

December 2020 Update

Early this month I held an introductory meeting with Faith Group leaders from across the Cynon Valley. It was inspiring to hear about the work being done in our communities by religious organisations and I look forward to working with faith groups to make a difference here.

I also met with Julian John, the Chief Executive of Cwm Taf Morgannwg Mind who has been working with Age Connects Morgannwg, Rhondda Cynon Taf Citizens Advice and Valleys Steps on a single point of access [Mental Health Hub](#). This is a brilliant initiative looking to streamline the mental health support services available to people in RCT. If you or anyone you know has been struggling with their mental health during the pandemic, please ring 01685 707480 or email info@ctmmind.org.uk



This week [Neil McInroy](#) from the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) addressed my economic advisory group (CVCV). CLES have played a leading role in [the Preston model](#) and are experts in regenerating communities and local economies. It was a pleasure and a privilege to hear Neil speak. The group will take evidence in the months ahead from RCT Council and others as it continues its focus on Enterprise and Community Regeneration.

The welfare reform group also had a guest speaker this week in Staci Berry from the MS society who spoke about Personal Independence Payments (PIP). Diolch i Staci for speaking with us.

I've recently met with a number of groups and stakeholders to discuss the Cynon Valley Gateway North, including local Cllrs, Hirwaun & Penderyn Community Council, and officers from RCT Council. Although I have reservations about the development, I feel very strongly that I want to make an evidence-based decision before taking a position either in favour or against the road. Please if you have strong feeling about the development, do not hesitate to get in touch.

Early in the month, the outgoing chair of the CLP Richard Jones and I published a joint article [in the Western Mail](#) to mark the anniversary of the Disability Discrimination Act. I also was made aware of the scale of the [disability employment gap](#) here in Cynon Valley. I am hoping to do a piece of work with Richard, Scope and others to address this vital issue in the New Year.

The Welsh Affairs Committee, of which I am a member, published its [report](#) on trade in Wales post-Brexit. I also used sittings on the committee to question representatives from BT about their plans to slash redundancy pay for workers. [97.9% of CWU](#) members have indicated they would be willing to take industrial action about this and BT must get back around the table with the Union to find a solution. Solidarity to BT workers in Cynon Valley and beyond. I was also able to question the Minister of State for Wales on the Shared Prosperity Fund. This Government's main aim seems to be to ensure that they hold the purse strings and the power of decision-making at Westminster.

It was a pleasure to meet with Honorary President of Palestine Solidarity Campaign UK Betty Hunter, Linda Jensen of Cardiff Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Cynon CLP member Sandra Holliday and Mairead Canavan this month to discuss the Palestinian situation and the launch of [RCT Palestine Solidarity Campaign](#). I was also honoured to attend and speak at the Black Lives Matter Wales [manifesto launch](#) earlier this month. Thank you to BLM for having me!