



JUNE 2023 NEWSLETTER



Campaign and Reselection. May and June were dominated for me by my campaign to be the Labour candidate at the next General Election.

This contest was brought about by the boundary review process which has redrawn the parliamentary constituency boundaries.

Cynon Valley will no longer exist as a seat at the next general election. 'Upper Cynon' will be merged with Merthyr Tydfil and 'Lower Cynon' will be merged with Pontypridd.

I stood to be Labour's candidate for Merthyr Tydfil and Upper Cynon, on a platform of solidarity with striking rail workers, nurses, and teaching staff, all of whom I have been proud to stand with on the picket line.

As part of the campaign, I tried to get to know members in Merthyr Tydfil as well as I could in such a short timeline. With that in mind I organised '**Meet Beth**' events in Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare. It was fantastic to meet and speak to so many comrades in Merthyr and Treharris and I look forward to working with you all again in the future as we fight to get the Tories out.

Unfortunately, despite a positive campaign I was not successful.

The selection process leaves many questions to be answered around democracy and fairness. I received no advance notice; the process was bulldozed through in a very short period of time and there were no in person hustings or voting.

I am continuing to take stock of my position and consider next steps.

But I remain the MP for Cynon Valley until the next General Election, and I will be continuing to work hard to represent and promote the interests of the people of Cynon Valley. In the days since the result, I have got straight back to work.

I want to thank all my supporters, local and national, and all those who endorsed me. It really means the world to me and I will never forget it.

I was devastated by the sudden passing of **Tyrone O'Sullivan**. I had known him all my life and his passing was such a shock. I was honoured to spend time with Tyrone at Tower colliery at the end of April to discuss the plans for the redevelopment of the Tower site. He was his usual passionate and energetic self.

The workers buyout of Tower Colliery proved the lie that the decision to close the mines was an 'economic' decision.

It also proved that workers can take control of the wealth in their own communities and the economic benefits that can bring. Tyrone's leadership will be sorely missed but his passion and his socialism will be remembered. His funeral was a beautiful service, with socialists coming from all over the country to remember him. Arthur Scargill and Jeremy Corbyn led the tributes with powerful and moving speeches.

All my thoughts are with Elaine and the family.



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CYNON VALLEY CHAMPION

In May I had the honour of presenting the inspirational Michelle Christopher with a Cynon Valley Champion Award for her tireless work raising Awareness of Sepsis!

There is no doubt that the awareness and money that Michelle has raised over the years has saved lives. And earlier this year she raised more than £4700 for The UK Sepsis Trust.

Thank you to the wonderful Pam for nominating Michelle as an extremely worthy Cynon Valley Champion, and to Cllr Tina Williams for coming with me. Thank you as well to everyone who helped keep the award a surprise! It was an extremely emotional moment.

Most of all thanks to Michelle for everything you do. If you can think of somebody who deserves to be recognised, get in touch!

CASEWORK

This month my Caseworkers were very pleased to offer a Caseworker Surgery in Fernhill Foodbank. As a referring partner we often support constituents with referrals to the Foodbank, so it was great for us to meet staff and local people using the service. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need a foodbank referral.

We continue to support lots of constituents who are having difficulties with energy providers, in particular people who are eligible for the Warm Home Discount or Energy vouchers and haven't received them.

We've become increasingly concerned about constituents using specialist medical equipment at home and the impact that it has on their energy bills. We are very interested to hear about anyone's experience of this so that we can raise awareness.

