



June 2022 Newsletter

We are deep into a cost-of-living crisis in this country and working people have been taking real terms pay cuts for 12 years of Tory rule now. **The whole country is suffering.** I was able to relate some people's experiences here in Cynon Valley when I spoke alongside Mark Drakeford, Shavanah Taj and Frances O'Grady at the Wales TUC Conference in Llandudno at the end of May.

Key workers kept this country on its feet for two years throughout the Covid pandemic. They went above and beyond. Now we have a Prime Minister asking working people [to take further pay cuts](#) to prevent inflation. Enough is enough.

Working class people need a pay rise, and they need it now. The Trades Union Congress called a huge demonstration in London for June 18th to demand better for working people. I organised a coach to London to make sure Cynon Valley's voice was heard at the demo. It was an inspiring occasion, as tens of thousands of Trade Unionists descended on the capital. It was great to see so many come up with us from Cynon Valley. Thanks to the CWU, Unite and Unison for their support.

That must mark only the start, and I am looking forward to holding a **local rally** in Cynon Valley as soon as possible to bring the protest to the people. Further details will follow.

As I write this, **the RMT are on strike** to protect jobs and conditions, and to demand a pay rise. The Trades Unions are the organised working class, and the Labour Party exists to represent the Trades Union movement. As a proud Trade Unionist, I see it as my responsibility to stand with Unions and

support our workforce as they organise for better pay, terms and conditions. I was proud to [stand on picket lines](#) with the rail workers.

Earlier this year, the RMT fought with P&O ferries after they fired all of their workers. The Tory Government ultimately took the side of bosses and didn't lift a finger to protect the workers. We know the Tories will always take the side of bad bosses and the super rich, so the working class must stand up for themselves.

I hope other Unions will feel able to follow the RMT's lead and bargain for a better deal for their members. As Mick Lynch rightly says, **'if you're not bargaining, you're begging, and the British working class should not need to beg'**.

This month in parliament was dominated by the [vote of no confidence](#) in Boris Johnson. It was a shameful spectacle to see the Tories infighting at a time when people are struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. Johnson must resign, as he must be held accountable for his lies and broken promises but no Tory will end the cost-of-living crisis.

We need a Labour Government now.

Finally, my team have been inundated with people getting in touch about delays with **passport applications**. We are in contact with the Passport Office every day to try and get responses for constituents. The UK Govt need to get a grip of the situation. I wrote to Priti Patel about this [on the 5th May](#) but still haven't received a reply. Labour held an opposition day debate on this recently. Watch my contribution on this [here](#).

In Cynon

The start of June marked **Volunteers Week**. I have a small number of wonderful volunteers helping the team at my office. I used the week as an opportunity to thank them all for everything that they do. [Get in touch](#) if you would be interested in volunteering with us!

The second week of June was **Carers Week**. Welsh Government marked the occasion by announcing a new fund to support unpaid carers in Wales with a grant of up to £300. Find out more about the fund [here](#). I spent some time in Parliament with the [We Care](#) campaign and with Oxfam Cymru. 3 in 5 of us will be unpaid carers at some point in our lives.

In the office this month, we held an '[appreciation buffet](#)' for all the amazing **mental health organisations** that support people in Cynon Valley. We are in a mental health crisis as a society, and the soaring cost-of-living is only making things worse. It was great to welcome people into the office, and the buffet provided by The Lunch Box was amazing too!

I had the chance to judge the fancy dress competition at the Queen's Jubilee [street party in Bryntirion](#) in Ynysboeth. It was very competitive, but the win went to Emma Wilkins as Dolly Parton! It was a really amazing event with a lovely community atmosphere and a very warm welcome. Thanks all for inviting me. I also attended a Queen's [jubilee event in Penderyn](#), meeting my lovely neighbours and friends.

With the Queens Jubilee, came the Queen's Birthday [Honours List](#). RCT Council leader Andrew Morgan was one of those honoured. Another Cynon resident Siân Holleran was also rewarded for services to education. Congratulations both.

This month, and in the months ahead, I have tried to get out and meet some of the wonderful **schools in Cynon Valley**. In the last fortnight, it was a delight to spend time with children at [Our Lady's Roman Catholic Primary](#) in Mountain Ash and [Pengeulan Primary](#) in Penrhiwceiber.

I was set to welcome children from **Rhigos Primary school** to parliament to celebrate their award as the **best breakfast club in the UK** but Kelloggs took the decision to cancel the event due to the rail strikes. Looking forward to meeting the breakfast club as soon as possible.

It was also a pleasure to meet and speak to the congregation at [Green Street Methodist church](#) this month. A huge thank you to everyone for such a warm welcome.

