

# Beth Winter MP



## May 2021 Report

May 6th was **election day** and we saw an extremely positive result for Labour in Wales, in the context of a much more mixed picture elsewhere. This was a ringing endorsement of Mark Drakeford's cautious and considered leadership. Llongyfarchiadau to my Rhondda Cynon Taf Labour colleagues and to all Welsh Labour MSs returned to the Senedd. Massive congratulations as well to Ross Williams, elected to represent the people of Penrhiwceiber, Perthcelyn & Miskin by a landslide.

Mark Drakeford wasted no time in signalling his intent in Wales, committing immediately in the days after the election to a **UBI pilot** here in Wales. This is extremely positive news and I tabled an [EDM](#) in parliament welcoming the news. Please see my comments in the Guardian article on 14th May [here](#). I am so pleased that Cynon Valley CLP [passed my motion](#) in support of a UBI pilot earlier this year and that RCTCBC is so supportive of it. More on UBI later.

At the time of writing we have only 5 Covid cases per 100,000 population in RCT. Accordingly, we have seen a further easing of **Covid restrictions**, with indoor hospitality organised events, community centres and more able to reopen again. We have also continued to see milestone after milestone reached in the astonishingly successful Welsh vaccination rollout. At the time of writing over 80% of the adult population have now had their first vaccine, including more than 40% of all 18-29 year olds. Anyone aged 18+ can now sign up to the Cwm Taf Morgannwg [reserve list](#).

The end of April saw the publication of a [report](#) by the BEIS committee on the **Mineworkers Pension Scheme**. The report recommends changing the existing surplus sharing arrangements in favour of miners and immediately giving £1.2 billion held in the pot to former miners. I [welcome the findings](#) of the report and call on the Government to implement the recommendations immediately and in full.

This month I also published a report on the response I've received from people here in Cynon about their **priorities**. More on this overleaf.

# In Cynon

Earlier this year, I distributed an information leaflet to every home in the Cynon Valley, with a section called '**Your Priorities**', inviting people to let me know what they think I should focus on. We had a brilliant response and I have now written up the responses into a report which you can read [here](#). On local issues, I have now written to all the relevant local Councillors. Other key actions include commissioning research on the future of the Cynon Valley economy and working with local people to put together a 'Cynon Climate Manifesto' to submit to the Climate conference that will be held in Glasgow this November.

The first of these **Climate Assemblies** will be held before the end of June, with a discussion on the potential of the Cynon Valley for Green Jobs. More details and speakers to be confirmed soon!

On May Day I wrote a [blog post](#) on **International Workers' Day** where I write that this pandemic could and should be a reckoning where we finally appreciate the value that workers create in society. Disgusting Fire and Rehire tactics are becoming increasingly widespread in our society, under the cover of Covid. We have seen an important win for Unite this month with bus provider Go North West backing down in Manchester. The Government must act quickly to outlaw this immoral practice as more and more unscrupulous employers try and push to see how far they can go and what they can get away with.

I have continued getting **out and about** this month where possible (despite the weather), including visits to Hirwaun & Ynysybwl. I was lucky to pop into Hirwaun post office on what was postmaster Tim's final day after 37 years of service. In other Post Office news, we have seen the Post Office this month begin consulting on plans to relocate the Mountain Ash post office to Mountain Ash Stores, which is also on Oxford St. [Click here](#) to have your say by June 25th.

My **Economy advisory group** (CVCV) had an extra meeting this month to discuss RCT's Draft Climate Change Strategy. Following that really helpful discussion, I am now finalising my submission to the consultation. You can submit to the consultation [here](#), but you will need to be quick as it closes on 31st May. CVCV is continuing to discuss the post-Covid Cynon Valley economy.

In addition to its work on Universal Credit (UC), PIP and Universal Basic Income, my **Welfare Reform advisory group** has been contacting groups in Cynon who work in food insecurity, like food banks and community pantries. Child poverty was rising before the pandemic, it is rising faster now. New child poverty statistics were released this month, and the proportion of children in Cynon in poverty has risen to 34.5%. There can be no justification for a system which leaves more than a third of our children in poverty. I have repeated my call for the Welsh Government to extend Free School Meal eligibility so that no child in Wales goes hungry following the publication of reports by [Policy in Practice](#) and the [Bevan Foundation](#). You can read my press release [here](#).

The 25th May marked 1 year since the murder of **George Floyd**. I joined [Black Lives Matter RCT](#) in taking the knee outside Aberdare Library to mark the anniversary.

In addition to my regular meetings, I have continued reaching out and **building links** with organisations across Cynon Valley, this month writing to Community buildings and meeting with RCT social services, representatives from Aberdare JobCentre Plus and with Travelling Ahead, who work with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) Communities in Wales.



