

Beth Winter MP



September 2020 Update

Annwyl gyfaill,

Since my last update, Covid-19 has well and truly returned to our communities. Local restrictions have been in place here since 17th September. The numbers are not yet retreating as we would like here in RCT and so it is more important than ever that we are vigilant and stick to these regulations. If we do, we stand a chance of stemming the spread of the virus in our communities as they have begun to do in Caerphilly. More information on the local restrictions can be found [here](#).

I want to take this opportunity to thank colleagues in the local authority, health and care services, emergency services and all other keyworkers who are working tirelessly during this very difficult time to keep us safe and secure. Thanks also to our Welsh Labour Government for taking a more careful and cautious approach to tackling Covid-19 in order to protect people's health and safety.

I must also address events surrounding the Overseas Operations Bill. Breaking the whip is something I take tremendously seriously and is not something I entered parliament ever thinking I would do. It is my view that the Labour Party should always oppose and condemn war crimes and torture, and stand up for human rights throughout the world. For this reason I felt I had to vote in accordance with my conscience against the Bill. Having voted against the Bill, I was informed by the Leader's office that I had been stood down as PPS to the Shadow Cabinet Office team.

I respect the position of those of my colleagues in Parliament who decided to follow a different path from myself - sometimes we can have the same objectives but find that we have different paths to reach those goals. You can read my full statement [here](#). Finally, I would like to thank all those who have given me their support during this time. It is very much appreciated.

Pob hwyl – best wishes

Beth

Cynon Valley

The tightened restrictions have impeded my ability to get out and speak to people across the Cynon Valley, and more meetings are having to be rescheduled via Zoom, as they were during national lockdown.

Earlier this month I met with representatives from RCT Council about their Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group and I will meet with them again to discuss in detail the Council's policy on divesting from fossil fuel companies.

In a similar vein, I have met with a number of organisations this month

to discuss the proposed Enviroparks incinerator on Hirwaun industrial estate. Enviroparks themselves have thus far refused to meet with me, however along with representatives from the [Valleys for Tourism, not Trash](#), I met with the UK Without Incinerators Network ([UKWIN](#)) who have vast experience in opposing developments of this type. I have since met activist Georgia Elliot-Smith who contributed to this powerful [article](#) last month about the impact of incinerators.

I have also been supporting some local mental health initiatives including taking some much needed early morning exercise with Das Boot Camp which is a health and fitness support group set up and run by a local individual on a voluntary basis for people with mental health issues. Local people taking such initiatives deserve all our support and assistance and I hope to do more to help in the coming months.

Earlier this week I met with Alun Taylor of Coalfields Regeneration Trust. Alun has been incredibly helpful since I started in the role, including administering the [Cynon Valley Flood Recovery Fund](#) earlier this year. In the last month I have held meetings about a range of issues across the constituency, including on the Penderyn quarry, the situation at University of South Wales and the ongoing uncertainty surrounding jobs in the Aviation sector. I have continued to meet with stakeholders across the constituency, including regular meetings with the local health board, other local elected representatives and the police. I'd like to wish Chief Constable Matt Jukes all the best as he leaves South Wales to join the Met police.

With the eviction cliff edge looming this month, I met with Tenants Union [Acorn](#) and have made approaches to Shelter Cymru and Julie James MS, the Welsh Government Minister for Housing and Local Government to discuss the matter. Housing should be a human right and I was therefore pleased to see Welsh Government [announce](#) an increase in the notice period for evictions. I will be continuing to work with a variety of local organisations including tenants' groups and landlord representatives to see what further action is needed to support the housing sector.

This month I hosted a Google Digital Garage for businesses and Community Groups in the Cynon Valley. As well as free social media training for businesses in the valley, this extremely positive event represented an opportunity to speak with businesses and understand the issues businesses are currently facing. Tom will say a little more about this in his update on p4.



