



May 2022 Newsletter

May Day is an important day in the Labour calendar. International Workers' Day celebrates the achievements of the Labour movement, and campaigns for the advances we still need to see.

This May Day I wrote an [article in the Morning Star](#) highlighting the Welsh Labour Government's progressive policies since being re-elected in 2021, and the Cooperation Agreement between Labour and Plaid Cymru in the Senedd.

Welsh Government is leading the way on the Climate Crisis, as well as on policies like Free School Meals and the real living wage for care workers, to help alleviate poverty and improve people's standard of living.

The spirit of May Day really is alive and well in Welsh politics: we must continue to feed that Socialist spirit.

The Socialist Campaign Group, Labour Assembly Against Austerity and Momentum have organised an online policy event to study the achievements and radicalism of the Welsh Labour Government and how they can help the wider Labour movement win enough support to kick the Tories out of Downing Street. The event will take place at 7pm on June 20th. Get your ticket [here](#).

This month we went to the polls for the **local elections**. It is so important that people engage in local politics and exercise their right to vote.

It was a hugely positive set of results for Labour in RCT, and in Wales. More on this overleaf. Congratulations to everyone elected here in Cynon

Valley, both new and returning councillors. Commiserations to those candidates who were unsuccessful this time. Thanks are also in order to all outgoing councillors, some of whom are standing down after decades of committed public service.

The **Cost-of-Living crisis** continues to be an overwhelming priority for me. I have now written up the response to my cost-of-living survey.

The findings are devastating. 90% of people in Cynon Valley reported feeling worse-off than at this time last year. 81% report that their financial situation is impacting on their mental health. 48% of people in work report having had to borrow money in the last year and 61% of people on benefits have had to skip meals. You can read my full report [here](#).

There is enough wealth in this country to house us all, to feed us all, to keep us all warm. We are a rich country. None of this should be happening. [The cost of living crisis is a political choice](#). We have allowed poverty to become normalised.

The Trades Union Congress are organising a huge demonstration in London on June 18th to demand better. I am looking to organise a coach from Cynon Valley so please [contact me](#) if you'd like to come!

The **Queens Speech** was this Government's chance to take action on the cost of living crisis and plummeting living standards in the UK. Instead, they are trying to distract with phony 'culture war'. They are proposing a Bill about freedom of speech on University campuses but have nothing to say about the cost-of-living. I let them know what I think in the Queens Speech debate. Watch my speech [here](#).

In Cynon

The **local election results** in RCT and in Wales were very encouraging for Labour. The Party has increased its representation on RCT council, and now holds 59 of the 75 seats. Throughout Wales, Welsh Labour gained 66 councillors and took control of Blaenau Gwent and Bridgend councils, whilst the Tories lost 86 councillors and their only council, Monmouthshire, which is now also under Labour control.

However, despite a similar collapse in the Tory vote over the border, Labour has struggled to make any substantial gains in England. UK Labour must urgently learn lessons from Wales. We can't afford to be ruled by the Tories any longer. Read my thoughts on the election results in [my article in Labour List](#).

I welcome the long-overdue news that the **Minor Injuries Unit** in Ysbyty Cwm Cynon [will re-open from 23rd May](#). Initially it will open on Tuesday and Thursday mornings only, but will once again provide a full five day service by mid July. I am hopeful that this can begin to ease the pressure on Prince Charles Hospital and had a positive meeting with the Health Board this month to discuss the ongoing pressures on our local health service.

This month, my regular touring **Advice Surgeries** were in Glyncoch and Cilfynydd, and my caseworkers have continued to run their usual fortnightly advice sessions in my office. I also spent a productive Saturday morning at the end of April at **Asda in Aberdare**, speaking to local residents about their concerns, and especially the soaring cost of living. I also held a **street stall in Mountain Ash** as I try and make myself available regularly to constituents across Cynon Valley. Please get in touch if you have any ideas for how I could engage in your community.

To mark **Mental Health Awareness Week**, my staff and volunteers ran a Cuppa, Cake, and Chat beating loneliness event in my office. Members of staff enjoyed chatting with Katy and Elysia from Mothers Matter. Our next community social event will be a **'Time for a Cuppa'** event for Dementia Action Week on 27th May. Everyone is welcome to come along, and the intention is to hold similar regular community get-togethers.

Earlier this month, I was delighted to visit **Baby Basics** in Penrhiwceiber, a fantastic organisation which helps new mothers by providing a start-up pack for their babies. Mothers can access help through health professionals. I also visited **Hirwaun YMCA** for a catch up with Neil on all the incredible work they are doing there. As well as a range of youth services, Hirwaun & Area Men's Shed run out of the YMCA. Get in touch if you'd like to know more.

