comes with it. The Royal family is a symbol of white nationalism, and that is not something that should be glorified.

Tourism is the royalist's main argument, claiming "they're a marketing tool, bringing revenue into the country through tourists wanting to see British history and culture". However, a student counteracted the solidity of this reason, suggesting "France makes more in tourism from their dead royal family and their palaces,

estates and titles than we do with a living one". Allegedly they bring in money from tourism, but students question if this is truly more than they spend?

The royals are known for their secrecy and are no stranger to lies and deceit. The shame of Andrew's unsettling friendship with Jeffrey Epstein leaves a bitter taste, and doesn't shape the family as "great role models". Another student highlights that "Tony Blair's use of the royal prerogative to push for the Iraq war, proves how they're out of touch of reality, and are not fit to make political decisions which bypass both the House of Commons and the House of Lords".

"It feels out of place and outdated in today's society"

A royal family "void of the working class" is inherently elitist and exploitative; and perpetuates classism. One student noted it's purely by chance they are "born into ridiculous wealth, fame and power", and "inheritance is responsible for enough inequality as is". A lot of students found it ironic how this money could be better spent on providing help for those in

poverty or seeking refuge, healthcare, education, social work, etc., rather than funding the lavish lifestyle of one singular family.

"It feels out of place and outdated in today's society... as a country we are more diverse, atheist, multi-cultural, and no longer following one demographic of the Christian white person." The family's extortionate wealth does not provide good reason in today's society to justify the argument that they help the people.



Remembrance Should Not Be Forgotten

Luke James
Opinion Editor

In November, poppy sellers line the streets, collecting donations for the Royal British Legion (RBL). Millions of poppies will be worn throughout the country in a display of Remembrance for those who have served.

Often, we relate the poppy to the First and Second World Wars, and rightly so. As we lose the last survivors of WWII, we must hear their stories before they are gone forever. As a child, I remember sitting with my great grandfather, listening to stories of his time in the Merchant Navy. From crossing the Atlantic whilst being targeted by U-boats, to Arctic Convoys into the Soviet Union, those tales will always be present in my mind, particularly this time in the year. I'm saddened he passed before he could tell me more of his stories and I wasn't able to fully understand them at the time.

Our generation dismisses the importance of Remembrance, which includes modern conflicts, such as Afghanistan and the Gulf Wars. Servicepeople fought for our protection and still do, yet we seem to treat the modern day military with disdain and disrespect. Those on the front line fight hard so we can live freely. Yet, we only seem to criticise them.

Special operations have eliminated key figures in terror cells, as well as large groups of enemy forces, with minimal casualties. The British military regularly carries out humanitarian operations globally. These operations receive little attention in British media, despite them protecting our nation.

The reason why we wear the poppy is not only to show respect for those who fought and fell, but also raise awareness of those who still live, wounded and scarred. The Royal British Legion is greatly benefited from Remembrance, allowing it to earn vital income and support servicepeople and veterans across the United Kingdom. The RBL is key to helping veterans adjust to civilian life and deal with life-changing wounds, as well as mental health support, especially PTSD. Without our support, they wouldn't be able to do the brilliant work they do, and The Poppy Appeal is a key funding opportunity for the RBL.

If Remembrance is treated

like just another day and its importance is forgotten when the two-minute silence ends, we have truly lost its meaning. Conflict doesn't exist solely on the 11th of November. Our nation fights twenty-four seven, three hundred and sixty-five days a year. Armed Forces Day is barely mentioned in the press, bar the Army vs Navy Rugby Union match at the Allianz Stadium. We seem to pay our respects on one day, then act like conflicts and sacrifices don't occur throughout the rest of the year.

We should help raise awareness for those who serve and served, such as raising money and having community outreach programmes. When I was in Year 6, we would go to the local church once a week and meet residents from a local care home. Many of the residents had fought in the Second World War and Korea. I met some lovely, kind-hearted gentlemen, who took part in the D-Day landings on June 6th 1944. He told me about his time in service and what it was like coming back to help rebuild the country.

Adapting from military life to civilian is no easy task and is why so many end up living rough on the streets, falling through the cracks of a broken system. Therefore, we as a community should help with small things, like coffee mornings where servicepeople can meet with others or an outreach programme so lonely veterans have someone to talk to. It isn't that no support exists, but that there is not enough. As a country, if we keep Remembrance at the back of our minds,

we can do more to help those who have given so much for us.

We live in an age of political turmoil, divided into extremes. If we commemorate what was given for us to be free, we will be deterred from hateful ideology and look towards peace and togetherness. Remembrance is not only a time of commemoration and reflection, but also a time of celebration, knowing that despite the huge losses and sacrifices, peace prevailed. From the Falklands to Skye, Britons will stand silent at the eleventh minute of the eleventh hour of the eleventh month, for all that was given for our lives today.



Hot Topic of The Month

The War on Women's Health

Miriam Southall
Head of Opinion

Exclusion, neglect, medical misogyny, and bias are just a few words that describe the historical attitudes and treatment of women's health. This ongoing pattern has resulted in inadequate care, leading to many women experiencing misdiagnoses or underdiagnoses. Furthermore, the lack of research and effective treatment has fostered a general sense of mistrust and isolation among women, who often feel that doctors are not listening to them or that they are being prescribed medications with insufficient research to support their use. It is vital we spread awareness of what exactly women go through when seeking medical treatment; it is 2025 and time people realise that women's health matters just as much men's.

"Many doctors consistently ignore and refuse to provide proper care and attention"

Problems surrounding endometriosis and adenomyosis. These conditions are often normalised or dismissed by doctors despite the severe symptoms they cause. Patients frequently experience extreme and prolonged menstruation, chronic pelvic pain that affects daily activities,

and fertility issues. This can also lead to depression and anxiety stemming from both the dismissal by doctors and the ongoing chronic pain. Needless to say, endometriosis and adenomyosis are deeply complex conditions with a wide range of effects on women's physical, mental, and reproductive health. However, even with these intense symptoms affecting 1 in 10 women, many doctors consistently ignore and refuse to provide proper care and attention. The issue is dismissed by claiming it is a normal part of menstruation which then leads to diagnostic delays averaging 7–10 years. What's more, there is extreme underfunding and a lack of research into these conditions. Indeed, the funding that goes towards research in women's health generally is profoundly disproportionately low compared to male-dominant conditions with similar prevalence.

The neglect and misogyny we witness today has deep historical roots. Women were excluded from clinical trials until the 1990s, with men being considered the standard in research and testing. This led to treatments that do not necessarily align with female physiology, and we still observe the consequences of this today. Additionally, the term "hysteria" originates from the Greek word for uterus, reflecting the belief that women's emotional and physical ailments stemmed from a wandering womb. This myth has

shaped centuries of dismissive attitudes toward women's health.

"We deserve to feel safe and understood when it comes to our health"

It is glaringly obvious from everything covered that women's health is still a low priority. Not acknowledging this or the feelings of women has and will continue to diminish the progression of women's rights. If people can't understand women's bodies, then women will go on feeling undervalued and misunderstood by the healthcare industry, leading to even more mental and physical issues. Although there is a glimmer of light as a result: there has been a rise in advocacy for pushing curricula that will treat menstrual health as a main subject rather than a specialty. This will increase awareness and understanding. Additionally, there have been calls for immediate changes from the UK Parliament's Women and Equalities Committee, demanding better training for doctors, increased funding for reproductive health, and more inclusion in research.

We can only hope that people in power will listen to women's voices and realise that our bodies are important and we deserve to feel safe and understood when it comes to our health.



Get off Your Phone and Have a Smoke

James Kitterhing
Opinion Editor

Waiting for a train, walking to the shop, finding love, or taking a shit. No matter how you spend your time, your actions will be punctuated by the use of one of the wonders of the modern world: your phone. A piece of technology so well designed that it could slide effortlessly into any activity or setting and cater to any mood which may overtake you.

Before its invention, however, a different item would be occupying the space between thumb and forefinger. The cigarette. Culture has shifted away from this vice and the benefits of a smoke-free society are numerous. But, in the rush to throw out the pack, we overlooked our tendency towards addiction.

From the bus driver to the prime minister, we're all driven towards quick pleasures and brief releases. This tendency towards addiction manifests itself in the smartphone as it did with cigarettes before.

We failed to consider what the social ramifications of digital addiction would be. Unlike smoking, smartphone use is insular, private, and individualistic. Smoking forced social interaction in the real world: stopping a stranger for a lighter

in the street, complaining about management in the short window of unmonitored socialising a cigarette provides, or sharing a smoke with a lover. All these and other spontaneous moments of socialisation are lost with the smartphone.

We hide from each other in the solitude of our screens and share no community in our consumption of it. You don't make friends scrolling in the club. We switched out one addiction for another and made ourselves lonely doing so.

I'm not suggesting you go out and smoke yourself to death. But next time you find yourself with five free minutes and feel the drag towards the box of blue light, share a smoke with someone instead. I guarantee it'll be more memorable than whatever sloop you would have seen on your screen.

Support to quit smoking:



OnlyFans Glamorises Sex Work

Bethan Jones
Opinion Editor

Long gone are the days of dodgy DVDs and late-night TV. Now, porn lives in our pockets, and rather than users actively seeking out explicit content, instead it is being thrown at us on our social media feeds. With the likes of OnlyFans, sex work hasn't just been made more accessible to watch, but also to participate in, and whilst we live in a time where women are told that every choice they make is empowering, we must stop and think: is agency really the same as liberation? And what happens when those choices directly feed into the patriarchy, rather than fight it?

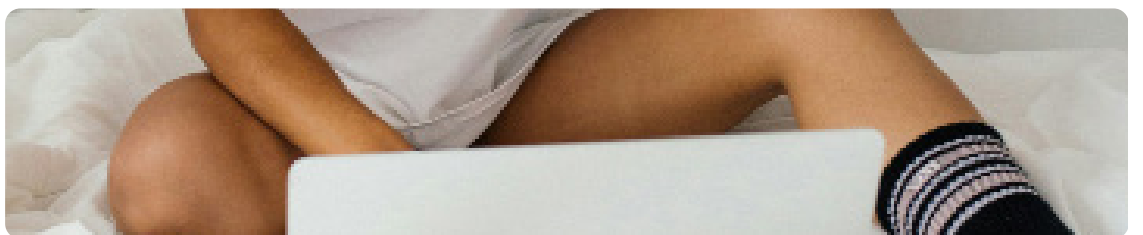
The pandemic saw a major shift in modern pornography. Whilst adult entertainment became harder to make, sites like OnlyFans skyrocketed in use to allow actors an alternative source of income, with the benefit of direct viewer interaction. Many people outside the industry were also drawn into its accessibility and flexibility, believing it could be a sort of "side hustle" during a national financial crisis.

I cannot count how many times I've heard someone say "I'll just start an OnlyFans if it doesn't work out". And whilst on the surface we're sold this blasé, luxurious lifestyle that so many creators flaunt on social media, there lies a darker side to it. Because OnlyFans is still sex work—and it's no walk in the park. What might

start off as innocent feet pics can quickly tumble into something far more extreme. The sexual harassment, violence, and stalking that creators frequently experience is hardly ever the focus of conversation. Even famous singer Lily Allen has spoken out about the increasing pressure from fans to create more explicit content—a path many may hesitate to take but see as their only option to keep bringing in money.

The women who rake it in on this site aren't your average women either. They're usually white, middle class, and have had a bunch of work done to meet the beauty standards the app is wanting to promote. Meanwhile, the majority of creators are barely making more than £100 a month. And whilst some argue OnlyFans to be "sex-worker friendly", the reality is far from it—with the company taking 20% of commissions and closing down accounts they believe to be inappropriate or harmful, leaving people with no income and no answers.

The surge of OnlyFans has been normalised in ways we cannot ignore. It has glamorised sex work and increasingly woven it into our everyday culture. I'm not suggesting we shun those for doing it, but the message it sends younger generations is something we must think about. Because money does not equal consent. And how equal are we really if women's bodies are still being sold as commodities?



The Revolt of Passion

Ivan Bliminse
Contributor

The modern soul is plagued by its history of monogamy. All men and women seek to find a pledge of loyalty, that staying with a partner and being all enduring is the “only” or “right” way we should love. Whether we have learned such castrating moral rulings through our social doctrines, in religion or our institutions, or the overly perpetrated ideas that there is virtue in undermining our wants and desires for others.

“It is clear to me now that the soul must fight to break the surface of these repressions”,

even if doing so comes at the cost of a relationship held so dear, so to find its space to breathe, if only to save our livelihood.

To quote Shakespeare’s Emilia, “Let husbands know their wives have sense like them”. Too long overdrawn is the power of hypocritical wants of our partners. The truth is that people lie all the time, especially when

encouraged not to: Fleeting eyes, a faint desiring glow of what could be, the temporary rush delivered in a cloud of unknown perfume. These are all exciters of the unknown and inspire all sorts of thoughts in any passionate direction. So, why not act? Why not take a leap of faith into another’s arms? I have lived long enough behind the old barring desires, and this is testament to the period of my ambition awaiting opportunity.

Why not let people swing from arm to arm; to bosom; to crotch?

The monochromatic colours of orthodox restraints have been painted all over the vigour and passion, seen in every lover and available in abundance to fleeing and changing relationships. Many would claim the hurt feelings of “betrayed” partners all over the globe, that they have somehow been let down, their expectations disappointed. But if we carried on catering to every expectation of others—chiefly, those that are absurd—then man and woman are left with not much energy for anything else, let alone knowing the passions within oneself.

“Cheating or swinging are not acts of childish indulgence, but rather a process of cathartic self-discovery and fleeing the dead weight of monogamy”.

It is not through lack of love that one goes from man to man, woman to woman, but with an abundance of love. It is that one loves them with the same individual passion each time, a passion that is not the same between any two lovers.

One does not receive the love one is looking for at last, but once more.

The human is a butterfly, destined to leap from flower to flower, to find one’s exulting desires at every turn. An expression of the soul’s wants for freedom, a space to breathe, cannot be seen as a sin but only as a revolt for passion. A dream to love all.



Photo, Gair Rhydd 1989

Stop the Pool Lobby!

Oliver Hanlon
Opinion Editor

In the wake of significant budget cuts to Cardiff University due to a £31 million deficit—which saw courses cut and a mass exodus of university staff through resignation and redundancy—an AGM motion for the Students’ Union to lobby the university to build a swimming pool has gained significant traction.

The motion to build our very own “big beautiful” pool was proposed on behalf of the various watersports societies calls for the VP Sports to lobby Cardiff University to acquire one, due to the “high cost” of renting external pool space, as opposed to the meagre cost of the university using tens of millions of pounds of our tuition fees to build a swimming pool. This motion, frankly, is tone-deaf and would see vital SU funds diverted away from more deserving causes into a lobbying campaign that could be optimistically described as a “long shot”, but more accurately described as “ludicrous” and “not going to happen”.

The proposal, if successfully lobbied for, would see Cardiff University students, in practice, paying the university to swim in their tuition fees.

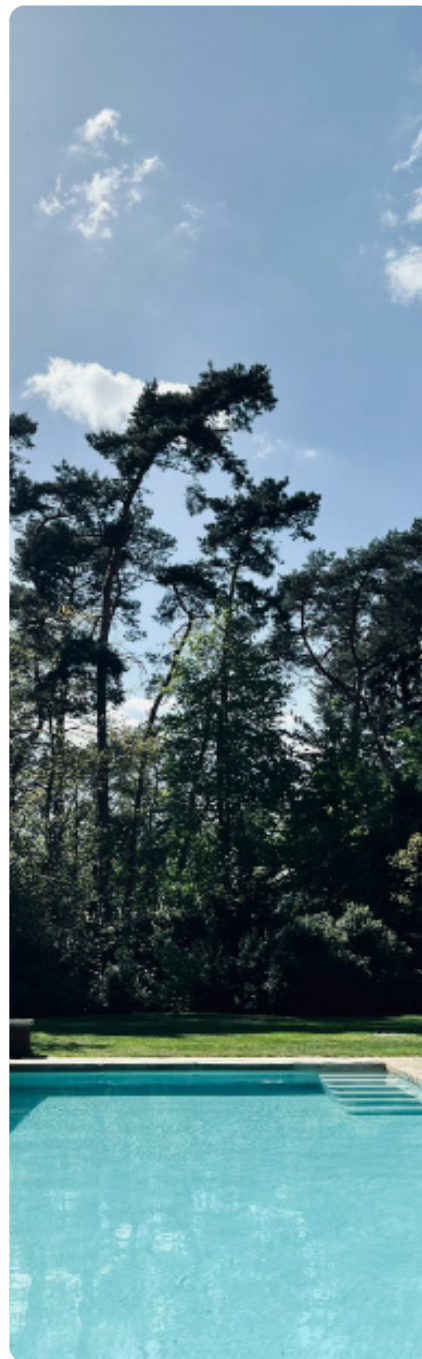
“Currently, this vanity project, which is like buying a luxury car when your house needs a new roof, is beating more worthy motions”,

such as: “Improving travel to and from Cardiff University Heath Park campus”; “Campaign to open the books and improve the university’s financial strategy”; and “Cooperate with, and support industrial action undertaken by, the staff trade unions”. Whilst I understand the societies’

struggles with finding affordable training spaces, it is not the place of the Students’ Union to lobby for a swimming pool; its focus should be firmly rooted in advocating for the majority of students’ interests and well-being. There are many more relevant and prudent causes in Cardiff students’ interests, and when put alongside rightful campaigns to address discrimination, inequality, and sexual assault within the university, a proposal to lobby for a swimming pool—which would only really benefit a select few—seems tasteless. In a cost-of-living crisis, where many students are struggling more than ever before, and the status of their courses hang dubiously over their heads, AGM motions and the CUSU should be about advocating for causes like these.

“This poses a more worrying question: is our students’ union disregarding the “union” part of its name, is it just a socially conscious nightclub?”

Whether debated or not, the motion exposes a fatal flaw in the AGM system. A combination of low voter turnout and general apathy towards the business conducted by the SU allows a minority of the student body to force motions through. If this were to enter the top four and become one of the proposals voted on within the AGM, the watersports societies will likely be able to pack the room and rubber stamp this motion through. The AGM markets itself as democratic when, in fact, it is the opposite. In 2024, 801 students gathered in Y Plas to dictate SU policy for the other 30,000. Little is done to increase engagement in proceedings like these, bar the occasional e-mail or sporadic TikTok, such as the one posted on the official CUSU account on Halloween, exposing that no one knows what the AGM is. Much improvement is needed to ensure that CUSU is advocating for students effectively.



