

Beth Winter MP



January 2021 Report

As we enter a New Year in 2021 it is a time for looking back and remembering, but it is also a time to be looking forward with hope for the future. I have been so inspired by the community spirit and mutual support, care and compassion shown by local people that got us through 2020.

2021 began with the end of the Brexit transition period. I know this will have resulted in mixed feelings for many of you. I spent many hours deliberating and consulting with others about how I should vote on the Future Relationship Bill. Finally I concluded that this is a Tory hard Brexit, and they should be the ones who own this deal and the consequences of it. I was not comfortable voting for No Deal either and therefore decided to abstain. You can [read my statement here](#).

The year also began with some of the highest Covid figures we have seen, surpassing the initial peak in April of last year. Due to the sustained lockdown we have been in since 20th December, the numbers seem more under control now, with the [latest figures](#) providing cause for optimism. Another source of optimism is the vaccine. Despite some teething problems, the rollout is continuing to accelerate, with the help of the mass vaccination centre in Ty Trevithick. At the time of writing, more than 36,000 people have been vaccinated in Cwm Taf Morgannwg, with all over 80s expected to be vaccinated by the end of this week.

This month has seen a repeat of the sustained and torrential downpours we saw this time last year, flooding roads and properties across Wales. My thoughts are with all those affected. These extreme weather events are locked in into the future due to past emissions. Their severity will depend upon future emissions. We must radically change the way we live if we are to mitigate the impact of extreme weather on our communities in the years ahead. Read more [here](#).

I also want to address the transition of power in the United States. After the disgraceful behaviour of President Trump and his supporters who stormed the Capitol building early in the month, it was a huge relief to see a peaceful transition of power. Democratic President Joe Biden was keen to say that 'the uncivil war is over and a time of unity has begun' - Unity was a key message throughout his inauguration speech. It was hugely significant to me that the US re-joined the Paris accords on the very first day of his Presidency. The Paris agreement in many ways is inadequate for the challenge we face, but to have an economy the size of the USA now pulling in the right direction is hugely important in the battle against Climate Catastrophe.

In Cynon

Applications have now closed for the part-time caseworker role in my office and we will soon be interviewing candidates. We are also in the process of drawing up a **volunteer strategy** to involve local members in the work that we are doing and reach out in the most effective way we can to our community. The strength of this party lies in its membership and I am very keen to involve members in everything I do. I know that we can achieve much more if we work closely together. Please let me know if you would be interested in volunteering. You can help me make the office a community hub and use it to embed the CLP into the community.

My **Advisory Groups** have continued to meet regularly and are developing action plans. They have been growing and working in different ways. The economy group, Cynon Valley Community Vision, are beginning the process of surveying the local business community about the challenges they face and the support they would like to see. The group has been addressed by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies and will soon be hearing from the Bevan Foundation as well. The welfare reform group is focusing on Council Tax Reduction and on Universal Credit. See more on the next page.

The **Devolution and Constitution group** has been continuing to explore issues around constitutional reform. On the morning of 6th January, the Chancellor announced a new support package, with HM Treasury declaring that Wales would receive £227 million new money. By the same afternoon, the treasury corrected this, stating there will be no new money for Wales. This is not the first time the UK has shown complete disregard for Welsh Government over the course of the pandemic and we are now regularly seeing record high numbers of people in support of Welsh Independence.

It is in that context that Mick Antoniw MS this month launched [Radical Federalism](#). I hope this brilliant report, which has been endorsed by Mark Drakeford, can mark the beginning of a much-needed grown up conversation about the future of Wales and the UK, rather than the tribalism that can sometimes arise between unionism and separatism. I have written to Keir Starmer regarding this issue and offered to assist in any way I can with his commitment to examine this issue. I am also currently involved in on-line discussions with leading Labour Party representatives in Scotland and in the English regions. The first in the Claim the Future series '[Nations and Regions](#)' took place this month. I will be chairing the final edition of the series.

This month I met with **Trade Unions** covering Cynon Valley. It was brilliant to speak with so many passionate Trade Unionists and I'm looking forward to working with them all in the months and years ahead. It was great as well this month to see victory for the National Education Union (NEU). The stance of the NEU, delivering 1000s of section 44 notices to headteachers, forced a change in policy at Westminster and schools were closed as a result. Similarly, at the Rolls Royce site in Barnoldswick, pressure from Unite members led to a deal which would preserve the site as a training site and centre of excellence.

