

Beth Winter MP



January 2022 Newsletter

After closing the office for the Christmas period, my team and I were straight back to work in January. We have been working from home in accordance with Welsh Government guidance.

If conditions allow, we will be returning to **Alert Level Zero** from this [Friday 28th January](#). Once this happens my team and I have developed a rota so that the office can be open for the public in accordance with the regulations. Yet again, Mark Drakeford has taken a cautious, step-by-step approach in managing the pandemic. Welsh Government have consistently been driven by the need to protect the health of the people in Wales. England, as Mark has [explained so clearly](#), has been an outlier in failing to take measures to protect the population.

This is far from the only way in which Boris Johnson has been negligent. I have heard so many stories from local people about the extraordinary sacrifices they made during the first lockdown. People were born, and died, alone. Key workers were moving out of their homes so that they could continue working without putting vulnerable family members at risk. People were being fined for sitting down on park benches while going for a walk. All the while, **Boris Johnson and his friends were breaking their own rules and then lying about it.**

Johnson's consistent disregard for the rules, and for the truth, has finally caught up with him. In continuing to desperately cling to power, he serves

no-one but himself. **He is not fit to Govern. He has lost his authority. He should resign now.**

Johnson's lack of authority was on full display when Tory MP Christian Wakeford [crossed the chamber](#) and joined the Labour party. His voting record and past comments about the Labour party raise real concerns and I'm sure Mr Wakeford will want to distance himself from his past record in the days ahead.

We are in a time of crisis, with the **cost of living** soaring. Inflation is above 5%, (as [Jack Monroe explains well](#), this often equates to huge increases in costs for the very poorest). In a crisis like this, we need an honest and trustworthy PM, resolutely focused on the issues that matter. Instead, we have a serial liar spending all his energy trying to dig himself out of the hole he's put himself in. Changing the leader of the Tory party won't solve our problems. We must challenge and campaign against their policies and priorities too.

Here in Cynon, I hosted the final of my **Cynon Valley Climate Assemblies**. It was a privilege to welcome Welsh Govt Climate Change Minister Julie James MS and Labour's Shadow Climate Change Minister Olivia Blake MP. Throughout this process I have been inspired by all the incredible work that is already going on, whether that's the local authority or community and charity groups. We are now focused on turning ideas into action and will have more to report in the weeks ahead.

In Cynon

In my last update, I congratulated Robins and Hummingbirds at **Pengeulan Primary**, whose brilliant snowman design (pictured) was the winner of my [2021 Christmas Card competition](#). I spent time in December getting out to schools in Cynon to thank them for taking part and congratulate the winners and runners up.

Huge congratulations to all the Labour members who have been selected to stand as Labour candidates in May's Council elections! As well as sitting Cllrs, I want to say a special word of congratulations to **newly selected candidates** Richard Jones, Louisa Addiscott, Victoria Dunn, Mustapha Maohoub, Julie Cook, Marcia Rees-Jones, and Richard Flowerdew. I know you all already do an incredible job in your communities and have every confidence that local people will put their trust in you to deliver on their behalf in the Council chamber. I can't wait to get out on the campaign trail with you all!

The **RCT Labour Group** must be commended on taking a grassroots, bottom-up approach to putting together their manifesto for the Council elections, they are running a survey so that local people can feed into the process. Have your say [here](#) if you haven't already!

I held a **virtual coffee morning** for Labour members earlier this month and will continue to host these on the second Saturday of every month. It always gives me a little boost to spend some time with local members after a long week in parliament. I hope we'll be able to hold the next one in person!

In addition to my regular **meetings**, this month I met with mental health charity Valleys Steps, with Year 6 pupils at Town CIW Aberdare Primary, with RCT Chief Executive Chris Bradshaw and Climate Change Champion Rhys Lewis, as well as with the Council's new sustainable food co-ordinator.

My brilliant casework team are available all the time but they have put time aside on [Wednesday mornings to offer face to face support and advice](#) to anyone in Cynon Valley. Constituents can book a slot to meet with my caseworkers in the office. Please do let people know about this service.

I was able to visit the **Holocaust Memorial Day exhibition** on Jewish Refugees at the Cynon Valley Museum last Saturday. It was a moving and informative experience. It certainly brought home to me how much Jewish people suffered as well as the huge positive contribution so many made to our communities here in the South Wales Valleys. I would encourage everyone to attend this exhibition which runs until 5th February.

I must end with a note of congratulation to Janis and everyone else at **Cynon Valley Organic Adventures** on winning the National Lottery Community Fund ['Wales project of the year'](#) award! Llongyfarchiadau!



Congratulating pupils at Pengeulan Primary on their Christmas Card!