NOTICE TO STUDENTS

Do you have a passion for sharing your point of view? Are you opinionated? Do you turn the pub into a debating society after a few pints? Or is there something you need other people to hear?

E-mail opinion@gair-rhydd.com to submit your opinionated articles. The spicier the better!

Myfyrwyr yn Codi Arian am Ambiwylans Awyr Cymru

Gwenno Davies
Golygydd Taf-Od

Gyda'r dyddiau yn byrhau a'r tywydd yn oeri yma yng Nghaerdydd, mae myfyrwyr y Brifysgol eisoes wedi bod wrthi yn cefnogi elusennau. Dyma gip ar beth fydd timau chwaraeon y Gymgym, a Chôr Aelwyd y Waun Ddyfal yn ei wneud dros fisoedd Tachwedd a Rhagfyr er mwyn codi arian.

Timau Chwaraeon y Gymgym

Yn ystod mis Tachwedd, mae timau Chwaraeon y Gymgym wrthi'n codi arian at elusen Ambiwylans Awyr Cymru, trwy gyfuniad o gerdded a rhedeg. Maent wedi gosod her i gyrraedd cyfanswm o 1400km yn ystod y mis, sef hyd arfordir Cymru.

“Mae'n bwysig cefnogi achos mor werthfawr sy'n achub bywydau bob dydd”

Mae'r myfyrwyr yn tracio'r pellter maen nhw'n symud mewn grŵp ar ap Strava. Yn ôl Elen Evans, aelod o bwyllgor tîm pêl rwyd y Gymgym, “Mae llawer iawn wedi dangos did-dordeb ac yn cymryd rhan bob dydd. Mae tua 90 o aelodau ar y grŵp erbyn hyn, sy'n grêt!”

Pwysleisiodd Elen fod yr elusen hon yn bwysig i'r Gymgym am fod yr Ambiwylans Awyr yn “helpu pawb, dim ots pwy ydyn ni neu ble rydyn ni'n byw. Does neb yn gwybod be all ddigwydd, felly mae'n bwysig cefnogi achos mor werthfawr sy'n achub bywydau bob dydd.”

Er mwyn cyfrannu, mae linc i ddolen gofundme ar instagram pêl droed y Gymgym, a phêl rwyd y Gymgym.

Côr Aelwyd y Waun Ddyfal

Bydd Côr Aelwyd y Waun Ddyfal hefyd yn codi arian, wrth gynnal raffl yn eu cyng-erdd Nadolig ddechrau mis Rhagfyr. Gwnaeth aelodau'r côr bleidleisio dros roi'r elw i Ambiwylans Awyr Cymru mewn pŵl ar grŵp Whatsapp.

“Mae hi yr un mor bwysig i gefnogi elusennau o Gymru ag yw e i gefnogi rhai mwy rhyngwladol”

Dywedodd Elen Williams, Cadeirydd y Côr, fod y Côr yn awyddus i gymryd unrhyw gyfle i gyfrannu at elusen oherwydd “ni'n griw mawr o bobl ifanc sy'n ddigon ffodus i allu mynd i gôr bob wythnos, a mwynhau canu.”

“Mae cefnogi elusennau, yn enwedig elusennau yng Nghymru, yn bwysig i ni fel myfyrwyr sy'n dod o bob cwr o'r wlad. Mae hi yr un mor bwysig i gefnogi elusennau o Gymru ag yw e i gefnogi rhai mwy rhyngwladol.”

“Ni byth yn gwybod pryd fyddwn ni angen yr elusennau yma yn y dyfodol.”

Beth yn union mae'r elusen Ambiwylans Awyr Cymru yn ei wneud?

Gyda phedair canolfan ar hyd a lled Cymru, gall criw yr Ambiwylans Awyr gynnig trini-aeth feddygol fel rhoi gwaed, anesthesia, a llawdriniaethau ar safle'r digwyddiad. Mae'r elusen yn achub bywydau, gan arbed oriau i'r claf wrth dderbyn y driniaeth briodol. Mae'r elusen yn dibynnu'n llwyr ar roddion elusennol i godi'r £11.2 miliwn sydd angen arnynt bob blwyddyn i gadw eu hofrenyddion yn yr awyr.

“Rydyn ni yno i bobl Cymru, pryd bynnag a ble bynnag y bo angen.”

Hannah Williams
Pennaeth Taf-Od

Yn ôl ffigurau a gasglwyd gan y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, mae hanner y myfyrwyr Cymraeg a ddechreuodd yn y brifysgol eleni wedi gadael Cymru. Mae'r ffigurau yn cyfeirio at y rheini fuodd yn ddisgyblion mewn ysgolion cyfrwng Cymraeg. Tra bod 50% wedi aros yng Nghymru i astudio, mae 49% wedi symud i Loegr, ac 1% i'r Alban. Mynegodd y sefydliad ei fod yn “destun pryder i'r Coleg bod cynifer o fyfyrwyr yn gadael Cymru i astudio mewn prifysgolion ble nad oes cyfleoedd iddyn nhw barhau i astudio trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg”.

Mae Beca Roberts yn astudio cwrs gwisgoedd ym Mhrifysgol Guildhall yn Llundain, Meddai, “Penderfynais i symud i Lundain achos dyna ble oedd y cyrsiau gorau am y gradd o fi moen astudio”. Dywedodd ei bod wedi derbyn cyfleoedd gwaith na fyddai'n bosib iddi yng Nghymru; “Fi'n ddigon lwcus i weithio ar sioe ar y West End fel dresser sy'n rhywbeth do'n i byth yn dychmygu bydde fi'n gallu neud. Fi hefyd wedi cael gweithio ar arddangosfa sydd nawr yn y Design Museum yn Llundain”.

Dywedodd Mali Rhys, myfyrwraig y Gwyddorau Meddygol ym Mhrifysgol Exeter, “O'n i'n gwybod bo fi eisiau byw tu fas i Gymru rhywbryd, ac o'n i'n gwybod tasen i'n mynd i'r brifysgol yng Nghymru mae'n debygol fydden i byth yn gadael”. Meddai, “Fi di cael lot o gyfleoedd yn y brifysgol, fel neud 'internship' gyda fy nghwrs, ond fi ddim yn gwybod os fi di cael unrhyw beth fydden i ddim yn gallu cael yng Nghymru”.

I fyfyrwyr eraill, roedd aros yng Nghymru yn ddewis naturiol. Meddai Ben Roberts, myfyriwr Cymraeg a Newyddiaduraeth ym Mhrifysgol Caerdydd, ei fod wedi dewis astudio yma gan

fod “Caerdydd yn un o'r ysgolion gorau ar gyfer newyddiaduraeth”.

“Mae gwneud cwrs trwy'r Gymraeg wedi rhoi nifer o gyfleoedd i mi nad oedd yn bosib i fyfyrwyr Saesneg”. Eglurodd, “mae gwneud cwrs drwy'r Gymraeg yn golygu bod gennych ddosbarth llai, felly pan ddaeth cyfle i wneud rhywbeth fel gweithio i Cardiff City, roedd llawer llai o gys-tadleuaeth i gael y gwaith yma”.

Penderfynodd Lowri Jones astudio'r Gymraeg a'r Gyfraith yng Nghaerdydd, “er mwyn manteisio ar y cyfle i dderbyn addysg mwy personol, drwy gymorth seminarau bach cyfrwng Cymraeg.” Dywedodd, “Mae astudio yng Nghymru wedi cynnig cyfleoedd unigryw i mi. Cefais gyfle i deithio i'r Ariannin i hyrwyddo'r Gymraeg ym Mhatagonia. Rwyf hefyd wedi gweld bywyd cymdeithasol Cymreig Caerdydd fel elfen bwysig o'm mhrofiad”.

Dywedodd Mark Drakeford, gweinidog y Gymraeg yn y Llywodraeth Lafur, “Rydyn ni eisiau pobl sydd wedi cael eu haddysgu drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg i fynd i ble bynnag y maen nhw eisiau astudio, ond i gadw'r Gymraeg sydd gyda nhw yn fyw, ac i ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yna ar ôl astudio a dod nôl i Gymru.”

Dywedodd Beca a Mali eu bod yn siarad Cymraeg yn y Brifysgol gyda rhai Cymry eraill maent wedi cwrdd. Pwysleisiodd y ddwy hefyd mai eu bwriad yw dychwelyd i Gymru yn y pen draw. Mae Mali yn bwriadu dychwelyd i wneud gradd feistr yng Nghaerdydd wedi iddi raddio flwyddyn nesaf. Dywedodd, “gan bo fi'n gwybod bo fi eisiau gweithio yng Nghymru byddai neud masters yn helpu fi i gael cysylltiadau yn y meysydd fi eisiau mynd mewn i”.

Dywedodd Beca ei bod yn awyddus i “fyw a gweithio yma [Llundain] am ychydig mwy o flynyddoedd” ond ei bod “bendant yn bwriadu dod nôl i Gymru ar ryw bwynt”.

“Dim Ffordd o Ennill”: Graddedigion Eleni yn Cael hi'n Anodd Gafael ar Swydd

Hanna Morgans Bowen
Golygydd Taf-Od

Eleni yw'r flwyddyn waethaf ar gyfer recriwtio graddedigion. Yn 2025, gostyngodd recriwtio 8% i gymharu â llynedd, gan ei wneud y flwyddyn wannaf ers y gostyngiad o 12% yn ystod y pandemig yn 2020.

Graddiodd Elin Owen eleni o Brifysgol Caerdydd. Dywedodd ei bod hi wedi bod yn chwilio am swyddi ers mis Ionawr, hyd yn oed rhai tu allan i'w maes dymunol. Ar hyn o bryd mae hi'n aros i glywed i nôl wrth 27 o swyddi.

“Dwi 'di trio am swyddi fel gweithio mewn siopau, ond maen nhw'n dweud bo fi'n gorgymwys, ond wedyn gyda swyddi yn y maes dwi ishe'i wneud, maen nhw'n dweud bod dim digon o brofiadau gen i. Felly does dim ffordd o ennill rwy'n teimlo.”

Yn ôl yr Arolwg Recriwtio Myfyrwyr 2025 gan Sefydliad Cyflogwyr Myfyrwyr (ISE), o'r 155 o gyflogwyr mawr a gafodd eu mesur, derbyniwyd dros 1.8 miliwn o geisiadau ar gyfer y 31,000 o swyddi graddedigion. Yn ogystal,

mae cyflogwyr yn derbyn mwy o geisiadau i bob rôl, sy'n ei gwneud hi'n gystadleuaeth fwy llym i ymgeiswyr.

“Ar y cyfan, gostyngodd y farchnad swyddi lefel mynediad 5%.”

Er bod nifer y graddedigion a gyflogwyd wedi gostwng, cyflogwyd mwy o bobl sydd wedi gadael ysgol a choleg drwy brentisiaethau, gan weld cynnydd o 8%. Mae hyn yn dangos fod cyflogwyr yn symud ffocws o raddedigion i brentisiaethau.

Ar y cyfan, gostyngodd y farchnad swyddi lefel mynediad 5%.

Pwysig yw nodi fod y patrymau yma yn amrywio o sector i sector. Mae'r arolwg hefyd yn dangos er bod 42% o gyflogwyr wedi lleihau cyflogi graddedigion, bod 25% o gyflogwyr wedi cynnal lefel cyflogi cyson, a bod 33% wedi cynyddu.

Defnydd deallusrwydd artifisial “ddim yn deg”:

Erbyn hyn mae rhai cyflogwyr yn defnyddio

deallusrwydd artifisial (AI) er mwyn dewis eu hymgeiswyr llwyddiannus. Mae hyn drwy uwchleuo allwed-deiriau mewn CV's a llythyron cais, a dadansoddi cyfwe-liadau fideo. Profiad Elin oedd:

“Ma na un o'r swyddi siopau nes i drio am, ag oedd y cyfweiliad yn hollol AI. Nes i arno fo ac roedd ddynes yn siarad set questions. Roedd o'n gadael rhyw ddeg eiliad i chi feddwl am sut i ateb y cwestiwn a recordio.”

“Dwi'n meddwl dyna le mae'r broblem yn dod i mewn. Dwi'n bersonol heb lawer o brofiad 'retail', ond os fyswn i'n cael cyfle i siarad efo nhw wyneb yn wyneb ella byswn i'n gallu dweud sut mae pethau dwi di neud o'r blaen yn gymwys i'r swydd yna, ond dwi ddim yn cael y cyfle os dwi dim ond yn cael deg eiliad i feddwl amdano'r peth cyn ateb y cwestiwn. Dydy o

ddim yn deg dwi'n i feddwl.”

Amcangyfrif disgyniad arall:

Er bod ISE yn canolbwyntio ar gyflogwyr mawr sydd â rhaglenni ffurfiol o hyfforddi graddedigion, mae data

ehangach y farchnad lafur yn dangos gostyngiad o 13% yn yr holl hysbysebion swyddi rhwng Gorffennaf 2024, a Gorffennaf 2025. Fe all hyn effeithio ar swyddi y tu hwnt i'r rolau hyfforddi ffurfiol i raddedigion.

Mae'r adroddiad ISE yn amcangyfrifo bydd recriwtio dedigion yn parhau i fod yn 2025-26, gyda disgydisgwylidiedig o 7%.

grad-sialens niad

RHUN AP

An Interview with...

LEADER OF PLAID CYMRU

For those who don't know lot about you, could you tell us about yourself and why you ended up in politics?

I'm a journalist by profession. I still consider myself in a way to be a journalist that ended up in politics. I come from Ynys Mons, the Isle of Anglesey, though I was born outside Cardiff in Pontypridd. I came to study Welsh and Politics at Cardiff University with a view to going into journalism, and that's what I was fortunate enough to do for nearly twenty years, working mainly for the BBC as a political reporter and news reader and presenter, and I had the most wonderful and privileged career. But I guess I'd always been surrounded by politics in my personal life, expressed through my parents, and then studying politics in Cardiff. I was always in and around politics and always had strong views of my own. Ultimately, I came to the point in 2013 when a by-election was called where I lived and I had the opportunity—should I have wanted to take it—to stand in that by-election, which meant I didn't have to give up my career as a journalist years before an election—that kind of thing. I think it was partially driven by the loss of my mother a few months previously, which was the kind of experience that makes you think differently about life. I decided that this is an opportunity I had to take to try to contribute towards building the Welsh nation. That's what I did, and here I am now.

A lot of people talk about the possibility of putting a divided border between Wales and England, maybe splitting some communities apart. Do you recognise that that might be a concern for people in those parts of the world?

Oh, absolutely. You have to recognise that people have lots of concerns and questions that are unanswered in their minds about what independence would look like. I'll say at the outset, we're going to an election next year, which isn't an election about independence. There's no referendum being put on the table by us now, but absolutely, I want to lead the debate on where we could go as a nation, get people interested in whether there's a different and better way of running things for Wales. Should we always be a nation that is stagnant economically, with families locked in poverty, a third of children living in poverty? Or are there ways at looking at the way independent nations work around the world that could allow us to map things better, redesigning Britain? And in that debate, yes, there are lots of issues. What happens around the border? What happens to our currency? What happens to our ability to trade with other nations? It's healthy that people ask those questions, and we must be ready and able to answer those questions. On splitting communities: of course, communities wouldn't be split. I'm an internationalist, I'm a European, and all around Europe, you see nations that are very distinct and independent, but

whose borders are very, very permeable and porous, and where people live in one country and work in another, live in one country, receive health services in another, and so on. I have no doubt in my mind that a very strong and positive relationship between Wales and other independent nations within these islands would just mean a new relationship, and in many ways, I think us being independents, could bring us up closer together as nations with our own distinct histories and futures and common ground.

For those who you've said might be "indie-curious", but nervous about the practicalities of independence, how would you reassure them?

It's in being willing and able to ask the difficult questions, facing up to the challenges that would inevitably exist in any period of transition, and focusing on what the opportunities would be. People tend to focus on the negatives if they're not convinced yet. "What about the risk of losing the comfort blanket that we have in the UK? Now things aren't perfect, but at least we have the backing of being in the UK." I'd say in the debate on looking for a different kind of potential for our nation, you have to turn it on its head and ask, well, the problems that we have now, the endemic poverty, and the economic stagnation, they are with Wales being part of the UK. It is as part of the UK that we are underperforming economically. It is as part of the UK that we have children that are marked out very early in their lives as to what their opportunities could be. So, I'd ask people: why would they want to—without considering another option—lock themselves and their families and their communities and their nation in that kind of relationship that hasn't been working particularly well for us?

You have described Brexit as socially and economically divisive. People might legitimately see the parallels between that and the transition to independence.

People will often ask: "You want Wales to be independent, so you want that sort of independence, but you want to be part of something else. Isn't Welsh independence just the same as Brexit? Isn't it breaking away from something?" I'd say it's the complete opposite, because Brexit was driven by a desire somehow for the UK to be independent. Well, I'm sorry, by any rational measure, the UK was already independent. As is

France, as is Germany; these are independent nations, but who've decided to go into a union that worked pretty well. I'm not interested in Wales being an isolated or separate country. I'm interested in Wales building something new. Brexit was about breaking something up. Independence for Wales is about building something new, and an independent Wales is always from the get-go about how we build the closest relationships we can within another union. So, I would be very happy being part of a British union within a European Union. I'm not seeking that separatism. I'm seeking building something new.

As a Cardiff University graduate, how would you address people's worries about Welsh student graduates and the academic ties that might be lost between Wales and the rest of the UK, when the graduate market is particularly quite bad in Wales, especially outside of the big cities like Cardiff?

I have no doubt that we could build on our longstanding tradition that has been undermined, as part of the UK, in our higher education sectors. We have a very proud history in Wales of excellent universities that have felt the ravages of policy that have undermined them in recent years. I would want Wales to be a centre of excellence in higher education that is recognised and would absolutely be able to attract our students in. But I also make no secret of my desire to have more students in Wales choose to stay in Wales—not forced to stay in Wales, but choose to stay in Wales—and build lives for themselves that contribute towards the prosperity of our nation. That is something that just is not on the radar of government in Wales currently, where the model that we have for higher education essentially says that Welsh government doesn't care whether our young people stay in Wales or not. "It's totally up to them; they can do what they want." There is no other country anywhere that does that. How can a country prosper if it doesn't mind losing its talent?



IORWERTH

& CARDIFF ALUMNUS

Interview by Ruaidhrí Gillen Lynch

Plaid Cymru has gained lots of support from young people. How would you inspire hope and well-founded optimism in the young people of Wales?

