

Beth Winter MP



October 2021 Newsletter

This month saw the horrendous killing of **Sir David Amess**. The fact that he was killed while running a surgery to help local constituents adds to the horror of what happened. My thoughts are with his family and friends at this awful time. All politicians, their staff and their families need to feel safe, while at the same time we want to be able to be visible and available locally. Our society is becoming increasingly polarised. The least we as politicians can do is to be more caring and respectful in our political discourse, a point well made by many speakers across party lines when tributes were paid to Sir David in Parliament.

The pandemic has exposed huge gaps in our safety net, with millions of people not getting the support they need. Despite this, the Government has gone ahead with the **cut to Universal Credit**, which came into force this month. This decision will take £1000 a year from thousands of vulnerable people in Cynon and drive them into destitution.

I was proud to join Unite Community in a **street stall** in Aberdare town centre gathering signatures on a petition to cancel the cut. Huge thanks to Pasty from Unite for organising and to all those local members who came out in solidarity.

We are now deep in a **cost of living crisis**. Those in work on low incomes have faced the triple whammy of a cut to their Universal Credit, a hike to their National Insurance and a jump in the cost of energy. The cost of food and other essentials is soaring too.

UK Government's response to the Covid pandemic proved that despite their protestations that 'there's no magic money tree', they **are able to find cash in a crisis**. They took radical action, rightly, for example the crucial furlough scheme. They need to recognise the crisis we are in and act again now to support working class people.

Another crisis we are facing is the **Climate Crisis**. We are seeing increasingly frequent floods across South Wales, with more extreme weather forecast in the years ahead. We must act now if we want to pass a habitable planet on to our children.

The climate conference **COP26** kicks off in the days ahead. Over the summer months, I held a series of Cynon Climate Assemblies with local people to discuss the way forward for us here in Cynon Valley. The assemblies were amazing. We are so lucky to have such expertise in our communities. The people of the Cynon Valley are ready for change.

I have now written up the events into a '**Cynon Climate Manifesto**' Head to my Facebook page or [website](#) to read the report! After COP26, I will be holding a fourth and final Climate Assembly called '**What Next**' where we can turn everybody's comments into a local Climate Action Plan. I will share details closer to the time.

Finally, my **Christmas Card Competition** is now open! I am inviting entries from people of all ages in Cynon Valley, with winners in different age categories. More details are on my [website](#).

In Cynon

Ahead of remembrance next month, my office has been reaching out to veterans groups and the Royal British Legion across Cynon Valley. This led to a visit to the **Royal Welsh Old Comrades Association**. It was a pleasure to meet Cllr Steve Bradwick there and listen to the really powerful and honest conversations about mental health and the support veterans need. Congratulations to Mr Eric Harris on 25 years membership of the Association!

I am now ready to welcome **volunteers** to support my office and the team are in the process of reaching out to local people who've expressed an interest in getting involved. Whether it's running political education sessions, helping with outreach, sitting on the front desk or getting out leafleting, please get in touch if you would like to help!

I have continued running **advice surgeries** for constituents, both in my Aberdare office and across our communities. This month I held surgeries in Abercwmboi and Cwmbach, with my team out leafletting to let local people know. In November we plan to be in Glyncoch, Ynysybwl and Cilfynydd. Please get in touch if you would like more information or if there is anything I can do to help.

As well as giving people the opportunity to come to us, I am focused on getting out to where people are. This month I went to **Aberdare Market** on a Saturday morning and in the month ahead I will be doing the same in Tesco café. We're also planning to hold street stalls across Cynon Valley.

At Labour conference last month, I met with representatives from the **WASPI campaign** on state pension inequality. Following that meeting, I organised a meeting with local women impacted by the changes to state pension age. I was inspired by the determination of the women present and my team are working hard on next steps.

When the **Minor Injuries Unit** at Ysbyty Cwm Cynon closed, I wrote to the Health Board and asked to be kept up to date. This month I received a response explaining that the unit will remain closed at least for the rest of the year due to ongoing staffing issues. This is disappointing considering the exceptional pressure that is currently being felt across our health service. I will keep you up to date with developments.

I had the privilege this month of visiting **Maesgwyn** school in Cwmdare. You can really feel the passion staff have for the mental health and wellbeing of pupils. I also popped into the new **ACT training** centre in Aberdare. It was great to hear from learners about their plans for the future.