In addition to my regular meetings with Welsh MPs and MSs, the local health board and others, I am set to meet this week with the new Chief Superintendent of South Wales Police Steve Jones. I also met this month with substance use support service Barod to hear about the work they have been doing throughout the pandemic. I was also privileged to meet with Rhigos Community Council to discuss the issues in the village. On Thursday 28th I will be meeting with the Coal Authority again to discuss the site of the Abercwmboi phurnacite.

In the Bubble

There was outrage this month as images of 'hampers' provided to those who rely on Free School Meals flooded the internet. These images are appalling but what is most infuriating is that many of them were in line with UK Government guidelines on what should be delivered. This disgraceful episode has brought closer to home what privatisation has meant in our economy. This happens with everything, from food contracts to aircraft carriers. We have seen it throughout this pandemic, with all sorts of companies [associated with Tory MPs](#) getting contracts to deliver PPE. We must call this what it is, corruption. We are not getting a good deal from this culture of outsourcing and must start investing in our public services instead.



One of the 'hampers' delivered to children on Free School Meals

Thankfully here in RCT the Council delivers Free School Meals by transferring cash directly to parents. I have been involved, alongside my friend and colleague Ian Byrne MP in the campaign to enshrine the 'Right to Food' in law. I am hopeful of meeting with representatives from Welsh Government in the weeks ahead to explore what we can do on this in Wales, watch this space!

This month the Tories also failed to vote to extend the Universal Credit uplift after Labour forced a vote on the issue. The £20 has been a lifeline for millions, including 7000 households in Cynon. These families risk being thrown into debt with what amounts to a significant cut in Universal Credit. My Welfare Reform group will be campaigning on this to keep the pressure on the Tories, as well as encouraging an increased uptake in people applying for Council Tax Reduction.

As well as immediate welfare reform, we have also been working on longer term solutions to the social security system in this country. This month I met with Shadow Chancellor Annalise Dodds and Shadow DWP Sec Jonathan Reynolds to discuss Universal Basic Income. I have been continuing to push for a trial of the feasibility of UBI in the UK. If you want to get involved in any of my work on welfare, please get in touch!

I raised the way Westminster has ridden roughshod over Wales with the Secretary of State for Wales at a recent [Welsh Affairs sitting](#). I also raised the issue of Universal Credit at this session and have questioned experts on the railways and renewable energy at subsequent sessions.

This month saw Employment Rights under attack as the Financial Times reported on a leaked document from the Department of Business. Along with Dominic Raab and Priti Patel, new Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng previously contributed to [this book](#) which described British workers as "among the worst idlers in the world. We work among the lowest hours, we retire early and our productivity is poor." This is the attitude of the current Tory cabinet and they look set to wage war on workers' rights in a post-Brexit landscape. This leak from Kwarteng's department represents a testing of the water to see what he will be able to get away with.

The Labour Party secured an opposition day debate on defending employment rights and ending 'fire and rehire' tactics being used by employers to force workers to accept reduced terms and conditions. I spoke in this debate which you can watch [here](#). We must be strong and clear as we not only defend our rights, but fight for ever better protections for workers. Not one step back.

Mark's Musings



Mark Davey
Office Manager

Happy New Year to you all! With January 1st in the distance and possible resolutions made and already broken, I would like to share, what I deem to be an inspirational quote by Saint Francis of Assisi: "Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible."

Indeed, whilst it is important to have big dreams and visions, there is also much truth in starting small, the acorn and the oak tree spring to mind. So as a new chapter begins in the form of 2021, learn from the good that happened in

2020, one supporting another for example and also the not so good, but leave the latter where it belongs - in the distant past!

In what continues to be difficult times, look for things to be grateful for, focus on what makes you happy and be bold and courageous as you move through the coming year.

Keep safe, keep going, keep on keeping on. Remember, we are here to support you, so if you need help, reach out. As the year progresses and the vaccines are rolled out, the constituency office (see below) will open to the public and you will be able to meet us in person.

Many thanks, Mark Davey.

Have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary. (Steve Jobs).



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