My office took part in the **Big Plastic Count** this month. In the course of a week, we counted 15 pieces of plastic waste. It's not much, but it has focused our minds on how we could cut our consumption further.

As we approach the anniversary of the Merthyr Rising I was honoured to speak at the **Dic Penderyn Society** annual conference in the Labour rooms in Merthyr.

Finally, the third week in May was **Walk to School Week**. I love walking my daughter to school. It's a time to connect and spend quality time together.



Speaking at a recent cost of living demo in Cardiff (Photo: Mehek Seth)



Celebrating Andrew and Wendy's victory in Mountain Ash ward



Walking my daughter to school to mark #WalkToSchoolWeek

In The Bubble

Our communities are suffering. In the face of plummeting living standards, any responsible Government would take action to protect its people. As the Government set out their plans for the year ahead, there was absolutely nothing for working class people.

The Government has promised 20 times to bring forward an employment bill to tackle bad bosses. We need that more than ever to protect workers from exploitative companies like P&O. Still nothing. They have promised action on the Mineworkers Pension Scheme. Still nothing on that either.

Instead, the Tories are taking every opportunity to lecture people on how they can 'protect themselves' by budgeting better, buying supermarket own brands and moving to better paid jobs. **We have the worst possible Government at the worst possible time.** They are waging class war, and we must get them out.

Watch part of my speech on the Queens Speech [here](#) and read my thoughts on it in Voice Wales [here](#).

This rotten right wing Government has continued to bring forward nasty, authoritarian legislation. I was delighted though to see them forced into a **u-turn** on their proposal of pushbacks of boats in the Channel. There can be no doubt that lives will be saved as a result. Watch my speech [here](#).

I was also called to [speak](#) against the **Public Order Bill**. The Bill is this Government's way of cracking down on protest and dissent. They know that people are getting angry about rip-off energy bills and are finding ways to deal with protest.

The **Welsh Affairs Committee** continued its inquiry on grid capacity this month, as we heard from Julie James MS. I used the chance to ask the Minister about coal tips in Wales. Julie repeated that whilst Welsh Government could monitor and maintain the tips, they could not remediate them and called again on UK Government to step up. Watch her answer [here](#).

In addition to the Welsh Affairs Committee, I will now sit on the catchily named Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee or **PACAC**. The Committee is currently looking into the [Greensill Scandal](#).

In recent weeks, I have been contacted by a huge number of constituents about the **Passport Office**. Not only are people facing huge delays, they report being left on hold for hours, and being cut off without warning. [I wrote to Priti Patel](#) to ask what she is doing to fix this. If you are facing problems with the passport office, please let my office know. We will do what we can to help. Boris Johnson has [threatened to privatise](#) the passport office in response to the backlog. This is a textbook case of failing to invest properly in a service, blaming the staff and then using it as an excuse to sell off our public services.

As usual, I have continued to use **Written Questions** to gather information from the Government. You can see my recent questions, and the answers provided [here](#).



So I'm absolutely incensed the Queen's Speech has ignored

Expressing my outrage about the Queens Speech in the House



Going on TV to express my outrage about the Queen's Speech



Hundreds of civil

Speaking against the Public Order Bill in the Commons.

Sue's Views



Sue Pickering
Caseworker

Many of you may know that up until the recent Local Government elections on May 5, I was the RCT County Borough Councillor for Ynysybwl. I decided to step down from the role some time ago, for various reasons.

First elected in 2012, my ten years as Councillor has been both a wonderful and sometimes difficult experience. It has been an honour to serve my community, where I was born, brought up and have lived in all my life and there is nothing more heart-warming or humbling than knowing your fellow residents have taken the time to vote for you and put their faith in you.

However, the years of austerity, due to the savage funding cuts coming down from Westminster, have

been difficult to navigate for me and my community on times. It was hard to try to explain why some non-essential services residents were used to, weren't so readily available as they once had been.

Nevertheless, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has done an amazing job in budgeting. While some services had to be reduced, they were mainly not lost and throughout the austerity measures the Council have still delivered in areas like education, regeneration, leisure, and many more. I am proud to have been a part of that.

Another highlight of my role was being a member of the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service Authority for many years, an organisation I was extremely privileged to be a part of. I will also miss many of my fellow Councillors, who have become friends as well as colleagues.

However, my 'day job' with Beth certainly keeps me busy and I am going to welcome my first grandchild in September, so I won't be short of something to do!

I'd like to say good luck to all those Councillors recently elected, and keep up the great work!

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Commiserations to Rich and Mark who would have made wonderful Councillors in Ynysybwl



I'm looking forward to doing more of this in the weeks to come!

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