

Beth Winter MP



October 2020 Update

Annwyl gyfaill,

I must start by paying tribute to former Abercynon Councillor Alby Davies MBE. Alby was a longstanding and much loved part of our Labour family here in Cynon Valley, and he will be missed enormously. If you haven't already, I would encourage you to read this heartfelt and [moving tribute](#) from Cllr Rhys Lewis. Rest in Peace Alby.

We are now in the middle of Welsh Government's 'Short and Sharp Firebreak Lockdown'. Cases have been rapidly rising here in Cynon Valley and across the UK, with hospitals fast approaching capacity. I know that nobody wants lockdown but we cannot risk our health services being overwhelmed over the winter and must get the virus back under control now. The decisive action taken by Welsh Government could prevent worse action in the future and buy us time and I fully support the measures introduced.

October is Black History Month. That has changed somewhat here in Wales as Black History Wales have declared that Black History should be taught and celebrated throughout the year, rather than just annually and so we now have [Black History Cymru 365](#). This month I was honoured to be gifted a [recording](#) of Paul Robeson singing down the phone to the Miner's Eisteddfod in 1957. A huge thank you to Glyn Roberts of Tower Colliery for this wonderful gift, which I mentioned in [my speech](#) during the Black History Month debate.

Pob hwyl – best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth Winter".

Beth

Cynon Valley

This month Cynon Valley CLP were able to (virtually) welcome General Secretary of the PCS Union Mark Serwotka who delivered the 2020 Keir Hardie lecture. It was a fantastic occasion with Mark delivering a powerful and insightful lecture peppered with astonishing and thought-provoking facts. Diolch Mark! Cynon Valley CLP are selling recordings of the lecture. If you would like a copy, please email secretarycynonvalleyclp@gmail.com.



Mark Serwotka delivering the 2020 Keir Hardie Lecture

The [Cynon Valley Flood Recovery Fund](#) has now been fully implemented.

More than £45,000 was distributed among Cynon Valley residents who were flooded during Storm Dennis. The Coalfields Regeneration Trust (CRT) estimate that each £1 spend returned £4.50 in social value. You can read CRT's full report [here](#). A huge thank you to the Moondance Foundation for providing the funding for this and to CRT for administering the fund as I understand that over £45,000 worth of staff time was contributed to administering the fund.

Over this month I have worked with the Valleys for Tourism not Trash campaign group who are opposing the proposed incinerator at Hirwaun Industrial Estate. The planning phase closes on the 30th October, however, the campaign doesn't stop there. If you want to get involved, please contact valleysfortourismnottrash@gmail.com.

I also met this month with stakeholders about Penderyn quarry. Hanson have agreed to form a constituency liaison committee with local people chaired by local Councillor Graham Thomas. I am hopeful that this will be a productive committee that safeguards the local environment and protects the good jobs provided by the quarry.

Over the last fortnight my team and I have been contacting community centres, businesses and other groups across the Cynon Valley, meeting with Glyncoch Community Centre, the Bryncynon Strategy and visiting Hirwaun, Abercynon, Ynysybwll, Penrhiwceiber, Mountain Ash and Aberdare. It has been great to have so many conversations with people across Cynon. I can use in Parliament some of the information people share with me and I intend to build what I am learning into a strategy, working with the community to help create a positive future for Cynon Valley.

Over the course of October I have held meetings about a range of issues across the constituency, including meeting with the Bevan Foundation about their new report [Reducing the Impact of Coronavirus on Poverty in Wales](#) and the Older People's Commissioner about her new report [Leave No-one Behind](#). I met with RCT Council about divesting their Pension Fund from fossil fuel extractive industry, [Riversimple](#) about their trial of hydrogen cars in Wales and had an introductory meeting with the Electoral Reform Society.

My Welfare Reform advisory group is leading an awareness raising campaign on pension credit with other local agencies and is now in the process of developing its action plan for the coming months. I am very pleased that the group now includes representatives from the Citizens Advice Bureau, Child Poverty Action Group and Neurological Society. I want to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to everyone involved in my advisory groups, most of whom are giving their time freely but who have a wealth of experience and expertise to contribute.

