

Beth Winter MP



April 2021 Report

After some gradual relaxation of **Covid restrictions** in March, April has seen an acceleration of relaxations, with the return of organised outdoor activities and outdoor wedding receptions brought forward to April 26th. From May 3rd, community centres will be able to re-open, and indoor organised activities for (*up to 15*) adults and supervised children's activities will be permitted. Although we mustn't become complacent, the consistently low rates of the virus in our communities is cause for optimism as we approach the summer months.

This has meant being able to get out and about more, and with the **Senedd elections** imminent, I took the opportunity to campaign in key marginals. It was wonderful to join colleagues supporting Buffy in the Rhondda and Sarah Murphy in Bridgend. Good luck to all Labour candidates on May 6th, Wales needs another Labour Government!

Over the last month, we have seen revelation after revelation about the scale of **Tory sleaze**. Hushed up contracts, privileged access, jobs for their mates. From former Prime Minister David Cameron lobbying Rishi Sunak on behalf of billionaire Lex Greensill, Matt Hancock awarding PPE contracts to 'VIPs', to Boris Johnson refusing to say who paid for the refurbishment of his flat. The Tories have given more than £2 billion in contracts to their friends, but couldn't find money to increase sick pay or extend the £20 universal credit uplift to legacy benefits. It is time for a full and independent public inquiry into the scale of Tory sleaze and to re-examine how we are governed in the UK. This can't be about individual personalities – it is about changing the system and ending this cosy elite club of government.

One of my key pledges during the election was to be an open and accessible MP with a High St presence. Just before the first lockdown I secured a lease on number **8 Victoria Square** in Aberdare but I have been unable to open the building the public so far due to Covid. We have now had a sign painted above the shop in anticipation of being able to open the doors in the months ahead. Once we open, I look forward to the office doubling as a bustling community hub, I hope you will all feel you can pop in for a cuppa anytime!

In Cynon



Savouring the chance to get out and about a bit more in Mountain Ash.

With the relaxing of restrictions, non-essential shops have been able to re-open again. After an incredibly challenging year, we should all do what we can to support our brilliant local businesses here in Cynon. It has been great to see so many people popping into Aberdare and Mountain Ash in the second half of this month and gives me hope that our high streets can thrive again.

I've spent time getting out and about **visiting shops and local traders** in Mountain Ash and Aberdare this month and wish to thank local businesses for giving me such a warm welcome. Thanks also to Cllr Gareth Jones for giving his time to accompany me in Aberdare. I'm planning to get out to all of our communities in the weeks ahead and look forward to meeting as many people as possible.

While in Mountain Ash, I visited [Rowan Tree Cancer Care](#), who have taken on the old Barclays building on Commercial Street. It is great to see the building being brought back into use after years empty, and I'm really excited to see what the amazing Rowan Tree team can do with it.

Less welcome in Mountain Ash has been the [grassfires](#) over Caegarw. Burning hillsides seem to be an annual feature here in the Valleys every time we get a period of dry weather. This is unacceptable. Thank you to the Fire and Rescue service who worked tirelessly last weekend to keep a number of fires under control across RCT.

This month I hosted a second quarterly [Trade Union Meeting](#) in Cynon Valley. At a time when the UK Government and many big employers are testing the post-Brexit waters to see what they can get away with, the Trade Union movement needs to stand together and I'm really keen to work with Trade Unions at a grassroots level.

In addition to its regular meetings, the economy advisory group **CVCV** this month met with Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development, RCT to discuss the Council's economic strategy. I'd like to thank Simon for his time and for his brilliant answers to all our questions.

Food insecurity remains a priority for me and my team. This month, my welfare reform advisory group met with food banks, community growers and others to discuss what we can do to fight food poverty here in Cynon Valley. More to follow on this next month.

Along with Cllr Graham Thomas I have this month met with **Openreach in Penderyn** to discuss the rollout of Fibre Broadband in the village. It provided a good opportunity to discuss the scheme and meet with residents to discuss their concerns. I look forward to continuing to work alongside Cllr Thomas on this scheme.

As a new MP, I feel very strongly that I need to be reaching out and proactively **building and strengthening links** in the communities I represent. We have been developing a rolling programme of engagement to ensure we are getting in touch with as many people and groups as time allows. This month we reached out to schools and to culture and arts groups. Additionally, I met with RCT Council officials from a number of different departments, and with the new Director of Content & Services at BBC Wales, who happens to be a Cynon Valley girl herself!

