

Beth Winter MP



February 2022 Newsletter

We are deep in a **cost-of-living crisis**. People in Cynon Valley are rightly worried about skyrocketing living costs. Energy prices are going up, food prices are going up, travel costs are going up. It seems like everything is going up except people's incomes.

The Bank of England this month warned that with costs rising, families can expect to suffer the biggest [fall in living standards](#) since records began. At the same time, the Governor of the Bank of England, who earns £575k a year, had the gall to say that workers should not ask their bosses for pay rises and should exercise '[pay restraint](#)'.

There is more than enough money in this country to feed us all. There is more than enough money in this country to house us all, and keep us warm. The cost-of-living crisis is a **political choice**.

This was proved this month, when we found out that British bankers are this year receiving their [biggest bonuses](#) since before the financial crash in 2008. Whilst not surprising, I find this revolting. Somehow, we have a system where key workers must 'exercise pay restraint' and bankers must be rewarded for their talent. Once again, the rich are incentivised by giving them more, and the poor are incentivised by giving them less.

Workers should not exercise pay restraint. Workers, and key workers in particular have more than earned a pay rise, as Cynon CLP TULO Jason Richards and I [wrote in Labour Outlook](#) this

month. I will bang the drum about this in parliament, but with such a big Tory majority, we will be disappointed if we expect them to give workers a pay rise just because we're asking for it.

Instead, we must give them no choice but to give workers a pay rise. It is vital that the working class look outside Parliament to the Trades Unions to tackle the cost-of-living crisis. **The Trades Unions are the organised working class**. We must not let that be forgotten.

At the weekend, I joined People's Assembly and many other organisations in Cardiff to [march against the cost of living crisis](#) that the Tories would have us meekly accept. This was the first wave of protest, there will be more in March and April and I hope you will join me in taking to the streets.

Here in Cynon Valley, I have this month [launched the research](#) I had commissioned in the **Cynon Valley Economy after Covid**. This independent research charts a course for Recovery and Renewal in Cynon Valley.

I have instigated nine task and finish groups to look into nine key workstreams coming out of the research. These concern: A Cynon Valley Development Trust, Business Infrastructure, Town Centre Regeneration, Skills & Education, Transport, Housing, Income Maximisation, Fair Pay, and environmentally focused 'Green Cynon' group. Each group comprised of local experts and key stakeholders. More on this in my next update.

In Cynon

With restrictions relaxing, I'm really excited about getting out and about a lot more in the months ahead, and especially about getting people to come and see the Cynon Valley constituency office in Aberdare town centre. We have put up a display to mark LGBT+ history month in the office and I would encourage you all to come and have a look before we take it down in early March.

I was delighted to welcome John McDonnell MP to Aberdare this month. He spent some time with us on the Friday morning having joined me for a [Socialist Campaign Group event](#) in Swansea on the Thursday night. I have been touch with a number of other Labour comrades and am encouraging them to come to Cynon Valley in the coming months!

I enjoyed popping to Mountain Ash this month to run a [street stall](#) in the town centre. Despite the weather, we had a decent number of people who wanted to come and say hello and raise local issues. I also held **advice surgeries** in my Aberdare office. In March, I'll be holding advice surgeries in Cwmaman & Fernhill.

Earlier in the month, I was lucky enough to get a tour of the **Pen y Cymoedd wind farm** site up on the hill. It was a very cold morning but a really fascinating tour, thanks to Jack James, Berry Jordan, Natural Resources Wales and all involved for taking the time to show me around the site!

With Barclays bank set to leave Aberdare in the weeks ahead, now is the time to discuss the **future of banking** in our communities. With that in mind, another meeting I had this month was with [Banc Cambria](#). They are hoping to set up a branch in RCT but are in the very early stages of planning. I am pursuing some ideas about next steps on this matter and following up on consultation I have held with local people. More on this to come.

We have seen another raft of extremely bold and important **announcements from Welsh Government** in recent weeks. From the [£200 towards energy bills](#) for people on low incomes (that won't have to be paid back), to the [£1000 for social care workers](#), to the [£150 council tax rebate](#).

Worthy of mention was the detail being publicised about the [Basic Income trial](#). As it is limited to care leavers, this is not a Universal Basic Income, but it is still a huge positive step and will allow us to test concepts around adequacy and regularity that haven't been tested in the UK before. I'm excited to see the difference it will make to the lives of the young people involved.

As well as discussing this with Jane Hutt, I also met this month with Labour's Shadow DWP Secretary **Jon Ashworth** to discuss the pilot and the UK Labour party's stance on UBI. I also spoke at a Glamorgan political education network [event about UBI](#).

My team and I braved the weather this month for a **team away day** at Daerwynno, up above Ynysybwll. It was a chance to get to know each other better in a lovely, peaceful, country environment but the weather beat us back to our office by the second day!



With John McDonnell and my team in the Aberdare office (and LGBT+ display!)