In the Bubble

I joined 33 of my Labour colleagues in voting against the 'Spycops' Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) Bill this month. I take breaking the whip incredibly seriously and did not want to do so. However, listening to friends across the Trade Union movement made clear my obligation to stand up against this sordid bill. There is a well documented history of state surveillance of lawful trade union activity, environmental and justice campaigns in recent years. I joined colleagues from across the Labour movement in signing [this letter](#) setting out our objections.

The purpose of test, track and trace is to save lives. Despite Boris Johnson's promise of a "World Beating System", the system that we have is shambolic. Earlier this month I [raised this situation](#) in the Commons. I wrote to Matt Hancock [last month](#) with a number of specific questions but have yet to receive a response.

IPSA, the body responsible for parliamentary expenses, this month proposed that MPs continue to get a pay rise in line with the average public sector worker, equating to around an extra £3000 per year. Along with many other colleagues I have [written to IPSA](#) to express that we think that is wrong at a time when so many key workers are being denied a payrise. If the payrise goes ahead I will donate my increase to local causes. We must continue to fight to ensure that everyone receives an appropriate income and pay rise and in these times of such hardship and an uncertain future for so many workers we need a green industrial strategic plan and adequate benefit and financial support to meet the needs of people.

Early this month the Welsh Affairs Committee published our [Latest report on the Shared Prosperity Fund](#) (SPF). We conclude that the SPF must be needs-based and maintain at least the current size of funding in real terms. It must also be co-created and built around a partnership approach and provide a guarantee of genuine joint working. I discussed the report on Politics Wales, which you can [watch here](#) (but only until the 3rd November!).



Discussing the Shared Prosperity Fund on Politics Wales

This month also saw the Secretary of State for Wales say that UK Government would be willing to [ride roughshod over Welsh Government](#) and build the M4 relief road that [Mark Drakeford decided not to build](#). The conservative contempt for devolution is clear and if they continue to undermine Welsh Government in this way, could lead to greater calls for Welsh independence. Mick Antoniw MS addressed this while speaking to my Devolution and Constitution advisory group. In my opinion it is vital that the Labour party has a clear and defensible policy on this as we approach the Senedd and Holyrood elections in 2021. I have therefore written to Keir Starmer to ask that he honour his pledge to convene a constitutional convention as a matter of urgency.

My economy advisory group (Cynon Valley Community Vision) has undertaken an extremely successful survey with you, our CLP members, to assist in establishing economic and employment priorities for the Valley. The survey data has been analysed and the findings will be shared with you in the near future.

Earlier this month I asked Secretary of State for International Trade whether she felt that the UK should apply the same principles to the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories as it has to the illegal Russian occupation of Crimea. You can see that question and the Minister's [response here](#).

Greg's Role



Greg Sproston
Parliamentary
Assistant

As Beth's parliamentary assistant my role is nominally Westminster based – though for the last 7 months I have been working from the slightly less glamorous confines of my bedroom! It's my job to make sure Beth is aware of upcoming legislation and important events in Parliament, and to ensure that she is well briefed on Parliamentary business.

This might seem Westminster focussed – but the truth is the opposite. It's crucially important that I am up-to-date and aware of what issues there are locally.

Without that knowledge, it would be difficult to suggest what debates would be relevant to the area, and more difficult still to provide any relevant information!

That means I spend a lot of my time cataloguing policy casework and meeting with local organisations, as well as with national organisations when they can provide specific data on Cynon Valley.

From Early Day Motions and Ten Minute Rule Bills to Humble Addresses and Backbench Business Debates, Parliament can be a confusing and opaque place – deliberately so, in my opinion. In my job, it's important that I understand all these different processes and can suggest different ways Beth can raise issues in the House and keep topics on the agenda.

With Beth in the driving seat as a local MP embedded in her community – and me in a supporting role providing her with additional data & information on the vagaries of the Commons – we can always ensure that Beth's contributions to Parliamentary debates – whether on local test and trace or economic support during the pandemic. – reflect the priorities of her constituents.

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