October saw exciting developments in Aberdare town centre, with Our Aberdare BID's **Fiver Fest**, and the opening of **Cynon Linc**. It was a real treat to visit during the first week Cynon Linc was open for lunch with the team. The food is amazing, drop in when you can!

I must commend Cynon Labour's new TULO Jason on the work that he has done to get an **RCT Trades Council** off the ground. Keep up with their activity on Twitter.



With Eric Harris & Cllr Steve Bradwick



At Aberdare Market



On a visit to Maesgwyn school

In The Bubble

The horrible murder of **Sir David Amess** has dominated the beginning of the new parliamentary term and the mood in Westminster is sombre. I didn't know David but that this should happen to anybody doing their job is upsetting and my thoughts continue to be with his loved ones.

This month saw the second reading of Barry Gardiner's Stop **Fire and Rehire** Bill. This disgusting practice is becoming more and more widespread in our society and we must fight it tooth and nail. Senior Tories have repeatedly talked the talk on this, condemning the practice but Barry's private members Bill gave them the chance to walk the walk and outlaw the practice. [They did not do so.](#)

The parliamentary entity of Cynon Valley may not last that much longer as the **Boundary Commission** have proposed splitting the constituency between the Pontypridd and Merthyr seats. I organised a meeting for local Labour members to have their say on this at the start of the month and will be submitting my views to the consultation by the November 3rd deadline. You can [submit your views](#) directly to the [Boundary Commission website](#).

Putting aside the specific proposals, its important to think about this in the context of attempts to bring in Voter ID and the way the Tories have ridden roughshod over Wales in recent years. I wrote an [article for the Morning Star](#) this month setting out my belief that what Wales needs is more powers and the proper funding to use them, not fewer MPs and confusing and restrictive electoral rules. UK Govt should be following Welsh Government's lead, and making it easier, not harder for people to vote.

The end of October will see the three year **spending review**. Although the cut to Universal Credit has now come into force, I don't see that as the end of the story and will join the Child Poverty Action Group and others in continuing to campaign for the uplift to be reinstated and extended to all those on legacy benefits.

Along with other Welsh elected representatives I have been using the approach to the spending review to speak about the need for sustainable long-term funding to make sure our **coal tips** are safe. Welsh Government is clear that we need £500-600 million over 10 years and that as the coal tips precede the devolution settlement, it is UK's responsibility to come up with that money. I will continue pressing the case.

The **Welsh Affairs Committee** inquiry into the social security system has continued, with experts from various think tanks attending a recent session. [I asked them](#) all what they thought of how devolution of some welfare powers has gone in Scotland. Their responses seemed to suggest that it had gone well so far. Now is the time to have that conversation here in Wales about how we can put our own stamp on the social security system and meet the specific needs of the people of Wales.



Stop Fire and Rehire



Reverse the Cut to Universal Credit!



At Welsh Affairs Committee

Sue's Views



Sue Pickering
Caseworker

I've been working for Beth for six months now and how time flies! I was welcomed very warmly by Beth and her team and I am enjoying my time here very much.

For me, as Caseworker, the things I enjoy the most is meeting the constituents. I've met so many different kinds of people over the years and heard so many different stories, sometimes heartbreaking, often heart-warming and occasionally unbelievable. I always say that nothing can shock me anymore, but recent decisions made by the current UK Government disproves that theory!

Some of these decisions, such as the removal of the Universal Credit uplift, end of furlough and increase in living costs, has led to a

definite surge in the volume of casework coming into the office. It's been a learning curve for me in lots of ways, dealing with different UK wide issues, but for whatever reason constituent's contact their MP or MS, whether it's personal, local or for more wide-ranging concerns, dealing with worried, sometimes distressed people remains the same.

Often, by the time a constituent contacts their political representative, they are at the end of their tether and looking for a solution. Sometimes the solution they wish for is achieved, and that's very rewarding, but sometimes it's not the result they are hoping for, and managing expectations is an important part of the job.

The most important thing is to do your best and that's something I personally, always say, that we can never guarantee that Beth's intervention will be successful but it won't be for the want of trying and every single one of us in Beth's office, and Beth particularly, always wants the very best for her constituents. That's a promise we certainly can make.

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