With my good friend Dawn Matthews in Mountain Ash



Me and the team at Daerwynno. Thanks to Rachel Rowlands for facilitating!

In The Bubble

The week beginning Valentines Day is **Heart Unions Week**, a chance to shout about Trades Unions and encourage people to join one. To mark the occasion, I joined with Cynon CLP's Trade Union Officer Jason Richards to [write in Labour Outlook](#). As we wrote; 'the Labour party has historically been the political arm of the Trade Union movement. The two are intrinsically connected. It is imperative we maintain and build on this relationship.'

It has therefore been incredibly concerning to see the conduct of a Labour Council in Coventry first offering refuse workers a real-terms pay cut, and then bringing in private workers to try and break a strike. This is not acceptable and I stand with my union, Unite, in **solidarity with the refuse workers**.

There has been a marked **increase in industrial action** across the UK as employers try to cut pay at a time of soaring living costs. University staff at my old employer Swansea University are on strike as part of nationwide [UCU industrial action](#). PCS Union are balloting members to protect pay and pensions. **Solidarity with workers striking across the UK**.

My contributions in parliament this month have focused on the cost-of-living crisis. I used a debate on Welfare Up-rating Orders to make the point that **the cost of living crisis is a political choice**. We are one of the wealthiest nations in the world and can afford to look after vulnerable people a lot better than we currently do. The Tories are choosing not to. [Watch my speech](#).

The following day I reinforced the point and tied it to child hunger. It is an outrage that two and a half million children in Britain are at **risk of malnutrition** due to living in poverty. We must not accept this. [Watch that speech here](#).

I was also called for a **Welsh question** this month and asked the Secretary of State Simon Hart how he could justify voting for measures that would drive Welsh families into destitution and poverty. His answer was [the usual waffle](#).

There were two public **Welsh Affairs Committee** meetings this month, the first was focused on farming and I used the chance to ask Julie James MS about the risks of coal tips on agricultural land. You can [watch that session here](#). There was then a session on the relationships between the Governments of the UK nations, which you can [watch back here](#).

With a new parliamentary worker Ben Folley in post, we have managed to increase the number of **written questions** in recent weeks. I have asked a lot of questions about the cost of living crisis, and also about banking and access to cash. You can see the questions and the responses I received [here](#).

I was sickened this month by Jimmy Carr's 'joke' celebrating the attempted genocide of Roma and Sinti people in the Holocaust and signed the [GRT APPG letter](#) calling for his show to be taken down from Netflix.

Finally, I wrote an op-ed about the co-operation agreement and Welsh devolution in the Scottish magazine ROSE, read that [here](#).

EVERY WORKER NEEDS A UNION

Heart Unions Week.



Speaking at the People's Assembly cost-of-living demo in Cardiff



We should be angry that we, the fifth richest nation

In the uprating orders debate, speaking about the cost-of-living crisis.

Beth Winter MP

WORKING TOGETHER IN CYNON
FOR A FAIRER FUTURE FOR ALL

Ben's Blog



Ben Folley
Parliamentary
Assistant

I joined Beth's team to support her Parliamentary activities at the start of the year. I work in Westminster, but had a chance to visit Cynon Valley at half-term, including getting to the St Gwynno Forest in Ynysybwl.

Since January we've worked together to ensure Beth has had a regular presence in key parliamentary debates that impact Cynon Valley residents.

At the start of January, Beth spoke in a debate - and voted against - Tory plans to renew the Welfare Cap, a measure George Osborne introduced during the Coalition to cap overall social security spending.

Most recently, she condemned and voted against the Conservatives' Social Security Upgrading Order, a government proposal that will keep social security rises to just 3.1% this year,

when inflation has already hit 5.5%, meaning those on social security are receiving a reduced income just as prices are going up.

I've also helped ensure Beth has been able to champion the progressive measures in the Welsh Government Coalition Agreement. In a debate on the future of the NHS, she welcomed Mark Drakeford's plans for a National Care Service in Wales, whilst in a Labour-led debate on food insecurity, she noted that Rhondda Cynon Taff has the greatest number of food banks of any local authority in Wales, and welcomed a commitment to extend free school meals to all primary school pupils in Wales.

I've also been ensuring Beth continues to use written questions to highlight the cost-of-living crisis, and have used them to challenge the Treasury on their plans to help people with the rising cost of energy bills, and their ability to access cash when banks close local branches, as Barclays are about to do in Aberdare.

Beth is keen to reference real-life experiences of constituents in her contributions - where local residents are happy with that - so keep phoning and writing in with your cases and policy concerns and the issues you want her to put to the Government.

You can also email me on benjamin.folley@parliament.uk.



The Green Benches. Beth speaking with the support of colleagues.



The Green Hillides. The view at Daerwynno on the team away day.

 01685 243166

 beth.winter.mp@parliament.uk

 @BethWinterMP

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