Well, to be honest with you, I think we must be doing something right currently, given the polls that are suggesting that young people, in both the youngest age groups, 16 to 24, and 24 to early 30s are backing Plaid Cymru in very, very significant numbers. I'd like to think that we've built that by showing and acting in a way that means we're a listening party, that we take young people seriously. Our own young people's organisation, Plaid Ifanc, is very important to us. We put a lot of work into making sure that at least parts of our social media really, really speak to young people. A lot of it was generated by young people. The best people to influence young people is other young people. It's about building that critical mass of people who are excited about our prospects for doing things differently in Wales, for being brave enough and confident enough to take our own future into our own hands with a government led by a party made in Wales that's focused on the interests of Wales. Young people seem to be currently promoting that momentum themselves. Now, I want to do everything that I can as party leader, through policy, showing that we're supporting young people, supporting young families, to show that we're a party of the future in Wales, and young people clearly are our future. It's a good relationship we have with young people; I will do everything that I can to maintain that.

Young people are particularly concerned about climate issues, and, unfortunately, a lot of nations are falling behind on their commitments. How do you plan to actualise an image of a green Wales and what sort of policies would you put in place?

I often remind people that the first green MP in the UK was a Plaid Cymru Green MP, back in the early '90s. We have always been intrinsically linked as a party with environmental campaigns and campaigners, showing that we're serious about innovating for the future. Now, innovating is about innovating for climate justice. We know what the challenges are that we face and Plaid Cymru has always been very serious in acknowledging that we face a climate emergency. We tabled the motion calling for a climate emergency to be called in Wales because it was the right thing to do. But it's got to be backed up by all those elements of describing

how we go through that just transition to make sure that we in Wales play our bit. And sometimes the criticism by people who still don't believe in climate change or who are dubious about the chances to address our climate challenges is that Wales is very small, so it doesn't matter what we do: "We could go completely net zero today and it wouldn't make a slight bit of difference." As an internationalist Welshman, I will always believe that every one of us—as communities, as small nations—has a part to play, and Plaid Cymru has been very clear on that. And then you have policies on making sure that we drive jobs in the green economy. I think back to Leanne Wood's "Greenprint for the Valleys" published years ago, showing how jobs could be created in areas that were suffering from post-industrial decline and could really be to the benefit of Wales. We also talk about community justice within the climate agenda, because we need to bring people with us, and we have to make sure that we appreciate and respond to community concerns about industrialisation of our landscape, for example. That's something that we're very serious about. A good example is in my constituency, where there are huge plans for solar farms. The Tories say "let's not have any solar". And I say, well, no, solar is great, but let's do it in a way that works within our communities—for example, more dispersed models, and so on, which takes a little bit more innovation. So, Plaid Cymru is really serious about this, and mapping that out between now and next May is going to be a big part of our election pitch.

And if you're to be successful in May, the size of the Plaid bloc in the Senedd and representation across Wales is going to grow massively. How are you going to ensure in that scenario that good governance stays a key principle, and what does that look like to you?

We're at that point now, six months and two days away from the election, and it really is all now about making sure that we are ready for government. We have, if you like, a number of things we have to do alongside each other: going out and persuading people and talking to people and generating momentum behind our campaign. Caerphilly was very useful in that, but, alongside, it's preparing for government. And in all those excellent people who stepped forward to be Plaid Cymru candidates throughout Wales, I've tried to instil in them the seriousness of what we are trying to achieve here. I've been really impressed with the kinds

of people—really diverse people: from doctors, to those in education, to very young people, to more mature people. There's a real spread there. But it's all about everybody who's a part of that team—or that prospective team—for Plaid Cymru, and out of them, of course, Welsh government, and understanding that we are here to do a serious job. Nothing could be more focused on that, in my mind, currently.

If you had any general piece of advice for young people, particularly young politicians, what would you say would be the most important thing about understanding politics or even understanding Wales?

I think an interest in politics always stems from an interest in your community, an interest in what it is that's perhaps holding us back. I would urge young people who have views on how things are done to promote public services, to promote your community, to promote peace. It might be international affairs that drives them to really get involved. I would urge them to look at Plaid Cymru. I try to be honest with young people in saying that don't always look for the party where you absolutely agree 100% with everything that they say and do. But find a party that you think represents your values, represents your views of where you'd like your country, your community to go. We are a democratic party. I'd urged people to get involved and to make their voice heard, and through a democratic party like Plaid Cymru, that can happen. There's a young guy now who came on my radar a few months ago, started showing an interest in politics, stood in a community council election. I think he didn't win. He's studying politics, and now he's put himself forward to be one of the names on

the Plaid Cymru community list going to next May, because he's passionate about doing things for Wales and for his community. That really excites me, and I want to encourage more and more young people to get involved—and hopefully get involved through Plaid.





Pum ffordd i baratoi ar gyfer siopa Nadolig

Mallt Ladd-Lewis
Cyfrannwr

Wrth i fwrlwm tymor y Nadolig agosáu mae'n hawdd teimlo pwysau ariannol a phwysau i blesio. Ond, gydag ychydig o gynllunio, mae modd mwynhau paratoadau a dathliadau'r ŵyl heb ddifetha'ch cyfrif banc yn llwyr! Dyma bum ffordd syml i arbed arian cyn y Nadolig.

1. Paratowch o flaen llaw

Gyda chymaint o stoc newydd yn ymddangos yn y siopau mae'n hawdd cael eich llethu, ond, cymerwch gam yn ôl a phenderfynwch i bwy sydd angen prynu a beth, yn ogystal ag uchafswm ar gyfer pob anrheg. Mae apiau megis 'Notes app' a 'Microsoft To Do' yn ffordd wych o gadw trefn ar eich rhestrau siopa gan gadw popeth mewn un man. Ffordd wych arall ydy pen a phapur! Ceisiwch ddefnyddio côd lliw i wneud y broses o baratoi yn fwy hwylus.

2. Prynwch yn gynnar

Mae'r mwyafrif o siopau bellach yn rhyddhau eu stoc Nadolig wedi Calan Gaeaf. Cymerwch fantais o hyn oherwydd yn aml iawn mae tuedd gan lawer o'r siopau i godi prisoedd tua Rhagfyr. Mae modd i chi hefyd felly osgoi torfeydd mawr o bobl sydd yn siopa funud olaf.

3. Gwnewch bethau eich hun

Os nad ydych yn hoff o siopa pam ddim ceisio gwneud anrhegion neu gardiau yng nghysur eich cartref eich hun? Gallwch ddefnyddio templedi oddi ar y we ar gyfer cardiau; gwefan sydd yn cynnig cannoedd o syniadau gwahanol ydy 'Pinterest'. Yn hytrach na chreffft gallwch goginio hefyd. Coginiwch neu bobwch un o hoff ddanteithion aelod o deulu neu ffrind – pam lai?

4. Siopau elusen

Dyma ffordd arbennig arall a chynaliadwy i arbed arian cyn y Nadolig. Cymerwch eich amser i edrych a thwrio – synnec chi faint o bethau da mae modd dod o hyd iddynt mewn siopau elusen e.e. gemau bwrdd, ffilmiau a nofelau, dillad newydd sbon a llawer mwy. Os ydych chi eisiau prynu addurniadau Nadolig newydd, gallwch hefyd ddod o hyd i rai rhad yn y siopau hyn yn hytrach na'u prynu am bris llawn. Mae 'na ddigonedd o siopau elusen yng Nghaerdydd felly os gewch chi'r cyfle, cyfrannwch at achos da wrth wneud eich siopa Nadolig.

5. Apiau disgownt

Yn olaf, gwnewch y mwyafrif o apiau disgownt, yn enwedig os ydych chi'n fyfyrwraig neu fyfyrwr. Mae modd derbyn disgownts ar gyfer siopau a bwyta i bob math gyda'r apiau 'Unidays' a 'Student Beans'. Defnyddiwch 'Tesco Clubcard' a 'Lidl plus' (yn enwedig os rydych chi'n byw yng Nghathays) i arbed arian ar eich siopa bwyd adeg y Nadolig.

Y peth pwysicaf yw i fwynhau y dathliadau sy'n arwain at y Nadolig a pheidiwch â mynd dros ben llestri!

Ar Dân: Gall Ateb i Anghenion Cynhesu Cartrefi Caerdydd fod o dan ein Traed?

Ifan Meredith
Golygydd Taf-Od

Mae data newydd yn dangos gall tymhereddau dŵr daear islaw dinas Caerdydd gyrraedd hyd at 20°C. Credir mai gweithred uwchlaw'r ddaear sydd yn gyfrifol am y "llygredd tymheredd" yma.

Er mwyn canfod y data yma, driliwyd 61 o dyllau ar draws dinas Caerdydd fu'n casglu data am dymhereddau'r ddaear o dan y ddinas ers 2018. O'r bae i ganol y ddinas, a thu hwnt, roedd y dyfeisiau yma yn trosglwyddo data i sefydliad y 'UK Geoenergy Observatories' bob hanner awr dros y chwe blynedd diwethaf.

Ond mae yna gyfanswm o 234 o dyllau i gyd

ar draws y ddinas sydd yn casglu data ar gyfer sefydliadau gwahanol fel y 'British Geological Survey' sydd i gyd yn dangos yr un tueddiadau sef bod yr hyn sydd gyda Chaerdydd o dan y ddaear wirioneddol yn mynd i allu cynhesu cartrefi gan leihau'r angen am nwy.

Pe bai cynlluniau ar gyfer gwresogi geothermal yn cael eu cyflwyno, byddai'n newid y byd i 124,000 o gartrefi Caerdydd. Mae'n bosib fydd y cartrefi yma yn gallu cael eu gwresogi a'u pweru gan dymheredd y ddaear.

Ond sut, medde chi?

Wrth dyllu o dan y ddinas, bydd peiriannau 'Ffynhonnell Tir' (Ground Source) yn gallu cael eu defnyddio wrth i ddŵr oer deithio o'r pwmp i'r ddaear lle fydd yn cael ei gynhesu'n naturiol. Wrth ddychwelyd i'r pwmp, bydd y dŵr yn cael

ei gynhesu drwy broses anweddu a chywasgu sydd yn cynyddu'r tymheredd yn uwch.

Mae gan y dŵr cynnes yma y gallu wedyn i wresogi'r cartref ac yn fwy na dim, y gallu i roi cyflenwad dibynadwy o ddŵr cynnes i'r cartref.

Tra'n arloesol i Gymru, nid yw defnyddio 'geothermal' yn anghyffredin. Yng Ngwlad Yr Iâ, mae egni 'geothermal' yn cael ei ddefnyddio yn aml — dyma beth sydd yn gwresogi 90% o gartrefi'r wlad. Yno, mae'n manteisio ar actifurwydd folcanig yr ynys sydd yn cynhyrchu gwres daear naturiol.

Clywn yn aml am bryderon amgylcheddol a'r angen i ddod o hyd i ddulliau amgen i wresogi a chael ynni. Ai dyma dyfodol twymo ein tai felly?

Rygbi Cymru Tymor yr Hydref: Hyfforddwy'r Newydd, Dechrau Newydd?

Gwenllian Mason
Cyfrannwr

Bydd bwrllwm yn llenwi strydoedd Caerdydd wrth i gemau rhyngwladol tymor yr Hydref agosáu, gyda chefnogwyr o bob cwr yn ymweld â'r brifddinas mewn gobaith o fuddugoliaeth i'w gwlad.

Wedi aflwyddiant tîm Cymru yn y flwyddyn ddiwethaf, yn derbyn y llwy bren yng ngemau'r Chwe Gwlad, a cholli 18 gêm yn olynol tan chwarae Japan ym mis Gorffennaf, bydd y tîm hyfforddi newydd o dan dipyn o bwysau i newid y drefn.

Steve Tandy ydy'r prif hyfforddwr i olynu Gatland ar ôl iddo gamu nôl o'r swydd ym mis Chwefror, ac fe fydd yn gweithio gyda'i hyfforddwyr cynorthwyol, Matt Sheratt a Danny Wilson i drïo sicrhau buddugoliaeth i Gymru fis yma. Gwahoddwyd hefyd 3 cyn-chwaraewr profiadol

i fod yn rhan o'r tîm hyfforddi, Dan Lydiate fydd yn gyfrifol am yr ochr amddiffyn, Rhys Patchell fydd yn gweithio ar gicio a sgiliau'r chwaraewyr, a Duncan Jones yn cymryd rôl arweiniol gyda'r sgrym.

Roedd gan brif gyfarwyddwr Undeb Rygbi Cymru — Dave Reddin, ddigon o ffydd yn y tîm hyfforddi, gan ddweud "Mae dod a Duncan, Dan a Rhys i mewn ar gyfer yr hydref i weithio ochr yn ochr â Steve, Danny a Matt yn rhoi cydbwysedd da". Gyda'r 3 yn arbenigo mewn meysydd tactegol a technegol gwahanol o'r gamp, a chyfuniad o 151 o gapiau rhyngddynt, gellir hyderu fod y doniau a'r wybodaeth yn safonol, ond oes digon o brofiadau hyfforddi ganddynt i allu ymddiried ynddynt a'r lefel ryngwladol?

Mae Tandy eisoes wedi cyhoeddi'r sgwad o 39, gyda sawl newid. Bydd posibilid o waed newydd hefyd, yn dilyn sylwadau'r prif hyfforddwr yn ddiweddar; "Mae yna chwaraewyr hyn fydd pobl yn tybio bydd yn chwarae, ond yn y

pendraw mae cyfle i bawb wneud argraff ar sut maent yn hyfforddi a gweithredu yn y grŵp".

Ni ellir anghofio dychweliad yr asgellwr Louis Rees-Zammit yn ôl i Rygbi rhyngwladol chwaith, 32 o gapiau i'r wlad ac wedi bod yn rhan o sgwad y Llewod. Ar ôl ceisio'i lwc yn yr NFL am 18 mis, teimlodd nad oedd cymhariaeth i chwarae rygbi, a'i fod yn gwastraffu ei dalent yn America. A fydd Zammit yn gallu gwneud gwahaniaeth, a newid y darlun i dîm rygbi Cymru?

Yn ystod mis Tachwedd, bydd Cymru yn wynebu Yr Ariannin (9fed), Japan (15fed), Seland Newydd (22ain), a De Affrica (29ain), a chynhaliwyd bob gêm yn Stadiwm y Principality. Gyda bargeinion arbennig ar wefan yr URC i fyfyrwyr, rydych chi, fel fi, siŵr o fod yn barod am wledd o rygbi dros y wythnosau nesaf, gan obeithio gall Cymru oresgyn y cyfnod anodd sydd wedi bod, a dangos eu cryfder a'u hyder ar y cae i gael canlyniadau cadarnhaol yn y

Dyfodol Tîm Pêl Droed Merched Cymru

Ela Rhys
Golygydd Taf-Od

Ar ddydd Sadwrn y 25ain o Hydref bu i dîm merched Cymru wynebu Awstralia mewn gêm gyfeillgar yn Stadiwm Dinas Caerdydd. Er mai 2-1 i Awstralia oedd y sgôr derfynol roedd dros 11,000 o'r wal goch yno yn cefnogi'r merched mewn gêm oedd yn arwyddocaol am sawl rheswm.

Mae Jess Fishlock, Capten Cymru wedi bod yn rhan annatod o'r garfan ers ei hymddangosiad cyntaf ar y cae yn 2006. Ers hynny a hithau bellach yn 38 mlwydd oed, mae wedi derbyn 166 o gapiau dros ei chenedl, wedi sgorio 48 gôl ac wedi chwarae yn 67% o gemau pêl droed cenedlaethol y merched. Ond, bu i Jess ganu'r anthem genedlaethol am y tro olaf ar y cae ddydd Sadwrn wrth iddi ddatgan mai'r gêm honno yn erbyn Awstralia oedd yn dynodi ei hymddeoliad.

Er mai gorffen ei gyrfa mae Jess, dim ond dechrau mae Maredd Griffiths y seren ddisglair

ifanc o Drawsffynydd. Gyda hithau ond yn ddeunaw mlwydd oed ac yn ystod ei pherfformiad cychwynnol cyntaf i'r brif garfan, llwyddodd i sgorio yn dilyn yr hanner amser.

Tydi chwaraewyr ifanc, talentog fel Maredd yn ddim ond adlewyrchiad o'r garfan newydd, addawol mae'r Brif Hyfforddwraig, Rhian Wilkinson yn ceisio'i ffurfio wrth iddi fwydo mwy a mwy o ferched ifanc i'r tîm cyntaf. Derbyniodd Gwen Zimmerman, yr amddiffynwraig deunaw mlwydd oed ei chap cyntaf i'r tîm ddydd Sadwrn hefyd.

Yn 2021 bu i FAW (Football Association Wales) lunio strategaeth "Our Wales; For Her", cynllun 6 mlynedd uchelgeisiol wedi'i anelu i drawsnewid tirwedd pêl droed merched ledled Cymru. Yn ôl data gan FAW, mae nifer y merched sy'n chwarae'r gamp ers cyflwyno'r strategaeth wedi cynyddu 45% gyda 15,898 o ferched yn chwarae yn ystod tymor 2024/25. Mae'r swm sy'n cael ei fuddsoddi ym mhêl droed merched yng Nghymru hefyd wedi cynyddu 254% ers 2021. Nid yw'n syndod felly fod gan y Brif Hyfforddwraig ddisgwyliadau uchel

o'i thîm a bod cynlluniau ar y gweill ganddi i ffurfio carfan gryfach nag erioed.

Mae Ania Denham, merch deunaw mlwydd oed o Fotwnnog yn rhan o garfan o dan 19 merched Cymru ac yn chwarae i glwb Wolverhampton Wanderers. Mae hi newydd ddychwelyd yn dilyn teithio ledled Sbaen gyda charfan o dan 19 Cymru a dyma oedd ganddi i'w ddweud am y profiad o gael chwarae'r gêm ar lefel broffesiynol:

"Mae cael chwarae dros Gymru'n deimlad anhygoel ac yn deimlad sydd pob tro yn fy nghyffroi. Mi ydw i wedi cael y cyfle i weld y byd a chael cyfarfod cymaint o ferched sy'n mwynhau pêl droed, fel fi. Fy nod ydi cael chwarae i'r tîm cyntaf ac mae'r profiadau dwi'n eu cael gyda'r tîm o dan 19 yn fy mharatoi tuag at hynny."

Dyfodol disglair sydd i'w weld o flaen carfan merched Cymru wrth i fwy a mwy o ferched ifanc gael y cyfle i wisgo'r crys coch. Nid oes dwywaith felly fod Jess Fishlock wedi gadael ei merched mewn dwylo diogel.