In Aberdare market, raising awareness for my Google Digital garage

In the Bubble

I have had more luck being able to speak in Parliament this month. I used a debate about the furlough scheme to speak about the need for a green industrial strategy and called on the Government to establish a national council for the recovery. You can see my speech [here](#).

I have also continued to work with Trade Union colleagues, other elected representatives and workers to call for protection of jobs, extension of the furlough scheme and sector specific support. Earlier this month I joined colleagues from Unite, many of whom work in the aviation sector, and other Welsh Labour MPs outside the House of Commons at the launch of the union's [SOS4Jobs](#) campaign.



With other elected representatives at the launch of Unite's SOS4Jobs campaign

Labour joined other opposition parties to attack the Government's UK Internal Market Bill this month, and I took the opportunity to raise this at [Welsh Affairs Committee more than once](#) this month, as well as [in the chamber](#). This legislation undermines the fundamental principles of devolution, and I will continue to work with colleagues to fight it at every possible opportunity. You can see Mick Antoniw's [article](#) on the subject here, I agree with every word. Mick will be addressing the Democracy and Constitution interest group I set up in the constituency this Thursday (1st October), get in touch if you would like to be involved!

I [wrote to Health Secretary Matt Hancock](#) this month to share my concerns about the Serco testing centres in RCT. Despite being marketed as for RCT residents only, a temporary testing centre was opened at Abercynon Leisure Centre which was run by UK Government. Symptomatic individuals were therefore travelling there from all over the country, **as well as** to the existing permanent site at Abercynon Railway Station. In my letter I expressed my firm belief that when an area is subject to local restrictions, testing centres located within that area should be reserved for use by local residents only. At the time of writing I am yet to hear back from Mr Hancock.

Cynon Valley Vision '21 (The economy interest group I've also set up in the constituency) have continued meeting and have been consulting the local Labour membership on a range of potential campaigning priorities for the months and years ahead. One key consideration for the group is pursuing and promoting the green agenda as part of our post-Covid economy here in Wales. Morien Morgan (Chair of this group) and I recently had an article published in the Western Mail on this issue which can be read [here](#).

Another idea the group is considering is Universal Basic Income. We are still staring down the barrel of mass unemployment across the UK, and the safety net is in urgent need of strengthening. I have continued to push hard for a recovery UBI and am the co-chair of the recently launched Cross-Party Parliamentary & Local Government Working Group on Universal Basic Income. Read my article [here](#). I also set out the case for a Universal Basic Income at a recent Petitions Committee meeting, you can watch that contribution in full [here](#) from 15:14:40

I have done a number of Welsh language interviews over the last few weeks. I'm brushing up on my Welsh so any offers of assistance with this would be gratefully received. If you are a Welsh speaker please do speak Welsh to me when you see me!

Tom's Comms



Tom Bateman
Communications
Officer

As well as Communications, part of my role involves Community Engagement and campaigning. This has been made a little more complicated by Covid-19, with national and local lockdowns restricting Beth's ability to get out and meet people and build the links that we would like to be building with as many people as possible. Even during the summer, all meetings had to be socially distanced as appropriate, with as many as possible taking place outside.

In the early part of this month, I was able to get around a few businesses in Aberdare and Mountain Ash town centres to try and encourage businesses to attend Beth's Google Digital Garage.

More than simply raising awareness for Beth's events, it was great to try and keep an ear to the ground and speak to people about what business had been like over the past six months.

I didn't know what Zoom was when I started the role in February, now I am arranging Zoom calls and events on a daily basis. As we approach the winter of 2020, I think I'm going to have to accept that the bulk of engagement work we will be doing in the months ahead will be online.

One recent example is the [Google Digital Garage](#) Beth hosted earlier this month. The event brought businesspeople into a (virtual) room with Beth, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Council's Staying Well at Work Scheme, giving them the opportunity to air their grievances, and to build connections locally. If you have ideas for how Beth could engage with communities across the Cynon Valley, don't hesitate to let me know!

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Google Digital Garage

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