Thanks to Tim and Lorraine for 37 years of service at Hirwaun Post Office!

# In the Bubble



The Free Palestine demo in Cardiff

The situation in **Gaza and Jerusalem** has dominated this month. The recent escalation in violence began when the Israeli police prevented Palestinians from gathering to pray in East Jerusalem and stormed the Al-Aqsa mosque during Ramadan. This all took place days before Eid and in the context of the forced expulsions of Palestinians at Sheikh Jarrah. The loss of life that has followed has been catastrophic and I am glad that a ceasefire has been agreed. However, lasting peace will only come when the root causes are addressed and Israel ends its illegal occupation of Palestinian territories. I was sorry to miss the recent demonstration in Pontypridd but proud to speak at the Free Palestine demonstration in Cardiff the previous week. See my speech [here](#).

This month saw the long awaited **Queens' Speech**. My team and I have been discussing the

Queens Speech and where we should focus our attention in the year ahead and have decided it is important to vocally oppose the returning Policing Bill and have real concerns about the Electoral Integrity Bill and the new plan for immigration. We also felt it was important to make sure the Environment Bill, Subsidy Control Bill (Replacing European Funding) and Procurement Bill are the best legislation they can be for Wales so we will be focusing on these. All in all, the Speech was noteworthy for what was [missing from it](#) as much as what was actually in it. For example the much needed Employment Bill promised by the Government in the 2019 Queens Speech is still nowhere to be seen. A far better [alternative Queens speech](#) was put together by the Socialist Campaign Group. This would be an agenda for the transformational change so urgently needed. I used [my contribution](#) to the Queen's Speech debate to highlight the success of the Future Generations Bill in Wales. I look forward to working further with Lord John Bird on promoting this on a UK wide basis. Another opportunity to celebrate Wales in Westminster!

The new Welsh Government sees Pontypridd MS Mick Antoniw as the new Counsel General and he will therefore lead on constitutional matters. You can read Mick's '**Radical Federalism**' papers [here](#). I support Mick's position on the need for a Radical Federalism and set out this belief in a recent article in the Morning Star. Read that article [here](#).

Another key role in the new Welsh Government is that of Minister for Social Justice, held by Jane Hutt MS. Mark Drakeford has confirmed that there will be a **UBI pilot** in Wales and that it will be part of Jane Hutt's brief to design this. This is extremely positive news and I tabled an [Early Day Motion](#) applauding Welsh Government's commitment on this and calling for UK Government to provide the necessary support.

I've kept busy this month speaking at a number of **events**, including an election debrief with [Compass](#), a Socialist Campaign Group [rally](#), a Marx Memorial Library [event](#) on the future of democracy and the British State, chaired by Labour Peer Pauline Bryan, and an [Arise festival](#) celebrating women's political contribution. Watch any of these events back using the links above.

I have been peppering the DWP with **written questions** this month, as well as asking the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs their assessment on incinerators. You can read my questions and the answers received [here](#).

Finally, I attended a number of fascinating **MP briefings** this month, including from the IPPR on work they have been doing on [Climate & Fairness in the South Wales Valleys](#) and one from Everydoctor on NHS Privatisation. Get in touch if you would like to know more.

# Sue's View



**Sue Pickering**  
Caseworker

As one of Beth's caseworkers, my role is to deal with correspondence from constituents seeking advice and support.

I have been in post for a little over a month now, so have been focusing on getting up to speed and getting used to the way things are done in the office.

Before starting work for Beth, I was caseworker and office manager for Vikki Howells MS and have previously worked for Jane Davidson and Mick Antoniw as MSs for Pontypridd.

I have also been the Councillor for Ynysybwl & Coed-y-Cwm since 2012, so have nearly a decade's experience of casework as a Councillor as well.

It has been really interesting for me to deal with different types of casework. Beth and Vikki have a casework arrangement whereby Vikki leads on cases that involve

devolved matters (Education, transport, health etc) and Beth leads on cases to do with reserved matters (Welfare, Justice, The Constitution). Now I am on a different side of that agreement I am handling completely different cases! I have been writing to Ministers in Westminster rather than the Senedd and helping people with benefits rather than with health problems.

With two caseworkers, we have enhanced capacity to support constituents and so I will also be helping out with outreach and community engagement in addition to my casework responsibilities. I have been working with my colleague Rob to put together a plan of surgeries and street surgeries so that we are getting out and about to all corners of Cynon Valley with regularity to let people know that we are here to help.

All in all, It has been a really positive start to my time in Beth's office and I am looking forward to what we can achieve together.

If you or anyone you know is in need of support or advice, please do not hesitate to get in touch, we will do everything we can to help!

**Sue Pickering**

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