Lily Allen's West End Girl

Heartbreak, Butt Plugs, and Madeline

Olivia Nilsen
Head of Design

Lily Allen's album *West End Girl* is her first release in seven years and is now one of the most talked about albums in the past few weeks. Countless videos, memes, and discussions of how David Harbour's PR team must be scrambling attempting to preserve his public image are surfacing, especially with the *Stranger Things* press tour ongoing. Allen and Harbour were married in 2020 and divorced early this year; however, until this album, it wasn't public knowledge that he had proposed an open relationship, setting them on the path for divorce.

Lily Allen will start touring the UK in March 2026. Tickets were released on November 7th and sold out within minutes—a testament to how fantastic the album is. Allen's album isn't your average breakup album; there aren't passing references to an amorphous affair or a mild slight towards their personality; *West End Girl* eviscerates Harbour's public image. The title song "West End Girl" begins with dreamy jazz music and the news that she got the lead in a play; this is in reference to her stage debut in 2:22 *A Ghost Story* in 2021. There are only occasional allusions to the first rumbles of unrest in their marriage: "You said I'd have to audition, I said 'you're deranged' / and I thought / I thought that was quite strange." The music suddenly cuts to one side of a phone call with the music bubbling in the background. It's like being told devastating news, the background falling away, and all you can focus on is the choking back of tears.

What's most impressive about this album is Allen apparently wrote and recorded it over ten days. The album bounces between the ethereal jazz-like sounds typically associated with Allen's music to songs like "Ruminating", which have heavy autotune, synth sounds, and a strong drumline. The killer line of that song being "If it has to happen, baby, do you want to know?". Some of the songs truly encapsulate the experience of

heartbreak, such as "Sleepwalking", which opens with a lullabylike beat and an almost whispered line "You won't love me / You won't leave me / You don't touch me / Still so needy".

All the visualiser footage has a hazy cast, giving it a dreamlike quality, which matches the overall tone of the album perfectly; each one features Allen looking off into the distance vacantly. In "Tennis", she sits on a bench looking off into the distance; two men walk past carrying a floral arrangement that says "husband" on their way to bin it. The kicker of this visualiser is her being hit with a stray tennis ball. This song explores her discovering his affair with Madeline, apparently a reference to Natalie Tippet, who came forward claiming that she was Harbour's affair partner.

Many of the songs are jaw-dropping; some left me laughing out of sheer shock: "Pussy Palace" is possibly the most talked about song for this line: "Sex toys, butt plugs, lube inside / Hundreds of Trojans, you're so fucking broken." "Dallas Major" explores the challenges she faced attempting to partake in their non-monogamous arrangement; the song seems to nod to their drastically different situations: "I'm almost nearly forty / And just shy of five-foot-two / I'm a mum to teenage children / Does that sound like fun to you?"

I truly urge you to listen to this album. *West End Girl* is more than just a breakup album, it's an exploration of varied sound and feels more like reading a diary than listening to an album.

"Love and Light Madeline"



Kit Robertson
Review Editor

A non-linear narrative, divided into three parts, chronicles the Creature's (portrayed by Jacob Elordi) desolate search for solace and companionship in the shadow of his creator's depraved genius. Particular poignance arrives in a segment centred around the Creature's kinship with a blind elder and his discovery of purpose and humanity in the retelling of fables about God's creation and parenthood of man. Even if feigned British dialects and accents by American actors occasionally grate, the performances are strong from talents such as Oscar Isaac, Christoph Waltz, Mia Goth, Charles Dance, and Ralph Ineson. The book-accurate portrayal of "the Creature" bestows a wistful torment to the character with which the audience can easily relate.

The film's director, Guillermo Del Toro, ought to be credited with achieving for the action horror subgenre what Christopher Nolan has accomplished for the genres of speculative and science fiction, crime, and action more broadly, albeit

Kit's Classic Corner

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari: Alienation in German Expressionism, Weimar Germany, and Early Horror

Thomas Hill
Contributor

Robert Wiene's silent picture *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* was birthed in the aftermath of German defeat in World War One. Germany was a country still navigating the economic fallout of the war, and feelings were still raw and disconnected from authority and reality—a habitat ideal for fostering creative expression regarding their dejection. It is no surprise that the movie, dubbed one of the "earliest horror films", can be considered amongst the most terrifying and discomforting watches across cinematic history. The German Expressionist movement, of which this movie was a part, was interested in *Weltanschauung*: "a view of the world, and a view by the senses, not by concepts." The aesthetic of *Caligari* is, then, not a purely stylistic matter, but a layered manifestation of the angst that permeated the zeitgeist and the minds of Wiene and writers Hans Janowitz and Carl Mayer.

"The viewer's sense of reality is obscured"

Wiene expresses this pent-up emotion through intricate set design and lighting, forging a style that is hallucinatory and trapped in a liminal dreamscape. One scene exemplifies this, where the eponymous Dr Caligari is captured in the latter stages of the movie, experiencing a hallucinatory episode, where the phrase "*du musst Caligari werden*" ("you must become Caligari") appears in writing that seems to be growing out of the surrounding trees. The viewers' sense of reality is obscured as it merges with the already fantastical mise-en-scène, concealing, to both the audience and Dr

Caligari, what is real or make-believe. Seemingly incorporating cubist influences to convey fragmented and abstract visions of reality, there is a surrealist sensibility to the set design. This mirrors the sense of disillusionment with reality that the film's creators had experienced in the volatile political and cultural landscape of Weimar-era Germany.

"The time in which it was born inexorably imprinted itself onto the work"

These designs are coupled with specific lighting techniques, namely a persistent use of chiaroscuro—the contrasting of light and dark—to reinforce this sense of alienation and visually isolating characters. The foremost example of this technique is found in the movie's most iconic shot: Cesare's unveiling. This specific usage creates a tunnel-vision-like effect that draws the viewer's gaze towards the pale face of Cesare, as it stands out in front of a sea of darkness. Cesare's prominence in the scene comes to emblemise his sense of subjugation under the doctor, an alienated distinction that, although he may not be aware of, he is utterly enveloped in.

Caligari is perhaps not as much of an analysis of alienation and the climate of the Weimar Republic as it is a product of both. The time in which it was born inexorably imprinted itself onto the work, suggesting alienation spawns equally alienated ideas and creations. The vicious alienation rendering it terrifying as a purely visual cinematic experience, but even more so when considering the realities that formed it. *Caligari* is the real-world, cinematic manifestation of this very concept.

Guillermo Del Toro's Frankenstein

An effective, if formulaic, telling of Mary Shelley's classic novel as a romantic parable about fatherhood



not to the same staggering heights of commercial dominance, nor the same extent of artistic veneration and critical acclaim. Within his realm of interest and admiration, Del Toro has harmonised more sophisticated conventions and subtext with commercial accessibility. Works such as 2022's *Pinocchio*, 2006's *Pan's Labyrinth*, 2015's *Crimson Peak*, 2017's *The Shape of Water*, his magnum opus (which earned him an Academy Award for Best Picture), and even 2004's *Hellboy* navigate fairytale themes of otherness, innocence, and experience; fascism and authority; and both the frailty and beauty of imperfection. Del Toro's films are at their most captivating when their narrative and stylistic sensibilities match and mirror the peculiarity and otherness of his subjects. *The Shape of Water* illustrates this perfectly.

However, just as Nolan resorted to creative safety and recycled the genesis, themes, and impetus of 2010's *Inception* with the enjoyable, but vastly inferior, *Tenet* (2020) for the purpose of mechanical and technological evolution, Del Toro labours a worthwhile but tired message. Whether deliberately or inadvertently, originality and intrigue have been sacrificed in favour of consumerist appeal. In the audience's reception of

and engagement with this rendition, there is now such a sense of detachment from the theatrical charm and warmth of even Del Toro's earlier works, let alone the traditional, old Hollywood cinematic experience, that it's challenging to engage with the individual merits of this specific adaptation. The film is distributed en masse and readily available within an environment that is entirely isolated from the community atmosphere, which grants films such as this one the most character and gravitas. Dan Lausten's consummate cinematography is somewhat frustrated and betrayed by an overuse of green screens and computer-generated imagery. Although the deliberate and measured use of practical effects, adept set design, and wardrobe offer a respite from these painfully contemporary practices, it's difficult to argue that the personality of Del Toro's filmmaking hasn't been stifled.

Simply put, it's hard to have any strong feelings or sentiments about *Frankenstein*. Del Toro may need to be more adventurous in his artistic experiments with the lost, lonely, and abandoned in future if he is to overpower the limitations and hegemony of modern Hollywood.

Royal Welsh's Pomona Revival

Ruby Collins
Head of Review

This year, Royal Welsh's internal theatre company Richard Burton have spent their autumn season putting on a series of three plays: *The Lonesome West*, *Hamlet*, and, my personal favourite, *Pomona*. Written originally by Alistair McDowall for the College in 2014; this play is not new to the university.

"The foundations of the play itself are of an interactive game"

Despite not being new to Cardiff, the play's themes still feel as fresh and exciting as they might have been a decade prior. This postmodern thriller explores ideas of alienation and ignorance and poses the question: "What would happen if we were all bystanders?" McDowall answers this with intrigue, obscurity, and mystery.

The foundations of the play itself are of an interactive game, much like *Dungeons and Dragons*, for those familiar. This is the trope that the mystery stands on: the characters we are familiarised with within the play, we realise as the plot pursues, are characters of the game, also. Olly, our protagonist, be-

comes a part of this simulation in a thrilling cyclical sequence where the play ends where we began—hence McDowall's obscurity.

Searching for her sister on Manchester's fictional "concrete island", Olly (Ashleigh Lai) encounters the sinister underbelly of the urban—a crime ring of organ theft, prostitution, and abductions. This "concrete island" is presumably constructed to echo Jay-Z's "Concrete Jungle", but ironically is not where "dreams are made of", but instead "a hole in the middle of the city" where dreams come to die.

The theatre was staged in a geometric round with the square stage, reflecting the Rubix cubes played with by characters as symbols of puzzlement and confusion. Not only this, but the alternate shading of the square floor felt like an optical illusion, contributing to this idea of obscurity. A visible mass of overhead lighting partially donated to this concrete asylum creation, as though the audience were in the mechanics of the crime den. Darker lighting, though, may have avoided the discomfort of seeing other audience faces across the room.

Generally, you could feel as the audience

"What are we ignoring in our own lives?"

that the actors were very much in a student company. Actor Joe Dolan (Charlie) stood out as the most convincing, naturally sinking into the role, which—including a long monologue about jizzing on the entirety of Manchester—was not an easy one.

The play opened with character Zeppo (Busa Wickramasuriya) telling Olly he "don't get involved". Specifically, he means the ins-and-outs of Manchester's property, most of which he owns. As the audience, we reflect this onto our own society. The fact we should do this was made abundantly clear as Zeppo munched childishly on McDonald's: "D'wywan a chicken nuggere?". Using McDonald's—an ethically concerning fast-food chain—encourages us to reflect on how we stand by in our own society, ignoring global conflict, climate crises, and suffering to not "get involved", like Zeppo.

Of course we learn that if Zeppo dug a little deeper into the ongoing of the city he dominates, he would discover the illegal activities exploiting Manchester's most vulnerable. This play doesn't seem to be one that provides strict arguments—remember its obscurity—but it is one that leaves you with questions about your own behaviour. What are we ignoring in our own lives, and what might we realise if we refuted complicity?

Recent Exhibition: Picture Post 'A 20th-Century Icon'

Thomas Cunick
Review Editor

The National Museum of Wales, situated in Cardiff, regularly plays host to numerous exhibitions. It has a remit to promote Wales' heritage and achievements through the arts on an international stage, as well as hosting travelling exhibitions as a recognised venue. It had gained a prominent reputation for hosting exhibitions that major in photography, partly due to the museum's efforts in developing archives of prominent Welsh practitioners. The current exhibition showcasing the history of the influential news and current affairs magazine *Picture Post* is part of that remit, as well as linking directly to Cardiff.

Picture Post was the British equivalent of similar news and journalistic magazines across Europe and North America and ran from 1938 to 1957, a time when most news was delivered via print. Crucially, it spanned the period of the Second World War and the annexation of Europe into the Cold War of the 1950s. Magazines of this nature mixed "softer" stories within the more hard-hitting and significant world events to offer their readers a complete experience of the times they lived in. Crucial to the success of such magazines was the quality of their photography, and many key photographers used such magazines to develop stories and positions within their work. The notion of the photo-journalist begins during this period.

Picture Post was celebrated as being one of the first news magazines that gave more prominence to the photographs than the accompanying text, and, as such, was a key development in British photographic history. *PP* photographers like Bert Hardy are synonymous with this period and his Box Brownie images became iconic *PP* covers, exemplifying a "carefree post-war Britain". *PP*'s covers had a striking design and logo but always gave prominence to the front cover image, for an impactful presence on the news kiosk. One of the most striking exhibits here is the collage of its covers as a historical overview of the range and reach of the publication.

The Cardiff exhibition reflects this as it captures each issue in terms of its design and layout, as well as background and historical information and memorabilia from *PP*'s history, with different sections being themed to different aspects of life and expectations of the time. It was good to see the exhibition majoring on Welsh stories and how the country was seen through the eyes of this magazine; the Cardiff section shows how Tiger Bay and Butetown were depicted post war as a growing multicultural area. Also, it showcased the amount of coverage given to the drowning of the Tryweryn Valley, Capel Celyn, and the efforts to protect the area from its eventual fate: the 1965 flooding to create the controversial Llyn Celyn reservoir—an event that has over time become central to Welsh nationalist identity.

The exhibition also shows *PP*'s efforts to cover international events, such as a powerful section on South African Apartheid and extensive detail on conflicts from before, during, and following the Second World War. Sections that showcase the London Blitz, the Suez War, and the Korean War produced iconic images from the history of photo-journalism, and were featured alongside cameras, proofs, and layouts.

The exhibition discusses the editorial processes in selecting and developing the stories and the picture-editing processes that created such iconic spreads. This behind-the-scenes aspect of the show underlines how much effort and industry was used in creating what was the most popular weekly publication in Britain during the period of its publication. The exhibition also points out just how influential this publication became—its editors, writers, and photographers moved to publications such as the *Sunday Times Magazine* (amongst others), which housed many of the images and articles from *PP* to this day.

It was great to see a visiting exhibition of this nature being held in Cardiff. Its curation was to be inclusive and this was prominent in the way it showcased Wales and the wider world in its pages.

Are you a Faithful or a Traitor? *The Traitors Concludes its Celebrity Edition*

Emma Sansum
Contributor

The Traitors is a beloved competition series built on strategy, suspicion, and deception. A team of players compete in a series of missions, winning up to £100,000 for the prize pot. Hidden amongst the players are the "Traitors", tasked with eliminating all the "Faithful" before the game ends. Every episode consists of a nightly murder and a "Round Table" where the Faithful must attempt to identify and banish a Traitor, securing the winnings for their team.

The star-studded roster of *The Celebrity Traitors*, with the likes of Sir Stephen Fry, Celia Imrie, Jonathan Ross, and Tom Daley, drew in a record-breaking viewership as the first episode averaged 15 million views. Set in the 19th-century Baronial-style Ardross Castle, amongst the vast, green beauty of the Scottish Highlands, this gothic refuge serves as the primary location for the ferocious game.

Returning as the host, Claudia Winkleman guides the celebrities through mental and physical missions as they zealously try to win money for their chosen charity. In the first Round Table, Winkleman selects her three Traitors: Alan Carr, Cat Burns, and Jonathan Ross. Now that the Traitors are distinguished from the Faithful, pop star Burns states that "the game has begun". With comedian Carr nervously observing

that "my thing was to go under the radar—I think I've pole-vaulted over it". Unable to withhold laughter, comedian Carr privately discloses to the camera "I am worse than Linda", referring to previous contestant Linda Rands, notorious for her over-the-top reaction that almost revealed her traitorous identity.

Singer-songwriter Paloma Faith is first to fall victim to the Traitors, murdered in plain sight by Carr through the simple swiping of her hair off her face: "I've gone and murdered one of my best friends." Betraying his long-term friend, this early death sets up the season for a calculated web of deception and deceit; yet, arguably, these values are key to an individual's success in the game.

Celia Imrie's snooping and Joe Marler's theory of the Traitor team being led by "the big dog" Jonathan Ross against the Faithful team led by the "Faithful big dog" Sir Stephen Fry, are some of the Faithful's notable observations, attempting to divide the group into innocent and murderous. Even Olympic diver Tom Daley suspected Kate Garraway's "flabbergasted" reaction as incriminating evidence for her betrayal.

Surpassing the halfway mark, episode seven saw all three Traitors confide in their concealed position, Carr considers "I have no faith, ironically, in the Faithfuls... I'm bursting with confidence as a Traitor". However, this conviction was swiftly undermined as "big dog Jonathan" undergoes banishment: "I have been all throughout the game completely Faithful... to the Trai-

tors!" Even to his final word, Ross remained a cleverly deceptive Traitor to the game.

With more face-to-face murders in the dramatic chessboard revelation of Lucy Beaumont's murder, and Imrie's dinner-time killing—"parting is such sweet sorrow, Celia"—the dramatic finale sees two Traitors (Carr and Burns) and three Faithfuls (Joe Marler, Nick Mohammed, and David Olusoga) head off face-to-face in the deciding Round Tables. This central forum saw the collapse of alliances as Marler not only betrays Burns (resulting with her banishment), but, in a shocking twist of events, his former ally Nick Mohammed betrays him for his implicating parting apology to Burns: "I'm sorry."

Mohammed, Olusoga, and Carr remain seated amongst the candlelit Round Table as the three finalists for the season. In a tense scene twisted with trust and deception, the glowing green firepit signals the group's decision "to end the game together". Unbeknownst to Mohammed or Olusoga, a Traitor lies beside them, with Carr revealing "I am and have always been a Traitor". Yet, this dramatic conclusion captured the hearts of the nation as Carr collapses, professing "I'm so sorry, it's been tearing me apart". Carr's instrumental effort, claiming the £87,500 prize pot for children's cancer charity Neuroblastoma UK emphasises that "all that lying was worth it, all that money is going to them, they are a wonderful charity".

“Dignity, Determination, and Courage” A New Presidential Era for Éire

Ruaidhrí Gillen Lynch
Head of Politics

The Inauguration Day of Catherine Connolly as 10th *Uachtarán na hÉireann* opened for many with ponderings on what the theme of her tenure will be, and indeed, if it will be mirrored in the portrait of tomorrow’s Ireland. Some insight into how Ireland under her presidency may appear—to its people and to onlookers worldwide—was provided by the closing words of her bilingual inaugural address: “I will embrace the role of the president with dignity, determination, and courage.”

