Could we be about to witness a seismic political shift in Wales

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Could we be about to witness a seismic political shift in WalesPolitics in Wales has long been dominated by Labour. However, Nigel Farage and his Reform UK party are eyeing up the Senedd elections due to Take place in the first half of 2026.A century and a quarter since Keir Hardie oversaw the birth of the Labour Party in Merthyr Tydfil, that question is once again on the agenda 149 miles from the Welsh Parliament, in the tearooms, bars and restaurants of the Palace of Westminster.

In 16 months time, clues about the fate of British politics will once more involve studying the political activities of the people of WaleThis will be critical to the fate of a man called Keir, albeit one born 100 years after the founder of the Labour Party.

The reason? The rise of Reform. Next May, the voters of Wales will choose their next first minister. Polls suggest a three horse race between Reform, Labour and Plaid Cymru.

"She must be very scared indeed!" Nigel Farage tells me, laughing mischievouslys.had just put to him the words of Welsh Labour First Minister Eluned Morgan: "There is nothing Welsh about Reform. They are an English focused party."She's got a point. Lacking at the moment are any Wales-specific Reform policies - the party says these are being worked upBut Mr Farage has a point too. Reform came second in 13 out of the 32 Welsh seats in the general election, the party launched its manifesto here and are tapping into disillusioned voters looking to new partiesAt Tonyrefail Rugby Club, exactly the sort of old industrial Brexit-voting place Reform hopes to gain ground, we find three Reform voters.

They all want something "different" but none want to go on camera. Easier to convince are Labour voters.

"I'm a Labour person, I'm like a stick of rock - it goes straight through me," Linda tells me.

"I've always voted Labour, it was drilled into me because we're working-class people," Ceirion sitting nearby adds. "I think that novelty is starting to come away."

You could argue Welsh Labour is the biggest election winning force in the West. It's been the largest party here for more than a century.Actually winning in Wales would be an extraordinary, and probably unlikely, result for Reform, but opposition is well within grasp and would give the party a significant platform.

What's more, a new voting system will be in place by next year's Senedd elections, and will see a third more elected politicians in a more proportional system.

This will favour Reform and disadvantage Labour and the Conservatives - the latter recently lost all their Welsh MPs and look set to go from opposition to fourth place in the Senedd.

A challenge for Reform will be winning over economically left wing voters on issues like healthcare. Last year, the party pledged a new funding model for the NHS, looking to countries with insurance-based models.

Another small party that should not be forgotten and is set to reap rewards is Plaid Cymru.The party's leader, Rhun Ap Lorwerth, tells me: "It doesn't have to be like this, Labour leading Welsh government is not inevitable."

His party could well be at the levers of power next year.

When I ask Labour Welsh First Minister Eluned Morgan whether she would go into coalition with Plaid she tells me: "If needs must."

What about Reform? "I think there is a red line on that one," she says.

The first minister adds: "I don't accept things are about to change. There is an international shift going on at the moment and we've got several months now to make sure people understand what's at stake here."

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