The Jewish Refugees exhibition at CVM



Cynon Valley Organic Adventures celebrating their award!

In The Bubble

The **cost of living crisis** and the attacks on our democratic rights, not Boris Johnson's antics, should be the focus of headlines at the moment. With the cost of fuel and food soaring, there is simply no way of squaring the circle for so many people.

By **9am on the 7th January**, the average FTSE 100 CEO had taken home more than the average worker will earn in 2022. GMB Union calculate that a social care worker would have to work for 173 years to earn what a FTSE CEO will take home this year. Oxfam released a report which shows that the 10 richest people in the world have **DOUBLED** their wealth during Covid, while 99% of people are worse off.

Something has gone seriously wrong in the way we value people. Our key workers work as hard as anybody, and society would collapse without them. Their pay packets should reflect that reality. We need to tax this wealth.

I took the chance to speak against the **Welfare Cap** in a debate on the subject. Whilst the vote would not have removed it, I felt it was important to put on record my strong opposition to the cap. It is wrong in principle to cap benefits such as Disability Living Allowance, Carer's Allowance and Winter fuel payments. Watch part of the speech back [here](#).

On 17th January, our democracy came under attack from this authoritarian Tory Government in both Houses of Parliament. The **Elections Bill** would introduce voter ID, stopping 2 million people from voting. I was hoping to speak against the Bill but time for debate was limited. Here's [the speech I would have given](#). At the same time as the Elections Bill was being rushed through the Commons, the **Policing Bill** was in the Lords. This is a chilling piece of legislation which effectively criminalises the right to peaceful protest, a right which is at the heart of our democracy. I'm glad [the Lords rejected some of the content](#) but the whole Bill must be thrown out.

The **Welsh Grand Committee** is a day that is put aside once per parliament in which all Welsh MPs are entitled to speak. It is an all too rare occasion on which I can contribute in Welsh in the Commons. The theme of the debate was 'strengthening the union' and I [took the chance](#) to demand that the 4 nations of the UK are treated as equals, rather than having to go cap in hand to Westminster any time additional needs arise.

The **Welsh Affairs Committee** has met several times recently to plan future business, but we haven't had any public meetings. Much of my time in parliament has been taken up sitting on two Bill Committees, the Dormant Assets Bill and Charities Bill.

Christopher Kapessa would have turned 16 on the 6th January this year. Instead, his family celebrated his birthday without him. He drowned in the river Cynon in July 2019 after allegedly being pushed in. I joined the vigil in London this month and was devastated that [the High Court ruled against Alina's](#) claim. Love and solidarity to Christopher's family. You can watch a good explainer on the campaign from [ITV here](#), and the BBC documentary [here](#). **Justice for Christopher Kapessa**.



Speaking against the welfare cap with John McDonnell & Dan Carden



A rare chance to speak in Welsh at the Welsh Grand Committee



With the Justice for Christopher Kapessa campaign at the High Court

Tom's Comms



Tom Bateman
Communications
Officer

A large part of my work this month has surrounded the final Cynon Valley Climate Assembly in which we focused on turning ideas into actions.

We were delighted to be joined by Welsh Government's Climate Change Minister Julie James MS and by Labour's Shadow Climate Change Minister Olivia Blake MP.

As someone who is used to dealing with the Tories' approach to Climate Change, I think Olivia was a bit taken aback to hear some of the conversations we are having here in Wales.

Conversations about the Future Generations Act, about the freeze on road building, the Clean Air act and about their All Wales net zero plan. Welsh Government are quite open that all of that is modest in the face of the scale of the climate emergency, but we are moving in the right direction here, in a way that can't be said for over the border in England.

One of the key takeaways from the series is how much passion, activity and expertise there is in our communities. 'Our communities are ahead of our politicians' as Olivia said.

It's clear that people recognise climate change for the existential threat that it is. People want to do their bit, but don't always know what they can do to make a difference. In the weeks ahead, we will be working with various agencies on a public awareness campaign to help people understand what they can do to make a difference. The final word from Julie James channelling Greta Thunberg; '*No-one is too small to make a difference*'. Watch this space for outcomes from the [Climate Manifesto](#)!

After two years of us nagging, you may have seen that Beth last month had her first monthly column in the Cynon Leader. This is really important to us. The world is fast changing and increasingly reliant on online forms of communication but we recognise that not everyone has access to the internet, far from it in some parts of Cynon Valley. With that in mind, we will now be looking to deliver this monthly newsletter out to communities across Cynon Valley to make sure local people can keep up to date with all of Beth's work in the community, whether they have access to a computer or not. As always, get in touch if there's anything we can do to help. tom.bateman@parliament.uk



Julie James MS and Olivia Blake MP addressing Beth's final Cynon Valley Climate Assembly

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