Before Connolly came Michael D Higgins, who was admired in roughly equal measure for his integrity, bravery, and willingness to pose difficult questions. As for his *grá mór* (great love) for his Bernese mountain dogs, President Higgins and his wife Sabina were fittingly met by a guard of honour of the breed as they left *Áras an Uachtaráin* on their last day. Higgins’ tenure as president was perhaps the most internationalist of all to date, pushing constitutional boundaries and focusing on social justice and morality. Over his fourteen years, world leaders were welcomed to the *Áras* in memorable fashion by President Higgins’ happy (and yes, truly mountainous) best friends Bród, Síoda, and Misneach. Bród and Síoda have sadly passed away, but we can be sure that Misneach, whose name means courage, will have very much approved of President Connolly’s inaugural speech, having understood from it that he is still a star of the show, after all!

This new chapter does begin with Connolly appearing ideologically aligned with Higgins on many positions. They share a deep appreciation of the Irish language and Ireland’s heritage, along with an affinity for the Irish diaspora worldwide, those living in the North from all traditions, and the “new Irish” who have brought with them valued contributions and diversity, which form part of the promising future envisaged for Ireland. President Connolly is keen to show a steady-hand approach alongside the straight-talking for which she has become known, and it is clear from her address that she can envisage a path to a desired united Ireland, but the president has also been clear that all steps taken on that path must be steps taken with the consensus of all, for all. Dignity, determination, and courage may be the most robust signals from Connolly of what will direct her presidency, her relationship with the Irish people, and her influence on Ireland’s relationship with

the world, especially in places where peace has long been sought. It is significant that President Connolly chose to highlight the legacy of 1998’s Good Friday Agreement and painted a picture of the road travelled so far, in recognising the achievements of her three most immediate predecessors.

Cognisant that even with her history-making landslide victory of 63% of first preference votes (Ireland uses a proportional representation electoral system), history was also made on election day by the never-before-seen percentage of spoiled ballots (almost 13%), Connolly has stressed her intention to be an *uachtarán do gach duine* (president for all the people) and she comprehends the varied concerns and desires of the wider public. Nonetheless, President Connolly emphasised her intention to act in line with the principles that those who voted for her believe in. Her speech referenced climate change, housing, Ireland’s neutrality, and the important role the country has played in international peacekeeping, indicating the issues by which her presidency may come to be defined. The courage cited in her inaugural address was also a public announcement of the consequential role she intends Ireland to play on the international stage.

Connolly’s decision to articulate a form of leadership that respects the constitutional role of the president emphasises that she will not shy away from testing the boundaries of what that means (with regard to acting on issues), which is a conception of the presidential office deviating from the traditional understanding. This may be an appropriate response to the global picture today, in which Ireland’s authority and influence derive from its bold voice on matters of international law, justice, and equality—an approach that President Higgins also embodied.

Ireland’s presidential role is contingent on *Bunreacht na hÉireann*, its constitution, but it is set out only foundationally, allowing precedents to take different approaches and draw different meanings from the role. This is arguably an intelligent way in which the office can contain the flexibility to allow the holder to be reactive to the needs of the politics of the day; it has, in recent eras, resulted in a pattern of overarching values characteristic of an *Uachtarán*’s individual tenure. Connolly’s message is a message for and from the Ireland of today. It is one of continued internationalism, outspokenness, and a solid emphasis on the space in which Irish language, culture, and influence will progress.

What the UK Left can Learn from the Irish Presidential Election?

Oliver Dermody
Editor

With independent, left-wing, candidate Catherine Connolly winning the Irish presidential election in late October, what can the UK left learn from her surprising victory? Whilst Ireland’s political system is very different from the UK, Connolly’s victory gives a clear lesson to the fractured UK left, that unity and principled morals can lead to electoral success. Ms Connolly was able to unite many of the left-wing parties, including the big three of Sinn Féin, Labour, and the Social Democrats, an impressive feat considering the left’s love of infighting and moral grandstanding, and without which would have led to a closer race with Fine Gael’s Heather Humphreys. The UK left should attempt to replicate this. An ununited left consisting of Labour, Greens, Lib Dems, and Your Party will steal valuable votes away from each other and will give Reform a clear path to victory. If Nigel Farage is a fascist, as Zack Polanski claimed on LBC, then surely the right thing to do, the only thing to do, is to unite the left against Reform UK. Polanski might be optimistic when looking at polling numbers—they have jumped to second place in some polls; however, the lead that Reform has over the rest is daunting, and a coalition of the left under Labour is the smart thing for Polanski to propose, in return for a leftwards shift in Labour’s policies and a harder line on Israel. I have stated that it should be a coalition led by Labour, simply because Labour will never accept a coalition in which their candidate is not positioned for the top job—it would damage their reputation too much. Your Party should agree to this too or disband entirely. The little momentum they gained at its inception has fizzled out due to infighting, and this may be the only way they can keep

relevant as a political entity going forwards. The Lib Dems would be vital for a coalition of the left, as even though they claim to be a moderate party situated between Labour and the Conservatives, they have pledged much further left-wing policies than Labour, and they would be vital in the coalition to retain the centrist swing voters that abandoned the Tories in the last election. Another lesson that the left can take from Connolly’s victory is the hard line on Gaza. Connolly’s strong condemnation of Israeli military action resonated well with the electorate who were frustrated by the political silence on Israeli war crimes, Labour should take notes. The fracturing of the Left’s vote can be partially blamed on Labour’s reluctance to condemn Israel. A

more decisive stance would help unite the left, if they can agree on the language of condemnation that is. Connolly’s victory shows that left-wing politics isn’t dead in Europe, and whilst far-right parties may loom large in many nations, if the left unite and take principled stances they can remain an attractive option for voters.



Photo, Declan Bree

Afghanistan’s Lead Poisoning Crisis

Arielle Melamed
Contributor

In the province of Ghor in central Afghanistan, pieces of scrap metal, mainly old car parts such as casings and body panels are hoarded in a yard outside a workshop. Bit by bit they are melted down in a dilapidated furnace that regurgitates thick black smoke into the atmosphere. This recycled metal is then remade into kazans – these cooking pots are a staple of an Afghan kitchen and can be found in every province in the country. And it is these Kazans that a mounting body of evidence suggests are slowly poisoning the country. A few years ago, a study carried out by the National Institute of Health found that Afghan refugee children who had resettled in the Washington state had the highest blood lead levels out of any other immigrant or refugee population. It was concluded that this came directly from pressure cookers the families had brought with them from Afghanistan with one pressure cooker leaching 650 times more lead than the recommended childhood limit. Afghanistan has leading rates of lead exposure worldwide with the average blood lead level exceeding that of countries such as China by fivefold. It is estimated that nearly all Afghan children

have at least some degrees of lead poisoning. The consequences of long-term exposure can range from brain and central nervous system damage often leading to convulsions, coma and even death, to learning problems and behavioral difficulties. It is also shown to have contributed to a greater incidence in violence and criminality in adulthood. The sudden decline in crime rates globally, but especially in America, has been linked to the removal of lead from paint and petrol. And whilst some scientists are still skeptical of a direct causal link between lead and crime rates, the lead-crime hypothesis – which shows the correlation between falling levels of lead in the blood of small children and the reduction of violent crime is staggering.

Afghanistan’s past has been nothing short of tumultuous. From the latter part of the 20th century to the present day the country has been occupied by Soviet troops, US led national forces and in between has fallen into the hands of various militant groups. The Taliban, who currently control Afghanistan, have been designated a terrorist organisation by various countries such as the United States, Canada and New Zealand are notoriously violent and oppressive, particularly towards women. Countries which have endured decades of conflict like Afghanistan also tend to have higher levels of lead, mainly due to remnants of abandoned munitions and the wreckage of

military machinery which pollute the air. Whilst there were some cautious attempts by the US backed government led by Hamid Karzai to resolve issues with contaminated kitchenware, the results were ultimately fruitless. Over a decade later, the Telegraph reported that none of the Taliban health ministry officials appeared to have any plans for tackling the country’s health crisis or were even aware of the problem in the first place.

The Taliban’s consolidation of power and their dominance over Afghanistan can be attributed to many things, the fall of the Soviet-backed government in 92’ and the subsequent civil war which allowed the country to unravel, the following insurgency after US and NATO forces withdrew in 2021. However, amongst all these various reasons that contribute to a radical group being able to have such a violent grip on a country, could the lead which is slowly poisoning an entire nation be a silent factor? Does the lead poisoning, merely exacerbate the problems plaguing Afghanistan? Or is it at the root of why the cycle of violence continues? Only one thing is clear, if not resolved the ramifications for the country will be severe and enduring.

big ideas...

The Young Person's Guide to Fighting Reform UK

Isaak Hewitt
Contributor

In a political climate characterised by division and disagreement, one thing seems unanimous: this country needs a reform. With experts fearing an economic crisis, government officials regularly facing scandal, and frustration on all sides of the political spectrum at seemingly an all-time high, something needs to be done. However, is Reform UK the saviour we need, or are they no better than anybody else? All evidence supports that, despite a very impressive propaganda campaign, the answer seems clear: no.

Yet, statistics do not reflect that. In opinion polls for the Wales 2026 Senedd Election, Reform UK ranks just second place, at 21%; Plaid Cymru lead the polls (28%), and Green Party (19%), Labour (15%), and the Conservatives (12%) round out the top five. This raises two questions: firstly, why are Reform UK, despite issues, receiving so much support, and secondly, what can young people do about it? In my view, the solution is to converse genuinely and openly with those you disagree with to find common ground, but before getting to that, we need to understand the first question by considering the core of that frustration alluded to earlier.

The truth is the British people feel a very understandable anger at the state of the country, and by considering different perspectives, we can better grasp the specifics of why people are annoyed and what must be done. Granted, this anger can manifest in disgusting ways; see the frightening rise of racism towards immigrants, for example. I like to believe, though, that most people are not inherently hateful. That the rise of bigoted rhetoric coincides with rising disdain for the state of the country is not a coincidence. More likely is that Reform UK weaponise that legitimate frustration for illegitimate purposes. Their rhetoric of hatred gives people someone to blame, and by providing an "enemy," (more accurately, a scapegoat) their incompetency is ignored.

So, with the support of Reform UK understood, we can start to consider the main

question: what can young people do to fight back? I feel that therein lies the issue: everybody needs to stop thinking of it as a fight at all. When already things are so fractured, arguing and blaming on all sides only furthers division, when we all need unity. The us-versus-them culture on all sides is fundamentally counter-productive, and mocking or belittling those you disagree with only alienates them further. Young people, specifically, have a clear problem in that they spend so much time explaining how awful Reform UK are and providing alternatives within their own bubble that the message never reaches the people who need to hear it.

Yet, for as much as many young people have weaknesses that must be addressed, so too do they have undeniable strengths, particularly in three key areas: empathy for people of all walks of life, awareness of what is happening in the political climate, and the ability to clearly, concisely communicate ideas. Why not use these, then? Surely, to reiterate, the best course of action is to start a dialogue with people you disagree with to find answers. Young people have an immensely valuable perspective, but it is only half the puzzle, and we, as a society, need the whole.

Furthermore, many see Reform UK as the solution, so certainly communicate and deconstruct why they are not that, but also provide alternatives. In Wales, Plaid Cymru is the best chance at defeating Reform UK, so explain how their economic, social and political policies might better serve their needs.

As young people, we do not have to change the world alone. As inspirational as they are, we need not be the next Greta Thunberg or Malala Yousafzai. Simply by communicating with people with different views from our own, from all backgrounds, by listening and pooling knowledge, we can all find solutions to our problems. Reform UK are not the way, but we will find the way. Together.

Interviewing Lindsay Whittle: Reflections from His Office Table

Aneuirn Davies
Deputy Editor

This is Dafydd Elis-Thomas' old office," Lindsay Whittle told us as soon as we entered his new base-camp inside the Senedd. The borderline emptiness of the large room left everything to the imagination. It wasn't surprising considering he'd just won a historic election a week and a half before we met and was just reestablishing his footing in the building. The first thing that hit us was the sheer scale of the office. We all had to admit that it was around double the size of what we'd expected. But, in reality, it felt fitting for the man who'd just won a vast majority of Caerphilly's votes. Sitting down at the round table in the centre of his office, we got to chatting, and while Ruaidhrí and Oliver led the discussion, I had a chance to look around. The most glaringly obvious thing to anyone who entered was the large amount of "Congratulations!" and "Llongyfarchiadau!" cards that spanned his entire windowsill. It drew my eyes away from the wrapped view of the back of the Senedd. Whittle is clearly a man admired by many. I can only imagine that they'd been filled out by family, friends, and constituents

alike. The Plaid Cymru poster on Whittle's wall, right next to his desk, heartily exclaimed "Save Our Coalminers!" and calls back to a time when politicians truly cared about the working class. Throughout the interview, my eyes constantly crept back to it. Every statement Whittle made was a clear reflection of the poster's meaning. It was as though the poster was an external piece of him, telling us what he believed in before we even had a chance to ask him anything. Whittle telling us that his office was that of ex-Plaid Cymru leader Dafydd Elis-Thomas' may have been an off-handed comment, but it certainly speaks of more. Elis-Thomas may be a controversial figure to some in Welsh politics, yet it's undeniable that Whittle now has some rather large shoes to fill. From our interview, it seems he intends to

do just that – in order to help his constituents in Caerphilly. Its safe to say that the office mirrored the man, not flashy and straight to the point. If some brief reflections on his office have interested you, you ought to head over to the Gair Rhydd website and read the full interview for reflections on Wales of the day, some fun stories about his childhood and some broader reflections on the future of Caerphilly and Wales as a whole.



Image: Wikipedia Commons 'Lindsay Whittle'

Can Lucy Powell Change the Course of the Labour Party?

Rowan Stanger
Politics Editor

Following the resignation of Angela Rayner, the Labour Party has elected Lucy Powell as deputy leader. This was the first time since the General Election that members have been able to select a candidate, expressing how they feel about the new government. Powell's victory was an awkward result for Kier Starmer who sacked her from his cabinet just 7 weeks before. Throughout her campaign, she argued for Labour to change its direction to serve a country that is "crying out for change". This secured her enough votes from members dissatisfied with Starmer's leadership that she was able to defeat her opponent Bridget Phillipson. However many from both inside and outside the party are sceptical about how much change she can make given the current political climate and her standing in the party. Powell was able to spin this narrative arguing her position outside the cabinet allows her to be a "full time deputy", a role Phillipson could not take on as education secretary. This also gives her more freedom to speak against government policy, not being bound by collective ministerial responsibility. Her election came with mixed responses, many raising concerns that her election threatens party unity. Thangam Debbonaire, for example, has spoken out about Powell since

her election criticising her for undermining the Prime Minister. This has also been used by the opposition to criticise Starmer with Conservative Chairman Kevin Hollinrake claiming he doesn't have the "backbone" to stand up to his deputy. Powell's victory speech set out her plans to hold the government for "not being bold enough in delivering the kind of change we promised". She also presented herself as a champion for party members left behind in decision-making as the party moves towards the center-right. She emphasised that "debating, listening and hearing is not dissent", challenging Starmer's attitude towards those in the party that don't align with his politics. The speech included criticism of the government's economic policy, relying on trickle down economics when issuing cuts to disability benefits and winter fuel payments. She is also a vocal supporter of lifting the two child benefit cap which pushes 40,000 children into poverty each year. Internal debates around the economy are more pressing than ever as we approach the budget later this month. Labour was elected on a manifesto promising no tax rises for "working people". Despite this, Chancellor Rachel Reeves has hinted towards a u-turn on this promise with taxes expected to rise to a total of £30bn. Powell has spoken out for the need to stick to the pledge arguing "it is really important we stand by the promises that we were elected on". Powell's election has come at a historic low point

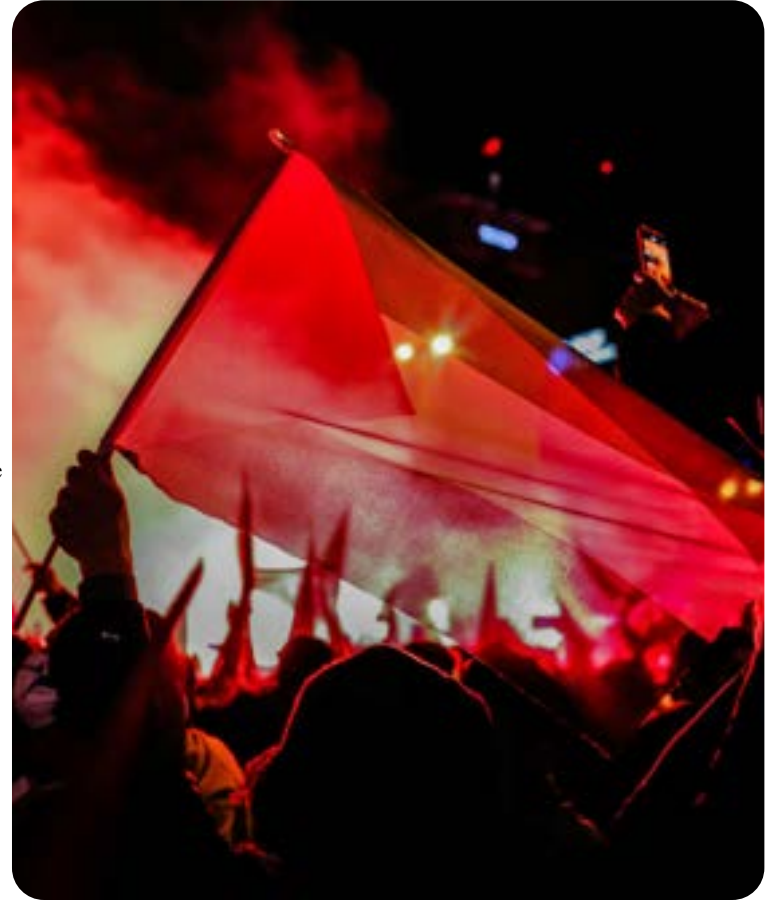
in Labour support, the party now polling at just 15%. This puts them behind Reform, Conservatives and the Greens and indicates a loss of 375 seats. Last month also saw a by-election loss to Plaid Cymru in Caerphilly – a seat previously held by Labour since the Senedd's creation in 1999. The new deputy leader, however, is confident that she can turn this around with a promise to start immediate door-knocking as soon ahead of local elections in May. However, with a 16.6% turnout and 8% between the two candidates it would be difficult to argue members were sending a particularly strong message in electing Lucy Powell. This could, in part, be due to lack of support from unions. Unite, for example, refused to endorse either candidate as "neither represents the change required". While campaigning on a platform of change, her politics is not nearly as radical as her opposition suggests, identifying as an advocate for "decent, moderate Labour people" and "mainstream politics" at a time where appetite for this style of politics are low across the political spectrum. Current polls predict Farage in number 10 at the next election and, on the left, Green Party membership has risen by 80%. With even more progressive members of the party such as Lucy Powell clinging onto centrist policies, Labour remains in a weak position going into elections next year, both locally and in the Senedd.