In the Bubble

Over the last year or so we have seen the Government put forward a series of dangerously authoritarian pieces of legislation. First was the **Overseas Operations Bill** which seeks to effectively decriminalise torture and other war crimes committed by our armed forces and make it much harder for British service personnel to pursue claims against the MOD. The Bill returned to the House of Commons this month with a number of progressive amendments from the House of Lords which I supported. However, I still believe that the Bill in its entirety is irredeemable and must be opposed, as I wrote in [my statement](#) at the time of its second reading. See my full speech [here](#).

This was followed by the 'Spycops' Bill which would allow undercover police to commit crimes with impunity. Most recently was the **Policing, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Bill**. This month I penned an [article](#) for Voice.Wales outlining why it is so important that we stand strong against this Bill and against all attacks on our civil liberties from this sordid Tory Government.

Another Bill that has been sent back with amendments from the Lords is the **Domestic Abuse Bill**. I fully support the Lords' amendments, not least amendments 47 & 48 which recognise the authority of the Senedd in Wales and prevent the Secretary of State from undermining the devolution settlement. You can watch my speech on this [here](#).

This month saw the publication of a staggering report from the Government's **Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities**, which claimed that the UK was no longer institutionally racist. This flies in the face of the Macpherson Review, the Lammy Review, the McGregor-Smith Review, the Windrush Review and more. Just 18 months ago, the UN special rapporteur for racial equality said that British levels of racial inequality amounted to a threat to democracy, and that Government policy was to blame. Campaigners have been pushing for years for the recommendations of these reports to be implemented, now instead we have a report which muddies the waters and attempts to relieve the Government of the responsibility to take those actions.

Rather than bury their head in the sand like the Government, [Swansea City](#) led the way in taking anti-racist action this month, boycotting social media for 7 days in response to the failure of governing bodies to take appropriate action on racism in football. Other clubs have since been following suit in the fight against racism. Staying with football, we saw an exercise in the power of the many over the few as the world's richest football clubs ditched plans for a '[European Super League](#)' within 48 hours after backlash from the fans.

The corporate greed on display in the ESL debacle exists across our society, with disgusting **#FireandRehire** tactics popping up across society, from British Gas to British Airways. This month British Gas engineers were disgracefully sacked en masse for refusing to accept a reduction in terms and conditions. Unite the Union have this month launched a campaign against Fire and Rehire, more info [here](#), and you can watch my speech on Fire and Rehire [here](#). DVLA workers were on strike for 4 days this month and will go on strike again for 4 days from May 4th in a dispute about safety in the workplace and I want to extend my support to them. On International Workers Memorial Day this month I joined others in remembering and [paying tribute](#) to all those workers who sadly lost their lives during the Covid pandemic. Health and Safety protection at work must be a fundamental right for all and I will continue to work alongside others to make this happen.

This month saw the conclusion of the Welsh Affairs Committee inquiry into **Renewable Energy**, you can watch some of the sessions back [here](#). At the most recent sitting I asked Ministers about the gap between rhetoric and action on Climate Crisis. Watch the session back [here](#). Ahead of COP26 this November, I am organising events to speak with the people of Cynon Valley about how they see a green future for our Valley. More info soon!



End Fire and Rehire

Suha's Stance



Suha Abdul
Parliamentary
Assistant

As Beth's Parliamentary Assistant, it is my job to help Beth use her platform as a MP to raise local issues and voices directly with the Government in Westminster.

Parliament often feels deliberately opaque and Covid has not made it any easier for new MPs to find their feet. Despite this, Beth has worked incredibly hard to hold the Government to account and make sure that the issues in Cynon Valley are heard in Parliament.

It's been an exciting time in Parliament, where public pressure has pushed the Government to concede on several key pieces of legislation, such as the Policing,

Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill and the Overseas Operations Bill.

In February, Beth was able to use Prime Minister's Questions to grill Boris Johnson on the devastating impact of austerity on Cynon Valley, and question whether this may have eroded our ability to cope with the pandemic.

Since then, she has also spoken out in Parliament about health inequalities in Rhondda Cynon Taf, the new Levelling Up fund and its implications for devolution, domestic abuse, the arms trade, and long term health conditions faced by miners, just to name a few.

In terms of the Parliamentary calendar, we are coming to the end of the year. In May, the Government will set out their priorities programme of legislation for the coming year.

I'll continue to keep you updated with Beth's work in Parliament. Please get in touch if there's anything which you would like to Beth to raise at suhab.abdul@parliament.uk



 01685 243166

 beth.winter.mp@parliament.uk

 @BethWinterMP

 @BethWinterMP