

Beth Winter MP



September 2021 Report

The month of September has been overshadowed by the imminent [cut to Universal Credit](#). Unless there is a last minute U-turn by the Government, this will be the biggest cut to social security in the UK, ever. DWP Secretary Therese Coffey disgracefully said she was '[entirely happy](#)' with the cut, and suggested that those who lose the £20 uplift should work an extra 2 hours a week to make up for it. This only served to illustrate her ignorance about how the system works. As Keir Starmer [patiently explained](#) to Boris Johnson at PMQs, a single parent working full time on minimum wage would need to work **an extra 9 hours a week** to make that £20 extra. I have spoken out against this cut at every opportunity, and spoke against it again this month, stressing the point that this cut is not just cruel, it's also economically unsound as it will take millions of pounds out of local economies. You can watch my speech [here](#).

At the same time as the cut, the Tories are pushing through proposals to increase [national insurance](#) to pay for health and social care. That extra money for health and social care is needed, but it must be raised in a fair and progressive way, with those with the broadest shoulders contributing the most. Instead, the NI hike will hit working people hardest, and the asset rich will not contribute any extra. To add insult to injury, inflation is driving up the cost of living by [record amounts](#). To add MORE insult to injury, energy prices are [rocketing](#). This is becoming a perfect storm and risks making this winter incredibly miserable for low income households.

Despite all of this, Labour Party Conference was instead dominated by [internal arguments](#) about one member one vote, changes to the rule book and processes for the election of the leader. I agree completely with the words of new Unite General Secretary [Sharon Graham](#), "Given what is happening to workers and communities this is not the time to talk process. We should be focusing on issues". Now is the time people need the Labour Party more than ever and it shows a serious lack of judgement from the leadership to choose this time to turn in on ourselves and bicker about the Labour party rule book.

Finally, a quick word on the Boundary Review. Members will be aware of the proposals to redraw the parliamentary constituency boundaries, which will have an impact on Cynon Valley. I have made myself available to receive members' views. I will submit my views to the full public consultation and I would encourage people to do likewise. You can submit your views to the consultation [here](#).

In Cynon

It was so refreshing after almost spending 18 months indoors to be able to get out and about in August for my 2021 summer [roadshow](#). The roadshow has been followed by a marked increase in the number of people contacting my office! This is exactly what we were hoping for and has meant my brilliant casework team of Rob & Sue being kept extremely busy in September. We have committed to spending more time getting out and about in the constituency and so the team have been working on an ongoing programme of physical advice surgeries in communities across Cynon. We are also beginning to work on a programme of doorknocking. People are getting in touch more than ever, but I know there are more people across Cynon we could be helping so it's important that I reach out into communities rather than waiting for people to reach out to me.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg have continued to run regular health board meetings for MPs and MSs throughout the pandemic to keep us informed of local developments. Local Covid rates are now above [875 per 100,000](#) at the time of writing. This is cause for real concern and we mustn't be complacent. This is far from over. At the same time, there is cause for optimism as we are projected to be at or near the peak of this wave of infection, with cases expected to fall away in the coming days.

Let's hope so because the Minor Injuries unit at Ysbyty Cwm Cynon [remains closed](#). This was intended to be a very short term closure, however it has now been fully 3 weeks, with no sign of a re-opening date. This is not an acceptable situation and I have written to the health board to express my concern and to offer support. With the unit closed, people are being directed to Prince Charles, which not only already has excessively long waiting times, it also is a hotbed of Covid infection. The Minor Injuries unit must re-open immediately.

With COP26 fast approaching, this month I hosted my third and final Cynon Climate Assembly. The events were designed to give local people a chance to be heard on climate matters. The third session was themed around [Green Energy](#) and we had expert panellists from Pen y Cymoedd wind farm and Ecotricity. Thanks to all who came along to any of the events! I am now in the process of writing up all your brilliant ideas into a Cynon Climate Manifesto to submit to COP26.

This month, I was able to visit [Cynon Valley Museum](#) for the first time since the pandemic began. It was lovely to pop in and speak to staff and trustees. The museum is looking for volunteers & trustees so please get in touch with them if you would like to get involved. I was also able to pop into the [Coliseum](#), it was so nostalgic to be back in the magnificent building, which brought back so many fond memories. Great to hear from RCT Council officers about all the future plans and investment for the theatre.

This month saw a damning [new report](#) from the CPAG which concluded that 42% of children in poverty in Wales do not receive Free School Meals. This compared to between 17-37% of children in the other countries of the UK. I have repeatedly written to Welsh Government about this, as well as penning [an article](#) in the Western Mail last month arguing that Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility should be expanded here in Wales. Welsh Government continue to argue that we simply cannot afford to expand FSM eligibility. I maintain that we cannot afford **not to** expand it.