This month was the anniversary of the **Merthyr Rising**, where working class people in South Wales came together and demanded the right to vote. The Merthyr Rising festival marks the occasion and I was delighted to be invited to join a number of [panels](#) at the event, as well as speaking at the closing rally. It was a chance for the RCT Trades Council to show off its [new banner!](#)

Finally, a quick reminder that CISWO are running a **£200 grant for ex-miners** to help towards the cost of living. If anyone you know was a miner, please make sure they are aware so that they can take full advantage. More information [here](#).



With Shaun from Let's Talk Mens' Mental Health in my office.



At the amazing street party in Bryntirion.



On a panel with comrades at Merthyr Rising Festival

In The Bubble

This month was my first sitting on the Public Affairs and Constitutional Committee (PACAC). In that capacity, I was able to ask questions of Boris Johnson's ethics advisor, **Lord Geidt**. I was keen to understand in what way he was 'independent' of the Prime Minister. That evening, he resigned, saying that he had been put in an impossible position. Novara Media covered the story [here](#). Keir Starmer has since suggested that the next ethics advisor to the Prime Minister should be accountable to the PACAC Committee, rather than to the Prime Minister.

Welsh Government have calculated that Wales' budget will be £1 billion worse off by 2024 as a result of the UK's so-called Levelling Up programme. We are promised 'not a penny less, not a power lost'. Instead, the Tories are continuing to prioritise wealthy donors, and are '[levelling down](#)' communities like ours.

In line with my support for Wales' position as a Nation of Sanctuary and my opposition to the Nationality and Borders Bill, I was proud to take part this month in demonstrations against the cruel Tory policy of **sending refugees to Rwanda**.

Boris Johnson this month [rejected the proposals](#) of his food expert Henry Dimbleby, who had called for **Free School Meals (FSM)** to be extended to all children from families on Universal Credit. The Tories have watered down his proposals, and will keep Free School Meal eligibility 'under review'. Here in Wales, I am so proud of Welsh Government's commitment to guaranteeing Free School Meals to all of our primary school children. This month, Welsh Government announced [more detail](#), with FSM to be rolled out to children in reception year from September, and to Year 1 and Year 2 children by April 2023.

The progressive direction of our Welsh Government has not gone unnoticed over the border. The Socialist Campaign Group of MPs, along with Momentum and the Labour Assembly Against Austerity this month organised **an event to celebrate the radical policies of our Welsh Government**. I was proud to chair the event which featured brilliant comrades from across Wales. You can watch the event back [here](#).

One thing mentioned by Jack Sargeant MS was the idea of a **4-day week**. As of Monday 6th June, this is something that is currently [being trialled in the UK](#), with more than 70 companies across the UK trialling a 4-day week for their staff, including Merthyr Valleys Housing Association. I'm excited for the results!

Another radical policy being discussed this month was the idea of a **Wealth Tax**. I was delighted to be able to contribute to the Westminster Hall Debate secured by my friend Richard Burgon. You can watch a short clip [here](#), or the whole debate [here](#).

Sean Taylor from Zipworld was full of praise for RCT Council and its leader when the Welsh Affairs Committee had the chance to quiz him about **tourism in Wales** this month. We also took evidence from [Wales Business of the Year](#) Penderyn Distillery. You can watch the session back [here](#).

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](#).



With SCG comrades, and my dad, on an RMT picket line in London.



In the Levelling Up debate in the Commons



Sean Taylor from Zipworld speaking about tourism in Wales



Tom Bateman
Communications
Officer

In addition to my day to day roles, such as handling Beth's social media, speaking with the press, and working on this newsletter, one of the key focuses for me in recent months has been the report into the **cost-of-living crisis**.

My colleague Rob led on pulling the survey together, and once that was done, it was over to me to get the survey on Beth's website and make sure we had a decent number of respondents, then to analyse the results, write them up into a report and distribute that report across Cynon Valley. The results make for shocking reading. You can read them in full on Beth's website [here](#).

One of the things we do every month is to compile what we call the **'Awareness Days'** into a

document once a month, to make sure we don't miss anything important. This is another of my 'bread and butter' tasks.

For example, you've already read about how we marked 'Volunteers Week' and 'Carers Week' in June. Sketching out in advance when those days are allows us to plan how we mark the occasion. This is something our amazing volunteers have been extremely helpful with in recent months. In July, we can expect Beth to mark the anniversary of the establishment of the NHS, 'Love Parks Week', and the Samaritans' 'Big Listen', among other things!

Finally, it was amazing to join comrades from Cynon Valley on the bus to London for the TUC Demand Better rally. I always get a buzz from a demonstration like that and it was great to catch up with comrades we hadn't seen in a while, and to show off the Trades Council's incredible banner.

The day went as smoothly as anybody could have hoped for, so chwarae teg to my colleagues Yvette and Julia, who I know worked really hard to make sure the day went off without a hitch. Thanks as well to James coaches for a brilliant service.

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THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS IN CYNON VALLEY

MAY 2022



Comrades from Cynon Valley in front of the RCT Trades Council banner in London.

The graphic design of Beth's cost-of-living report that we published in May.

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