The Devastating Result of the Faltering Ceasefire in Gaza

Jessica Ling
Politics Editor

On the 29th of September 2025, a press conference between Donald Trump and the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took place to negotiate a peace plan that should mean the end of the war in Gaza. The Gaza Peace Plan, or the Israel-Hamas ceasefire, is a twenty-point plan that had been agreed upon by Israel and Hamas and was officially put into place on the 10th of October, with the terms of the deal aiming to put an immediate end of the war and start rebuilding Gaza through humanitarian aid. Some of the terms of this ceasefire include the withdrawal of Israeli forces to an agreed upon line where they will wait for hostages to be released by Hamas, suspension of Israeli military operations, the release of 1,700 Gazans detained since the 7th of October 2023, 15 Gazan hostages remains to be released for the release of every Israeli hostage that remains, and for humanitarian aid to be sent to Gaza to rehabilitate their infrastructure, hospitals and their economy. Despite the official ceasefire being in place since the 10th of October 2025, there are continued attacks from the Israeli army on Gaza which violated the initial terms of the deal. One of the attacks during the ceasefire was cited by the official Palestinian News Agency Wafa and Israeli drone strike that had opened fire on civilians as they surveyed what remains of Palestinian homes, resulting in the death of 45-year-old Fardid Hassan Qdeih in Abasan and adding to the 93 Palestinians that had been killed since the ceasefire. The devastation is not limited to this increasing number in deaths, it also includes the heartbreaking reality that families returning to their homes in Gaza must face when there is nothing left to salvage from their lives before. Said, a father of two, returned to Gaza to find something he could save and saw nothing but ash where his home used to be. Alongside these continued attacks, there have been reports of Israeli authorities preventing the water and sanitation that was promised to Palestine from reaching them. These reports outline how the delays

have been a result of a rerouting of the humanitarian and commercial trucks that are trying to reach Palestinians and heavy traffic along the new route that was given to them by the Israeli authorities, temporarily reducing the amount of trucks in their convoys until there has been an assessment of the road conditions and they are certain that the aid will reach Gazans. Dr. Stephane Dujarric, a United Nations spokesperson, describes that these reports are “deeply concerning” and voices her fears that these efforts will continue to be delayed throughout the ceasefire. As a justification for their breach of the ceasefire agreement, the Israeli military claims that Hamas has been prolonging the return of the remains of Israelis that had been killed in Gaza and had already gone against their part of the plan. In response to these claims, Hamas stated that they have not been able to locate return the remains because of a lack of heavy-duty equipment that is needed to dig through the rubble where the bodies of both Israelis and Palestinians are believed to be buried under. Even if the attacks were to stop now and the aid were to reach the people in Gaza, there is the risk that they will still be under Israeli blockage and would not be able to return their economy to its pre-war levels for an estimated 350 years and it would take decades for the United Nations to gain the \$53 billion required to start rebuilding the Gaza strip. Charity associations such as the Palestinian Red Cross and the International Red Cross are relying on donations from the United Kingdom to help in the long-term recovery for Gaza and ensure that the aid reaches the people of Palestine.



Where is Soft-Power in an Age of Growing Aggression?

Advait Gangawanwale
Contributor

In a world dominated by missiles, tanks and economic sanctions, a subtler form of influence is quietly shaping the battlefield of global opinion: soft power. First coined by political scientist Joseph Nye, soft power is the ability to “get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments”. His words bite especially hard when applied to a war-riven era.

The paradox is this: while hard power grabs attention, it’s often the war of narratives, values and culture that delivers long-term influence. Winning a war today means not only defeating your enemy militarily, but also winning legitimacy, sympathy, and narrative dominance.

The 2024 Brand Finance Global Soft Power Index shows how fragile and contested this terrain has become. The USA remains number one, yet countries deeply engaged in aggression have seen their reputations and influence tumble. Consider Ukraine. Under Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the nation has turned its struggle into a global narrative of democracy under siege, resilience framed in real time via social media, diplomacy and mass mobilisation. The result is a surge in global sympathy and alignment far beyond bullets fired. Meanwhile, Russia which was once a strong soft power, thanks to their vibrant culture, literature and global energy ties is now seeing its attractiveness diminish substantially as its hard power approach increasingly overshadows its cultural appeal. In the Middle East, the occupation of Gaza and the subsequent military campaign have taken a toll on the soft power of Israel. Long-standing strengths in advanced technology and innovation have been overwhelmed by adverse global perceptions of the conflict. The index records a significant drop in “reputation” and “influence” for Israel. This gives a warning that advanced economies are not immune to soft-power erosion. On the flipside, countries

less involved in overt aggression continue to make gains through cultural exuberance and diaspora connections. India, with Bollywood, yoga, and a multiculturalism, and South Korea, with K-pop and K-drama, are building durable influence beyond the battlefield. What they show is that cultural exports and lifestyle appeal remain powerful even amid strategic rivalry. Yet even cultural power is not immune to geopolitics as China presents a compelling case. Its global manufacturing infrastructure and media campaigns have expanded familiarity and influence, but reports show the lack of legitimacy and trust in some quarters which is undermining its soft-power potential. According to the British Council in its 2024 report ‘Soft Power at a Turning Point,’ soft power is increasingly aligned with strategic national interest rather than simply cultural exchange. These trends make it clear that primarily, aggression corrodes attraction. A nation may win wars but lose reputational ground if its values and narratives collapse under global scrutiny. Secondly and more importantly, soft power in wartime is not passive. It becomes intensely active and contested, built on narratives, digital diplomacy and moral positioning. Finally, in today’s age, building soft power is no longer just about exporting culture or selling it to the global audiences. It increasingly depends on institutional credibility, governance and peace-building, at least on paper. A recent quantitative study finds that stable, non-violent societies and greater national policies are major determinants of soft power, perhaps even more than traditional cultural resources. As we think about the role of soft power today, the world still watches what nations believe and project, not just what they do. The battles may be fought on the ground, but the wars of influence are fought through values, legitimacy and storytelling. In the age of growing aggression, the soft power advantage lies in how well a country sustains its moral narrative, institutional trust and cultural resonance while the world watches.

Centrism Prevails in the Netherlands, Evidence of a Brighter Europe

Jake Hopper
Contributor

In a time where both extremes of the political spectrum are growing across the world, the Centre in the Netherlands have prevailed. Rob Jetten, the leader of the Democrat 66 party has won the right to lead coalition talks and form the next Government. In an election that had a robust turn out (78.4%) the Democrat 66 party gained 10.6% putting them at 16.9% of the vote, just behind this the Party for Freedom, led by right wing populist Geert Wilders, lost 6.7% of the vote landing them at 16.8% of the vote, just 0.1% behind the D66 party. In third place, the centre right VVD (peoples party for freedom and democracy) led by Dilan Yesilgoz lost 1.1% of the vote, positioning them at 14.2% overall. In 4th the GL/PVDA lost 3.1% but remain strong at 12.7% of the vote. But why has this shift specifically happened in the Netherlands? Firstly, effective campaign messaging has enabled the D66 Party to engage with voters on issues they see close to their heart. These issues range from housing, health care and the cost of living. For example, a D66 Government would aim to build 9,000 new houses per year of which “50% is affordable and available to middle class incomes”, along with 10 new cities being built to free up affordable housing. Furthermore the Democrat 66 party aims to not raise the annual 385 euro excess charge, and to grant further autonomy for healthcare officials. Secondly, the decline of the far right party led by Geert Wilders has led to more voters turning to D66 who are looking for an alternative option. Furthermore, many mainstream parties have ruled out forming a coalition Government with the PVV, with even the D66 ruling out inviting them to join a coalition with concerns of their reliability over withdrawing from previous coalitions. The centre left bloc PVDA has refused to enter Government with Gert Wilders

party due to ideological circumstances. Jetten D66 victory appears as a standout result in Europe, with parties from both sides of the political spectrum rising rapidly across the continent. For example, in France, far right party The Resemblant National is currently polling at 35% and the leftist political alliance Nouvea Front Populaire (nfp) polling at 24%, with Macrons centrist party The Ensemble dropping to 14% due to the recent political crisis. Likewise, just across the border in Germany the far right party AFD is joint top of the polls with the incumbent party CDU, as both are polling at 25.6%, however AFD is rapidly growing in support whilst the CDU is starting to fall. Back at home, right wing party Reform UK continue to top the polls, along with left wing progressive Green Party who seem to be gaining momentum in the Polls. It is quite clear that the Netherlands electorate have decided to vote in a different manner to their European counterparts, but what does this mean for the country? It means a tone back in extreme political rhetoric we are seeing across Europe from far right and far left parties and a vote against populism. Furthermore, it means voters core interests, such as housing, immigration and healthcare are being tackled, as they were central to D66 campaigning. It means the Netherlands have chosen a more pro-European Union path and a rejection of Wilders eurosceptic administration. But Rob Jetten still needs to lead negotiations to form a coalition, with right wing party PVV being seen as too extreme, especially for left wing parties to enter a coalition with, they are almost excluded from negotiations, meaning Rob Jetten has two options to form a coalition. A broad centre left coalition with the GLPVDA, CDA and possibly the VVD, or a centre right Coalition with VVD and the CDA.

Japan’s First Female Prime Minister *Symbolism or Substantive Change?*

Janey Gash
Contributor

Sanae Takaichi - Japan's first female Prime Minister, who marks a massive milestone step towards equality in one of the world's most patriarchal states. Elected on October 21st, 2025, she has instilled hope among much of the Japanese population through her politics and identity. She is an 'ultraconservative' member of the Liberal Democratic Party and voters are exceptionally inspired by her 'outsider, rebellious' personality as a former heavy metal drummer and motorcyclist. She marks the smashing of the 'glass ceiling', overcoming the invisible barriers to women advancing to high leadership levels, such as Japan's low ranking at 118th out of 148 countries in gender parity (World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Report 2025). Some now say, 'Japan is back'. Facing a challenging economic scene, she aims to combat inflation with her 'Sanaeonomics': aggressive government spending and investments in AI and biotechnology sectors to stimulate growth, while simultaneously increasing defence spending. Her popularity is furthered by lower certain taxes plans whilst tightening controls on foreign workers, reflecting the growing nationalism in Japan. These stances have led to high approval ratings of 83% (JNN poll). Her success and power should be promising for gender equality and Japan's future, but is it? Controversial to this public optimism, Takaichi's Thatcherite ultraconservative politics reveal that no ceiling has been smashed... She is in many ways actively working against intersectional feminist liberation. Firstly, Takaichi supports male-only succession to the throne, reiterating the long-standing notion of female submission and inferiority. Secondly, in response to Japan's current debate on whether it should be legal for women to retain their maiden name after marriage, Takaichi's pro-establishment stance keeps it illegal. However, married surnames are a powerful symbol of women losing their identity upon marriage, showing Takaichi's conformity to oppressive institutions. Additionally, her opposition to same-sex marriage and scepticism of gender quotas

reflects the voice of her 'idol' Thatcher, who said she owes nothing to women's liberation. This is further echoed by her Trumpism; following their meeting on October 28, their close relationship reflects her tolerance for misogyny. These positions perpetuate the confinement of women to society's margins; ultimately making equality even more inaccessible. Conservatism UPHOLDS misogyny. The main harm of Takaichi's election is its contribution to the narrow definition of what type of woman can hold power. There is a quota seen in Marine Le Pen, Giorgia Meloni, Thatcher and so on, that to survive in top roles, women must align with the conservative framework of an 'acceptable woman'. Female leaders seem to be credited when emphasising nationalism, traditional family roles and strong state ideals rather than challenging patriarchy. This is a paradox: only by aligning with the very system that oppresses them, can women achieve power. Takaichi's election symbolises a strategic 'fem-wash' for the LDP, which has been in power almost continuously since 1955 but is currently reeling from scandals, particularly the misuse of a ¥600 million slush fund. Takaichi therefore represents a 'new era' for the party, intended to invigorate voters and convey party transformation. Despite the descriptive politics of Takaichi (her gender) representing a radical shift in patriarchal Japan, she is deeply rooted in continuing the traditionalist agenda. This fem-washing highlights the large step from symbolism to substantivism in descriptive politics. Just because Takaichi broke gender barriers doesn't mean she has broken the structures of inequality. Her gender and 'outsider' character description are purely symbolic and indeed politically useful, rather than meaningful. Her nationalist conservative priorities neglect the rights of minorities or intersectional feminism. It remains unclear whether she will increase female political inclusivity. Still, it is clear that she reveals the persistence of the patriarchy in Japan. Will this narrow definition entrench the future for women in power globally? Or is it better to have this 'acceptable' trope of a woman in power over none at all? Does that mark the failure of equal democracy?

Modern Propaganda: *Conditioned Consent*

Sophie Scott
Politics Editor

YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU!" We've all seen the posters before. Pointing fingers, flexing biceps, the type of moustache that now only exists on a pringle can. For most, propaganda feels like a relic of the past, something confined to museums and history textbooks or so we are led to believe. Yet, in the age of smartphones and political social media campaigns, propaganda has not vanished, it has simply just evolved. Today's propaganda no longer shouts from posters, it has slithered into notifications, adverts, and social media posts. It no longer manipulates us to fight in a war, but instead cultivates our social behaviour, our emotions, and our political loyalties, all through the language of marketing. Even Duolingo's green owl, with its duality of cheerful reminders and guilt-stirring emails, re-enacts the psychological tactics once reserved for national campaigns. The differences between marketing and propaganda have become non-existent. Every brand, political movement, campaign seeks not only to sell but to create a social reaction: a new pair of jeans comes with controversy and attention; a soft drink advert with a social cause and profits. Every comment, like, and share has become a silent political act, one we rarely consent to but constantly repeat. Modern political language has perfected its own jingles with the use of tricolons. "Save the NHS." "Stronger for Scotland." "Stop the boats." These three word slogans are used for more than branding linguistic style; they can be used as indicators for unity or wielded as instruments of control. Designed for memorability and emotional digestion, they allow parties to distil complex agendas into soundbites. They create the illusion of clarity, of conviction, of aims. This simplicity is deliberate. When slogans dominate political debates, it is all smoke and mirrors to avoid real scrutiny. They make parties feel familiar and trustworthy, discouraging voters from searching through manifestos and checking the details of policies. Political communication has changed to favour comfort and

familiarity, not truth and information. As elections draw near, this pattern intensifies. Slogans appear on podiums, buses, and media backdrops. Hopeful political contenders repeat them until they become background noise, training the public through repetition. Pavlov treats his dog when a bell rings, and Farage is trying to have you eat out of his hand too. Look at the posters all around you, the words they are using; the signs are literally right in front of you. Brexit was a Pandora's Box of modern propaganda's power to weaponise the real frustrations of the working-class. "Take Back Control", words to indicate power to the people and a chance of something new but instead just repackaged austerity as freedom. It turned anger away from inequality, years of lacking investment and from poorly managed governments towards immigration and Brussels by framing Machiavellian arguments as objective logic. Contemporary politics thrives on the narrative of individual power: "You matter. You decide. You vote." Yet behind this rhetoric lies a numerical reality. Parties do not win through individuals, they win through aggregates. Voters become data points in a broader equation, and their importance extends only as far as their ballot can be persuaded. Successive governments, regardless of the colours of their ribbons, have swapped caring about our beliefs and instead just track our engagement. What differs modern propaganda from its poster predecessors is precision. What was once broadcast to nations now whispers to us as individuals. Instead of rallying together for collective causes, we are pushed into digital echo chambers to fight among ourselves over jobs, housing, and identity. In the 21st century, propaganda no longer asks us to fight for our country. It ensures we are too divided to fight for anything at all. Until we enforce rules of transparency into political advertising, democracy will remain a contest of manipulation rather than choice.

COP30: *What we Should Expect and What we do Expect*

Madeleine Bette-Bennett
Contributor

The irony of last years' COP being hosted by an oil state can only be rivalled by the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest to build a highway to this year's summit. COP30 will be held in Belem, Brazil, 10th -21st of November, considering that the controversy began before the negotiations did, how effective can we expect this conference to be? Last years' COP focused on enabling progress towards reduced emissions through financial agreements. Delegates painstakingly agreed to an annual fund of \$300 billion, with an aspirational sum of \$1.3 trillion annually by 2035, from developed to developing countries. Whilst a specific budget is progressing from previous years of perfunctory promises, it still falls catastrophically short of what is required. Indias' delegate Chandi Raina told the committee that 'This document is little more than an optical illusion. This....will not address the enormity of the challenge we all face.'

With the somber acceptance that overshooting the Paris target of less than 1.5 degrees of warming is inevitable, COP30 aims to address 6 thematic pillars in the Action Agenda. These focus on energy transitions; stewarding biodiversity, transforming agricultural systems, urban resilience, and fostering social development, to be underpinned by financial and technological commitments. The 6 pillars are divided into 30 key objectives. It is expected that objective 1 and 4 (tripling renewables and transitioning away from fossil fuels) will be agreed upon this year. Renewables maintained their price advantages over fossil fuels, with solar 41% cheaper and wind 53% cheaper than the lowest-cost carbon alternatives. Moreover, objective 30, information integrity in climate change matters, will likely be accredited, as public and media scrutiny grows with awareness and interest in daily discussions. Many other objectives, such as land restoration (8) and reforestation (5), are unlikely to result in clear agreements, as stakeholders involved still harbor conflicting opinions. Additionally, we should expect objective 27, artificial intelligence, to be

incredibly divisive, and should not hope for a unanimous decision. As the Caribbean attempts to recover from one of the worst Atlantic hurricanes in history, and another record hot year comes to a close, we can anticipate a renewed sense of urgency from policy makers to utilize the conference to review the success of last years' solutions and improve upon them. Historically, public outrage and the exploitation of the developing world haven't tugged at the heart strings of COPs' most influential players. Nevertheless, these entities can be relied upon to act in their financial interests. Fortunately, as UN Secretary-General Guterres stated 'Clean energy is smart economics- and the world is following the money'. Whilst it seems surmounting social and financial pressure may set the stage for a more productive COP; the absence of a US delegation cannot be understated. It is likely that much of this year's negotiations will have to devise energy into damage control of the expected lack of US engagement during Trumps' term. Moreover, whilst China voluntarily committed to last year's aid budget, the nation cannot be pushed into any greater

commitments this year due to its official title as a developing country. How can significant progress be made when two of the world's largest polluters either wholly exempt themselves or slip through terminology loopholes of the declaration. However, it would be reductionist to suggest slow progress is no progress. The COP conferences are still important forums for change; we can only hope that those attending are not there to save face and 'ditch their obligations'. COP29 laid a foundation for serious financial commitments to be enacted this year. It is reasonable to propose that this year's discussions will continue to result in concrete agreements as climate consequences encroach closer to the comforts of our own homes. How fruitful these results would be without the aid of the US remains to be seen. Any action, if taken, may be a relative improvement but not a realistic way out of the race against the climate clock.