Finally, it is worth noting that the panel which is [reviewing roads](#) has been announced by Welsh Government. This will have ramifications for the proposed Cynon Valley Gateway North, which has not been exempted from the review. The panel will be chaired by Dr Lynn Sloman OBE, who is a renowned sustainable transport expert. It is worth re-iterating my stance that in light of the Climate Crisis, it is extremely welcome to see Welsh Government lead the way as we move away from a reliance on road building, and instead focus our attention on developing sustainable alternatives.



With Cynon Valley Museum staff Rhian & Will

In the Bubble

I will start this month with coal tips. With the spending review due to take place in October, now is the time to begin to increase the pressure on Rishi Sunak to make sure long-term sustainable funding is in place to ensure the coal tips on Welsh hillsides are safe. 300 of the 2000 coal tips in Wales are classed as being at high risk of endangering life or property. When I spoke to Mark Drakeford about this [earlier this year](#), he was clear that we need a ten year programme of £500-600 million to make them safe, and that UK Government was responsible for delivering this. I took the chance to raise this [in the Commons](#) this month and will continue to fight for the money that is needed.



You can watch my speech against the Universal Credit cut [here](#). In addition to this, I have been driving behind the scenes for a Welsh Affairs Committee inquiry into the welfare [benefits system in Wales](#). That inquiry finally opened this month as we questioned experts on how the benefits system needs to be changed. You can watch the session back [here](#). In addition to this, there was a one-off Welsh Affairs session on S4C. I was disappointed to be asked to speak in English throughout as there were no facilities for Welsh translation.

More draconian Tory legislation passed through the Commons this month with the [Elections Bill](#) demanding that people need voter ID in order to vote. As I said in my speech against this power grab, we should be doing everything in our power to encourage people to vote and engage in democracy, not put up new barriers to people voting. This attack on democracy will only lead to the most marginalised and vulnerable people in society not being able to vote. We must fight it tooth and nail.

It was incredibly emotional to be able to join bereaved families and colleagues on a walk along the [Covid memorial wall](#) at Westminster. To step away from the Westminster circus for a few minutes and spend time confronting the sheer loss of life we have suffered in the last two years was a sobering experience. Another emotional experience was listening to my friend and comrade Ian Byrne MP deliver an incredibly powerful speech about his experiences as a Hillsborough survivor. I would urge you all to take the time to [watch his speech here](#). Don't buy the S*n.

In addition to speaking in the House, I have been asking Written Questions and supporting the motions of colleagues. I signed Richard Burgon's EDM demanding a [wealth tax](#) is raised to pay for Health and Social Care for instance and I signed Andrew Gwynne's EDM in solidarity with the [WASPI women](#). I met with the WASPI campaign at conference and will be meeting with local women born in the 1950s in Cynon Valley on 8th October. Please get in touch if you would be interested in attending.

I was able to attend several events at Labour Conference, including listening to Mark Drakeford's speech – as always, an intelligent and principled contribution, in which he gave the example of practice in Wales, based on a “legacy of progressive socialism” as a means of showing people what Labour in power could achieve. Alongside Labour conference runs The World Transformed (TWT) festival. I was delighted to be involved in two panel events at the festival. The first was a brilliant event on [Universal Basic Income](#) featuring Mark Drakeford and world renowned economist Guy Standing. A quick reminder to sign the [UBI Wales petition](#) calling for the upcoming pilot to be as wide-ranging as possible, not limited to care leavers. Please [sign and share](#) the petition if you haven't already.

The second TWT event featured Welsh activists Harriet Protheroe-Soltani and Rhian Jones and was focused on the future of the [devolution settlement](#) and the prospect of Welsh independence. This was a really fascinating discussion and I made clear my view that with Johnson repeatedly riding roughshod over the devolution settlement and Wales' voice being sidelined at Westminster, it is increasingly difficult to make an argument for the status quo. Something needs to change and we need to have a frank and open-minded discussion about what this change looks like.

Davies' Diary



Yvette Davies
Office Manager

I have recently taken up the post as Beth's Office Manager after having worked 20 years as Advice Services Manager for Age Connects Morgannwg, a local independent charity supporting older people. This is a challenging and exciting new role for me, and I am 100% committed to fulfilling the challenge.

I was born, brought up and still live in the Cynon Valley where I enjoy nothing more than walking and admiring the beautiful scenery within the countryside which surrounds us. I fully support Beth's vision for Cynon Valley and its constituents.

My role as Office Manager is, as the name suggests "to manage the office" and to oversee

the smooth running of office functions both with staff at Westminster and the team based at the constituency office in Aberdare, providing regular supervision, updates on training opportunities and organising team meetings as well as managing Beth's diary and inbox and offering professional support and assistance to the MP where required.

It is also my responsibility to manage the office budget and finances and ensure health and safety procedures are in place for both staff and constituents accessing the office.

With this in mind, we have more recently been busy preparing the office to ensure accessibility for all, from those seeking advice or assistance with issues they want Beth or the Team to take up on their behalf to those just wanting to pop in for a friendly chat and a cuppa (and to use the Wi-Fi). We cannot wait to be able to welcome you all to the office once easing of Covid-19 restrictions allow.

Watch this space for further updates.

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