'Turn the Volume Up!': New York Chooses Mamdani

Oskar Hyams
Contributor

In the early hours of Wednesday morning, Democratic candidate Zohran Mamdani was declared the Mayor Elect of New York City, following a resounding electoral victory. The self-declared democratic socialist (and member of both the Democratic and Democratic Socialists of America parties) won the election with 50.4% of the vote, 6.2% more than his main electoral rival independent (and former Governor of New York state) Andrew Cuomo. Following his victory, Mamdani had a simple four-word message for President Trump, telling him to 'Turn the volume up' as he declared he had received a mandate for change. With Mamdani winning 5 out of the 6 boroughs in New York, what does his mandate for change look like and who stood against him to push for a different vision for New York?

Zohran Mamdani, originally born in Uganda and the son of an academic and an acclaimed film maker, started his professional life in New York as a housing counsellor. This saw him help low-income households fight evictions. In 2020 he was elected as a state assembly member for the 36th District. An early sign of his grassroots approach as an assembly member was when he took part in a taxi driver hunger strike, fighting for debt relief, which

they achieved. In October 2024 Mamdani announced his intention to stand as New York Mayor. Throughout his campaign, his policies had a consistent objective of achieving social justice, through the tackling of the affordability crisis. His policy pledges include: free city-wide bus services; rent freezes to alleviate the cost of living; city owned grocery stores to help affordability; and his aim to triple production of union-built housing. Zohran states he can raise \$5bn in revenue

for these projects through the raising of corporation tax on the top 1%. It is in large part thanks to these policy promises and his mobilisation of voters through social media that



he has been elected the first Muslim-American mayor of New York.

While Mr Mamdani's victory is impressive, it would be remiss to ignore the other two candidates who together received 48.7% of the vote share, so who are they and what did they stand for? Mamdani's biggest rival throughout the campaign was independent Andrew Cuomo, who received 41.6% of the vote. At first glance, Andrew Cuomo has an impressive CV with 4 years as Attorney General and 10 years as Governor of New York. However, Democratic

Party members didn't believe this was enough to choose him as the Democrat candidate, possibly due to the controversial end to his term as governor. This saw him resign after the At-

torney General found him guilty of sexually harassing 11 women in the workplace. This led to Cuomo losing the Democrat primary by 13 points to Mamdani and being forced to stand as an independent. As an independent though, Cuomo gained the endorsement of President Trump, and he stood on a platform of tax relief for low- and middle-income families and the recruitment of 5000 new NYPD officers. However, despite Trump's endorsement, Cuomo still also faced Republican candidate Curtis Sliwa. Sliwa is the founder of the Guardian Angels group (made up of unarmed volunteers who fight crime in New York) and stood on a platform of a full-time subway crime force being established, the implementation of 'efficiency savings' and increased SEND support in schools. Although both candidates' policies did resonate with just less than half of New Yorkers, it still was not enough to stop Mamdani (who Trump called a 'Communist' becoming Mayor Elect).

Mamdani will be sworn in as Mayor in January, and it appears his grassroots campaign has inspired several European leftists to study and learn from his success. French, British and German left-wing parties have sent representatives to study his media strategy on the ground. This leaves the question: is the Mamdani style of campaign the future of the lefts approach to elections? Only time will tell.

Image: Wikipedia Commons 'Zohran Mamdani'

American Affairs: An Age of Weaponised Polarisation

Hugo Keenan
Contributor

On the 10th of September, on the grounds of Utah Valley University, the prominent conservative figure, Charlie Kirk, was shot and killed. Instantly, due to the capabilities of the digitalised world we live in, an act of heinous violence was known by the world, read about, pictured, streamed. News of the event was spread like wildfire, and an eruption of vehement debate followed in the days and weeks after the event. This aftermath is precisely the soil in which the roots of maliciously driven, weaponised polarisation grows, for it's times like these that are fertile with opportunities for political leverage, and the facilitation of the pushing of a hateful agenda through blame and finger pointing to an under-represented minority.

What's more, this occurrence is far from new. On the 27th of February, 1933, tragedy struck Berlin, as the Reichstag building, home of the German Parliament, was engulfed in a fierce inferno. Much like the most recent

shooting of Mr Kirk, the news was instantly widespread, it shocked and saddened millions across the nation and eyes were cast to the political leaders for an answer. This frantic, tragedy driven search for answers put better reason in a back seat and allowed for Adolf Hitler to whip up support behind his claim that it was a radically left, communist attack on Germany, which necessitated tangible political and legal retribution. This is today largely understood to have facilitated the establishment of the authoritarian Third Reich that we know demolished German democracy and set Germany to war with the democratic west. In the now chronically digital age we live in, after a similar event with similar fallout, the spread of such a vicious and divisive polarisation can, and does, take root with much wider participation and at unprecedented speeds. Because of this we are looking at a more dangerous situation where a moment of shock and tragedy can be capitalised on and utilised tenfold by political leadership to whip up a dangerous frenzy of weaponised polarisation. The fact is that this climate of weaponised polarisation is, as we have just explored, certainly capable of

giving far right authoritarianism a strong upper hand.

Education in the United States being the way that it is today, these historical parallels and patterns will simply not be drawn by the general public, the blame shifting and finger pointing they are fed will inform their misled judgement. The sheer size of the nation combined with constitutionally granted state sovereignty, makes sweeping, base standard education reforms near on impossible to come by, as seen by Bush Jnr's failed 'no child left behind' attempt in the early 2000's. Systematically failed by their government, the US people are now more than ever susceptible to such manipulation by a maliciously opportunist leader, like Trump, all in all creating the ferocious storm that allows divisive, weaponised politics of polarisation to thrive in the United States today.

Now with Republican senators and House members publicly voicing their condemnation of the shooting of Charlie Kirk come clear undertones, and at times, complete blame on a kind of imminently dangerous political agenda on the left, which they

emphasise must be dealt with. Similar to Nazi propaganda after the fire in the Reichstag, the politically loaded blame being laid on the left again. This sets the tone for history to repeat itself in the form of popularly backed authoritarian reforms pushed by the Republicans to deal with this "imminent threat" that they've created.

The truth is that history will repeat itself; through watching closely the next months of Trump's term in this settling aftermath, further right authoritarianism in the US will rise as a form of 'republican retribution' born out of the martyrdom of Charlie Kirk. We can see this play out already, with the most recent announcement by Trump of the Charlie Kirk remembrance day on the 14th of October, keeping the event fresh in the minds of Americans and stamping it on the annual calendar, so to fully leverage this lamentable vicissitude in the interest of his far right administration in years to follow. And keep a keen eye on American affairs in the months and years to come, because leverage it he will.

Silencing Dissent: The Quiet Death of Free Speech in Trump's America

Ceris Lloyd
Contributor

Journalists at the Pentagon are now being told what they can and cannot say, marking a worrying moment for American democracy. Under new rules from Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, journalists covering what's now being called the Department of War must sign an agreement promising not to gather or report any information that has not been officially authorised for release. Reporters also face tighter controls on their movements inside the building, with escorts required to reach senior offices or even military press departments. It's censorship under the guise of national security. The policy has been met with strong opposition from major media outlets across the political spectrum. Organisations such as The New York Times, ABC News, Fox News and CNN have refused to sign on, citing serious concerns over press freedom and the potential stifling of independent journalism. Their stance is simple: if journalists can only publish what they are told, the press is no longer free. So far, only reporters from smaller, far-right outlets like The Federalist, Epoch Times and One News America, alongside a few fringe and foreign media outlets, have agreed to the terms. The Pentagon insists the measures are about protecting national security, yet many journalists worry that this sets a dangerous

precedent for increased government control. It's a distinctly Trumpian move: an attempt to control political narratives and punish anyone who refuses to comply. For a country that calls itself "the land of the free," the quiet obstruction of free speech has become one of America's most unsettling contradictions. Beyond restricting what information reaches the American public, this new policy reflects a broader trend in Trump-era politics, where criticism is framed as betrayal, and institutions once meant to inform the public are increasingly expected to serve political narratives. When access to information is conditional on silence or compliance, the press is no longer free; it becomes an instrument of control. The real danger isn't the loud silencing of voices, but the quiet self-censorship that follows when people start to fear the consequences of speaking freely. Repeatedly, the President has attacked the press, labelling them "the enemy of the people". Such rhetoric fuels distrust and may pressure news outlets to self-censor, or risk losing access and facing threats from the President himself. When this happens, journalists will begin to soften their reporting. They learn silently to avoid certain questions, to avoid the loud implications of what should not be asked. The result is a press that may look free on the surface, but operates under an invisible hand. The alarm bells ring beyond the Pentagon's new rules. The fear

is journalists internalising these pressures, sacrificing their work for compliance. The government won't need to silence them; they'll start doing it themselves. That is how free speech dies, not with sudden repression, but with quiet compliance. A climate that encourages self-censorship is already apparent, making bona fide media restrictions feel like the final nail in the coffin of free speech.

Trump's relationship with the media has always been combative, slowly but surely strangling the press under his chokehold, with access tightened, narratives controlled, and questioning the Federal Government labelled as unpatriotic. This chokehold isn't just dangerous for American journalism; it threatens the very core of democracy it is meant to uphold. Free speech in America is slipping away, one compromise at a time, one fearful pause, one unasked question. When journalists must seek permission to inform the public, they stop being watchdogs and become mouthpieces. Every hesitant story, every untold report takes a piece of freedom with it. The Pentagon's new rules might seem bureaucratic, but they symbolise something far deeper: that information can be owned. When silence becomes the safer choice, it's already too late. Democracy thrives only when people can speak freely, and in Trump's America, that freedom is under attack.

Cardiff Triumph as Welsh Rivalry Reignited

Steffan Williams
Contributor

There was a distinctly Welsh feel to Round 4 of this season's Carabao Cup, which took place last month. Championship side Swansea City hosted Premier League giants Manchester City. And a north-south Wales rivalry was resurrected when Cardiff City visited the Racecourse to take on Wrexham, for their first meeting since 2004.

“Swans’ best efforts not enough”

At the Swansea.com Stadium, the home team competed well and briefly threatened to cause an upset when Gonçalo Franco placed a shot from the edge of the 18-yard box, beyond the reach of James Trafford in the Man City goal, off the post, and into the net. That was to be one of only two Swansea shots all game. The visitors put themselves back into control with six minutes of the first half remaining when Jérémy

Doku levelled with a deflected strike. The Swans did well to withstand the Man City pressure for much of the second half, until two late goals from Omar Marmoush and Rayan Cherki sent the 8-time winners of the competition through to the quarter-finals.

“Cardiff claim Welsh bragging rights”

There were only 1,626 in attendance the last time Wrexham faced Cardiff at the Racecourse, in the short-lived FAW Premier Cup. The intervening 21 years have been dramatic, however, and much has changed for both clubs. Cardiff have moved stadium, been to the Premier League, reached two cup finals, changed club colours, and been relegated to League One. Wrexham's recent, well-documented, rise has seen them reach the Championship and overtake Cardiff in the footballing pyramid. With much change, and much at stake, both fanbases will say they have legitimate claims to being the biggest club in Wales; a sellout crowd greeted the teams this time.

Both managers made changes to their starting lineups, but it was the visitors who best settled into the occasion and dominated the early exchanges. Their superiority was converted into a goal within the first 15 minutes — Yousef Saleh followed in on an Omari Kellyman shot to notch his sixth goal of the season and give Cardiff a deserved lead. The visitors' supremacy continued and should have produced at least one more goal before the break; City talisman Rubin Colwill hit the bar from an excellent free kick, and Ronan Kpakio spurned a golden opportunity from a header.

With the home fans subdued, Wrexham boss Phil Parkinson looked to his bench and made a triple substitution, which paid dividends within seven second-half minutes. Ex-Bluebird Kieffer Moore equalised for the home side in typical fashion, powering in a header from inside the 6-yard box and letting the away end know where his loyalties now lie. Cardiff were nonetheless unrattled, and with twenty minutes left on the clock a deep cross found defender Will Fish, who clinically side-footed a volley into the bottom corner, for what proved to be the decisive

goal. “One team in Wales” was the chant that boomed from the away end after fulltime. There may be a debate on whether it can be considered a “derby”, but there is no doubting the significance of this Welsh rivalry to City fans.

“Revenge and semifinal on cards”

The well-deserved reward for Cardiff is a home quarter-final tie, against world champions Chelsea, to be played in December. The last meeting between the sides, in 2019, is unlikely to invoke many pleasant memories for City fans; a controversial late Chelsea winner was instrumental in relegating the Bluebirds from the Premier League. So, with a chance for revenge and a place in the semifinal for only their third time at stake, there will be no shortage of motivation for Cardiff. Promotion from League One might be their main objective for this season, but City fans may be forgiven for starting to dream of Wembley.

Rugby Roundup: Nations Series Ramps Up

Luke James
Sport Editor

The second week of the Nations Series has come and gone. We have seen giants brought to the limit, red cards making the offending team somehow play even better, and drama across the board. Wales put on a valiant, but ultimately doomed, effort against Argentina. Ireland thumped Japan, England, and Fiji went toe to toe, Scotland brought New Zealand close, and 14-man South Africa left France in the dust. This time, we'll focus on the Wales and France fixtures.

The Principality gave its best roar despite the smaller crowd. Wales ran onto the pitch with little support from analysts, but massive hope. Argentina scored twice early, slicing through the back line and finding gaps in the wide channels. But Wales managed to score twice to bring themselves level, and suddenly the once silent Principality erupted into a cacophony of “WALES” chants. However, the hope was reduced when Argentina slotted a penalty and scored a try. And then another. Wales were suffering when they went into the changerooms at half-time—the score 31–14. Wales ended up scoring two more, with captain Jac Morgan dislocating his shoulder in the process, ruling himself out of the rest of the series. Tomos Williams provided a stellar performance, and his second-half line break was just one slither of his excellence. Blair Murray, as well as scoring one, provided a huge defensive shift. However, Steve Tandy's first game in charge finished with a defeat: 52–28. On paper it looks bad, but on the pitch, there were signs. Louis Rees-Zammit made his first Wales appearance since the 2023 Rugby World Cup Quarter Final exit in Marseille, having come back from the NFL. Rees-Zammit showed promise and pace on the wing, and so did Josh Adams. The Welsh scrum was decent at times, but they will not look forward to facing the All Blacks and the World Champions South Africa. Ben Thomas was also lucky to not see red for his alleged kick to an Argentinian face.

It was a standard Argentinian performance, with shaky sections but, overall, decent enough. Santi Carreras was flawless off the tee, and Geronimo Priscantelli crossed the whitewash twice.

To France's Les Bleus, Six Nations Champions and ranked third in the world com-

ing into the fixture. The atmosphere was electric, and the occasion was like no other. Billed as the ultimate grudge match—being potential revenge for the 2023 Quarter Final exit that saw France bow out on home soil, losing by only a point—it was perhaps the most important 100-cap match in Springbok history, with Siya Kolisi walking out to add another chapter to his already long rugby story. The inspirational leader was on full show in Paris, and his humble nature shone through. As I have argued in a previous issue, the greatest captain in rugby, if not sporting history, getting one of the ultimate individual achievements could not have had a better moment. Two early Penaud tries gave France a well-deserved lead. Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu's tee kicking, potentially influenced by pressure, was far from perfect, missing two penalties in the first half, alongside a conversion in the second. The score sat at a cagey 14–13 for a while after Cobus Reinach blasted his way through the French defence and into the corner. And then came a match-defining moment. Lood De Jager hits Thomas Ramos on the head during a tackle attempt. A straight red is given and the crowd erupts. South Africa will be down to 14 for the remaining 42 minutes. The Boks trail by a point as they go into half-time, and Kolisi does not run back out onto the pitch, knowing that the Springbok game plan needs a hybrid like André Esterhuizen rather than a flanker on the pitch. France win a penalty, and Thomas Ramos' kick seals off their scoring for the night. 17–13.

A man down, and seemingly out, the Boks kick into a higher gear. Esterhuizen scores from a maul, and Bielle-Biarrey is yellow-carded for a deliberate knock on. Then Grant Williams picks a wonderful line and adds another five. Sacha FM adds the extras. And then he scores a stunner, looping through the French back line and sealing the match. Les Bleus look on, dejected. Revenge will have to wait. France were outplayed, despite the man advantage. They were worn down and despite their best efforts, they were demolished. South Africa kicked up a gear after the red card and did not look back. The World Number One is clear and obvious, and it will take some challenge to beat them.



An Overview of CUFC's BUCS Campaign

Mael Le Paih
Sport Editor

The 2024/2025 BUCS campaign is in full swing for Cardiff University Men's Football Club, with all three squads making a strong impression across their respective leagues. The 1st team are battling it out in the highly competitive Men's Western Tier 1, facing off against top university sides such as Cardiff Met and Bristol University. Meanwhile, the 2nd team are performing in Western Tier 2, in a tightly contested division. The 3rd team, competing in Western Tier 5, has a growing sense of momentum. Across the board, Cardiff's squads are demonstrating the necessary qualities as they push for success in both league and cup competitions.

The Cardiff University Men's 1st team impressed on Wednesday, winning 4–1 at home against Plymouth Marjon. Cardiff have 7 points from 4 games and sit 2nd behind Cardiff Met's 2s.

“The season has been very up and down so far, starting with a narrow 3–2 loss to Cardiff Met 2's at home.”

However, the team has not lost a game since picking up 7 points from an available 9.

Going into the fourth game of the season against the Plymouth Marjon's Men's 1, Cardiff University's 1st team were unsure as to how the game would play out, as Plymouth have been a strong side in previous years. These worries were quelled early on with a well-worked move that left Sam Macleod one-on-one with the keeper. Macleod's effort was saved, with the ball rebounding to Giles Basson, who scored his first of the game to put Cardiff 1–0 up. Cardiff capitalised on the early momentum, with Bason netting a penalty before half-time, following a clumsy tackle by a Marjon Defender.

The second half continued the good fortune of the first, with Bason scoring his third goal, completing the hat-trick. As the game progressed into the latter stages, Marjon picked up a red card for dissenting, before scoring for 3–1. Any hopes of a comeback, however, were curbed when Albie Turner sealed the game with a chip for 4–1.

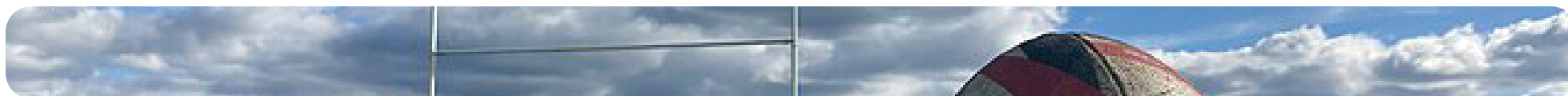
Cardiff University 1's look to continue carry their good form into the cup campaign where they face Bristol's 1s in the Men's National Trophy. Cardiff have yet to face Bristol in the league so this will prove a big test for the side.

Looking over to the second fixture on Wednesday for Cardiff Uni FC, the University 3s played the Cardiff Medics' 2s in their league campaign, ending in a tight 2–2 draw. This game was the first encounter between the medics and the university team for several years and this rivalry was displayed on the pitch. The medics' 2s took the lead twice, both times the Cardiff Uni 3s equalised, leaving a point shared on the table for both sides. The University 3s sit 2nd in the BUCS Western Tier 5 and the Medic 2s 4th after 4 games.

The 2s did not have a game this week as they prepare to meet Bristol University's 4s in the Men's Western Conference Cup. The 2s sit 4th in the league after 3 games played.

With all three Cardiff University men's teams showing promise across their respective leagues, momentum is building as the season progresses. The 1s will look to impress in the cup as they face Bristol in the National Trophy, while the 2s prepare for the Conference Cup tie. Meanwhile, the 3s continue to perform after their draw against the Medics.

“Cardiff's squads are well-positioned to make a statement across their respective BUCS competitions this season.”



Beyond the Moustache: Physical Fundraising for Movember

Jess Hyland
Contributor

Every November, the charity Movember embarks on a campaign to raise awareness and money for men's health, including aspects such as mental health and suicide prevention, prostate cancer, and testicular cancer. From funding medical research to peer support programmes, Movember covers an extensive range of initiatives.

“Originating in Australia in 2003, the charity has grown exponentially, now totalling over 6,861,045 ‘Mo-Bros’ and ‘Mo-Sisters’.”

Campaigning by the charity and participants has long focused on growing moustaches in order to garner attention and spark conversations surrounding men's health. Whilst this is still a cornerstone of their campaign, physical activity and fitness challenges have also become a fashionable way to raise money and

awareness. This year, Movember announced the “Move for Mental Health” campaign. Symbolising the 60 men that are lost to suicide globally every hour, participants are challenged to run or walk 60 kilometres in one go or throughout the month.

This is just one example of the many fitness challenges that fundraisers are opting to partake in to raise money for the cause. Adam Garone, CEO and cofounder of the charity, supports a greater focus on physical fundraisers, saying: “Knowing that physical inactivity contributes to many preventable causes of death, we're committed to encouraging men to get active.” Through Movember, physical activity is used to raise money, and to promote a tool one can use to positively affect their life.

Turning locally, the Cardiff University Rugby team are no strangers to going above and beyond to raise money for Movember. Last year they raised a whopping £46,037, which contributed to the university-wide total of £102,007. Due to their efforts, they were invited to the Mo Awards in London and won the “Havin' Fun, Doin' Good” award in recognition of their rugby club Mo Ball, an event that is set to go ahead again this November.

With big goals to reach this year,

I spoke to the club's Welfare and Charity Secretary Alex Ray to discuss the team's participation in Movember and some of the fitness challenges they are taking on.

He explained: “There really is a club culture around supporting Movember where everyone gets behind each other and pushes to try and raise as much money as possible. With a large club of usually around 200 members, people have experienced different things in their lives which motivates them to want to raise money for a charity like Movember.”

Some of the fitness challenges that the rugby team are taking on includes swimming the length of the English Channel, climbing the Three Peaks in twenty-four hours, and even running a half marathon entirely in Misfits. Alex commented that completing physical challenges are a good way to raise awareness as “being active in general is definitely good for your physical and mental health, which links to Movember's goals, and the harder your physical challenge is, the more people will donate”.

Alex is completing his own fitness challenge where he is rowing 5 kilometres every day for the entire month. A big part of his fitness challenge is inviting a different person each day to complete the 5 kilometres with him, promoting being there for

one another and a safe space to share one's thoughts.

“At the time of drafting this article, the rugby team have raised £11,518, a number that is sure to rise as the campaign continues.”

Cardiff University Rugby are just one example of the many teams and clubs around the world that are opting to complete bold fitness challenges to raise awareness for the causes that Movember supports. These challenges help to raise money for a vital charity, but also promote camaraderie and well-being, which are significant positive factors that can help address men's health.



Provided by Wikimedia Commons (Movember Foundation Logo.jpg)

Exclusive: Inside Cricket Wales Inaugural Women & Girls Cricket Conference

Rosa Simkin
Contributor

On a sunny morning in late October, I found myself walking into Sophia Gardens, the home of Welsh cricket. Instead of being met with the usual sound of bat on ball, the air was full of conversation and shared ambition. This was the inaugural Women and Girls in Cricket Conference, staged by Cricket Wales. A landmark event bringing together voices from across women's sport, including international athletes, women's health researchers, and media.

After a summer in press boxes across the country, most of which are still male dominated, I was struck by the sense of community in the room. Individuals from a mix of age groups and backgrounds were united by one aim: to build a stronger, more inclusive future for women's and girls' cricket in Wales and, to be frank, for sport more widely.

The event marks a significant moment for the sport in Wales, reflecting the rapid growth of the women's game across the UK. In 2020, excluding those on national team contracts, there were just 40 professional women cricketers in England and Wales. Today the picture is vastly different, with eight fully professional sides. By 2027, Glamorgan women are set to join them as Wales' first fully professional side.

Women's participation in Welsh Cricket has seen similarly extraordinary growth, up 288% since 2018. Speaking exclusively to Gair Rhydd on the growth of the women's game, Cricket Wales CEO Barry Cawte said: “It's an incredible feeling really, because I think it's a sign of the evolution of women's and girls' sport, and I say evolution, but perhaps the word is revolution. It is slowly evolving from a traditional white middle-class men's game to a game that is inclusive for all. I think that's where we want sport to be.” Cawte's words neatly encapsulate the ambitious messaging that ran through the day. Welsh cricket is not only catching up but is playing a crucial role in pushing the sport forwards.

The line-up of speakers perfectly reflected the diversity of Cricket Wales' ambitions, from GP Samara Afzal to women's health researcher Professor Joanna Wakefield-Scurr. Current GB hockey player and Olympian Tess

Howard spoke about the importance of inclusive kit policy. After leading a successful campaign enabling international women's hockey players to wear shorts, as well as skorts, Tess formed Inclusive Sportswear. Concerned with the fact 1/3 of girls drop out of sports due to puberty, she has one aim: “To enable choice and comfort through kit policy”.

Ria Burrage-Male, former international athlete turned business owner, spoke about the power of allies. She drew on the example of Katherine Switzer, the first woman to run the Boston Marathon as an officially registered competitor. When an official attempted to force Switzer off the course, her boyfriend stood in to defend her. Labelled an “infiltrator” by the press, Switzer is a profound reminder that a push for equality does not have to be provided by women alone.

Beyond the formalities of presentations, the conference provided an inspiring space for networking. Organisations from across sport, including Maiden Cricket, Tigerseyebra, and Her Game Too (with whom I attended), filled the room with creative energy and shared purpose.

What stood out most, however, was the mix of attendees. Amongst the crowd were young players, executives, seasoned coaches, with one noticeably young potential cricketer in a pram acting as a symbol of the game's future. It was a reminder to all that UK women's sport stretches across age groups, backgrounds, and ambitions, creating a community that feels as dynamic as it does determined.

The professionalisation of Glamorgan's woman's side in 2027 will mark a milestone. But at Sophia Gardens, surrounded by those shaping the transformation of the Welsh game, it was impossible not to feel that something bigger is unfolding.

“Not just a new chapter for women's cricket but a redefining of what it means to belong in sports' wider landscape.”



WSL in Review: The Unlikely Success of London City Lionesses

Harvey Knowles
Sport Editor

To those beginning their journey supporting the women's game, or even those expanding their interests from internationals to club football, there are few surprises as to the WSL's make up. The league shares similar teams to that of the Premier League, boasting giants such as Manchester United, Arsenal and Liverpool amongst others. However, amongst the twelve clubs that make up the topflight of England, viewers will find the perhaps unfamiliar London City Lionesses.

The London City Lionesses are a football club based in Bromley, London. They find themselves in a unique position of being the only independent club in either the WSL or WSL 2 and are in fact the first fully independent club to ever reach the WSL. Their roots go back to 2019, forming following a breakaway from Millwall due to disagreements over finances. Following the split, the Lionesses achieved respectable finishes in WSL 2, becoming a consistent top-half side.

Whilst the split from Millwall was clearly monumental in their history, a bigger moment came in 2023. This was the year that current owner, Michele Kang acquired the club. Kang, who has been praised for her investment into the women's game, controls a multi-club ownership consisting of London City Lionesses, Olympique Lyonnais (now separate from the men's Olympic Lyonnais of whom she is president) as well as Washington Spirit. Last season, following investment from Kang into the club, the Lionesses clinched promotion to the WSL.

With their promotion, the lionesses had to prepare to face teams with more investment and a higher calibre of players. With this in mind, Kang made further investments into the club. By the end of the transfer window, the Lionesses had brought in sixteen new players from across the footballing world. They had signed numerous high-calibre players of their own, including Danielle van de Donk, Nikita Parris, and Jana Fernandez. Most notably, however, was the world record signing of former PSG star

Grace Geyoro.

The investment made by Kang into the women's game, and the Lionesses in particular, has been well met by the majority, coming as questions continue to be raised regarding the lack of investment made by Premier League clubs into their women's sides. This imbalance can be seen by comparing Liverpool's women's record signing of £210,000 with Liverpool men's summer transfer spending which has been reported at over £400 million.

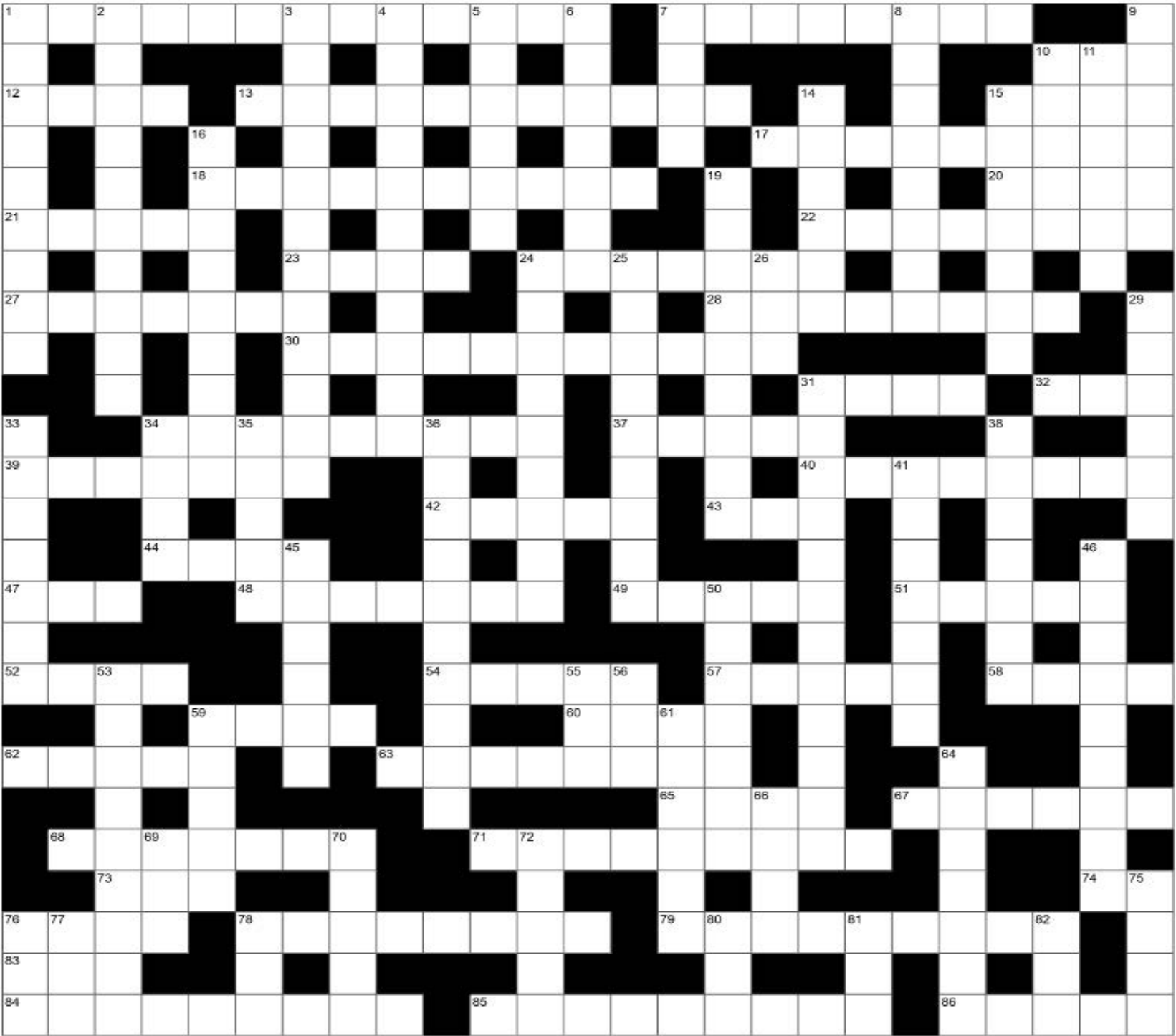
The Lionesses faced a difficult start to their debut season in the WSL, facing Arsenal, Manchester United, and Manchester City in three of their first four games. Despite the investments made, the Lionesses lost all three games by considerable margins, conceding a total of thirteen goals. However, their quality has begun to show since facing weaker opposition and now they find themselves sixth at the time of writing, after eight games played.

The impressive rise of the London City Lionesses acts as more than just another footballing success story. It is a statement that the women's game is, in itself, an investment, and not a second thought behind priorities placed on the men's game. The club's success rebuts any assumption that the women's team must rely on a financially stable men's side. This observation can be seen across the US, as well as at Barcelona Femeni who dominate and are profitable despite the financial difficulties seen by the club as a whole.

Whether the London City Lionesses can establish themselves among the WSL's top sides and break into the established top four is yet to be seen, but their progress so far has certainly been impressive, and has pushed the conversation about equality and investment in the women's game.



Provided by Wikimedia Commons (London City Lionesses 3 Lewes FC Women)



ACROSS

1. Threw someone out of a window (13)
7. Offence for offending the judge (8)
10. Gender disparity measurement, abbr. (3)
12. Doer of the lord’s work? (4)
13. Spork, brunch, frenemy, e.g. (11)
15. Tear to bits (4)
17. One who doesn’t involve police for justice (9)
18. The complete polar opposite (10)
20. Classic New Year’s resolution (4)
21. Particularly difficult (puzzle) question (5)
22. Frozen flowers (8)
23. Proper ____ (4)
24. Gap between neurones (7)
27. Stemming (from) (7)
28. One of the Four of the Apocalypse (8)
30. Dark outlines (11)
31. Frankenstein pal; Tyler, the Creator album (4)
32. [Not my mistake] (3)
34. Specialised cell subunit (9)
37. To exercise sovereign power (5)
39. Much fear-mongered power source (7)
40. Flipped the ship (8)
42. Most populous city in Africa (5)
43. ____ culpa (3)
44. Blueprint detail, for short (4)
47. Involuntary spasm (3)
48. Small plug-in devices that act as adaptors (7)
49. Knight mare? (5)
51. Honolulu hello (3)
52. Increases the motor’s rpm (4)
54. Good or bad vacuum cleaner review? (5)
57. Valuable quality (5)
58. Bamboozle, hornswoggle, or hoodwink (4)
59. Pedal pusher (4)
60. Slippery fish (4)
62. Line dance (5)
63. Result of too much TikTok (8)
65. Gemini or “stop” (4)
67. Brisbane barbecue (5)
68. Nephrologist’s concern (7)
71. Involve one unfavourably or criminally (9)
73. Playing hard to get (3)
74. I complement (2)
76. Fibrous cereal (4)
78. RVs, to Brits (8)
79. Give an assurance (9)
83. Burglar type (3)
84. Treasures dearly (9)
85. ***** (9)
86. Lightly scratch; feed on fescue (5)

DOWN

1. Like *1984* or *Brave New World* (9)
2. Very loudly, to Vivaldi (10)
3. Wish granter (8,4)
4. Vegetable stew (and *not* the rodent) (11)
5. Pre-trailer preview; fun-poker (6)
6. Mildly insanely or eccentrically (7)
7. Learn the exam content the night before (4)
8. Make a problem less severe (8)
9. Arse cleaners (6)
10. Wish granter (5)
11. Many a student’s role in the summer (6)
14. Pungent sushi-complementing rhizome (6)
15. Politically extreme (7)
16. Flesh fiend (9)
19. “Sugar!”, “Fiddlesticks!”, e.g. (9)
24. Tourists’ trophies (9)
25. Unfavourably known, like B.I.G. (9)
26. Sea plea (3)
29. 315,569,520 secs (when not a pedant) (6)
31. Pre-LED bulbs (12)
34. Fútbol cheers (4)
35. Stared at stars (5)
36. Not very good or exciting (10)
38. Strife; sweaty gamer Skype (7)
41. Football infraction reaction (7)
45. “Ten a penny” or “a dime a dozen” (6)
46. Proto YOLO (5,4)
50. Apt to snap back? (7)
53. Prove someone’s innocence or correctness (9)
55. Hunk of plastic? (3)
56. Archaic term of address for knights (3)
59. Buttocks (US); vulva (UK) (5)
61. Coming last (6)
64. Octothorpe or pound sign, to many (7)
66. Festive celebration (4)
69. Slip into; mafia boss (3)
70. To ____ cunt (5)
72. Post-dinner freebies; makes change? (5)
75. Intentionally stay close to orgasm (4)
76. Discreetly include in an e-mail (3)
77. Posho (3)
78. Adjacent over hypotenuse (3)
80. “Why does it hurt when I pee?” answer (3)
81. Toning targets; automobile safety system (3)
82. American air quality organisation (3)