We've also been helping constituents who are having difficulties getting in touch with the DWP and HMRC due to long waits on the telephone.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Below is just a handful of the brilliant events coming up in Cynon Valley in the month of July:

- Summer Fair at St Fagans Hall - 1st July
- Car boot sale at Penderyn Community Centre - 1st July
- Liverpool Legends vs Cynon Valley Select, Abercwmboi Rugby Club - 8th July.
- Free Family Fun at Cwmaman Primary School - 8th July
- Sing & Sip for Tenovus Cancer Care, St Margaret's Church Aberaman - 9th July.
- Festival Fundraising Event at Ynysybwł Con Club 14th July
- Family Fun Day at Glyncoch Field - 22nd July




GWYL
Festival
YNYSYBWL

PRESENTS
A Festival Fundraising Evening
at **Ynysybwł Con Club**
on **Friday 14th July**

with **THIS WAY UP**
Local Guitar/Vocal Duo

plus **NEIL 'DAI-MOND'**



CYNON VALLEY

Back in April I organised a band night to raise funds for the local foodbanks. **We raised around £2400** which we've split between Merthyr-Cynon, Pontypridd and Rhondda foodbanks. I joined Jason and Mustapha from RCT Trades Council to hand cheques to the foodbanks. It is upsetting that food banks are reporting a 35% increase in uptake over the last year. I will continue to work for a society in which they are not needed and will support our amazing local foodbanks in the meantime.

Since my last update I have held **street stalls** at Aberdare market and Mountain Ash as well as visiting **Cornerstone Church** in Cwmbach, attending a craft fair at **St Elvans**, an open day at **Penderyn Community Centre**, and I joined Wendy Gane and the Wales Diabetes Patient Reference Group at **Ysbyty Cwm Cynon** for Diabetes Week.

I also had the privilege of attending the **re-opening of the CANA Centre** in Penywaun. I thought it had been about 15 years since I'd worked there as a Community Worker, but when I look back, it is actually more like 25 years... Huge credit to the Coalfields Regeneration Trust who have brought this amazing community asset back into use.

I was honoured to attend the unveiling of a stained-glass **memorial window to Paul Wigley** who was the popular and long-standing librarian at Hirwaun library. This beautiful window is a fantastic and fitting tribute designed by Deanne Mangold.

June also marked **Dr George's last day** at Hirwaun Medical Centre after over 40 years of service to the community. I popped in to surprise Dr George to congratulate him and wish him a long and happy retirement.

Mountain Ash couple Ivor and Janet Hancock celebrated their **60th anniversary** in May and I was delighted to spend some time with them in the office to wish them a very happy diamond anniversary.

I also held the first of a short series of **appreciation events** in my office to pay tribute to local community organisations & volunteers who are the bedrock of our society. One of my key election pledges was to celebrate & promote the work done in the valley by inspirational local people.

This month I hosted **South Wales Victim Support** so that they could chat with staff and local constituents. We also held one of our regular **Cuppa with a Copper** sessions in the office, giving people the chance to raise concerns directly with South Wales Police. All this helps me to realise my aim to establish my office as a community hub for local people.

June is **Pride Month** and some of my volunteers put together a brilliant awareness raising display in my office. The team and I also recently undertook a full day's LGBTQ+ training.

The weekend of the 24th and 25th was a busy one in Aberdare! With the Eisteddfod coming to RCT in 2024, the **proclamation ceremony** took place on Saturday, led by the Archdruid. I was even able to help a little with putting the robes ready for the ceremony! The ceremony gives people a year's notice that the Eisteddfod is coming.

Then on Sunday, we celebrated **100 years since the unveiling of the cenotaph**. It was another fantastic and well attended event, with Roy Noble the guest speaker, and performances from local choirs. I moved a Motion in Parliament to recognise this event which ends with a call for lasting peace - heddwch - throughout the world.

It was a fantastic weekend and Aberdare looked amazing. The Cynon Eisteddfod organising committee, Our Aberdare BID, Aberdare market, the memorial garden team and lots of other amazing local volunteers pulled out all the stops to make sure **the town looked picture perfect**.



Handing a cheque to Cleide from Merthyr-Cynon foodbank.



The memorial window to Paul Wigley at Hirwaun library



With Lee Gardens Pool volunteers in my office.



IN PARLIAMENT

With inflation remaining stubbornly high, as usual it is working class people who are bearing the brunt. A clear example is in **food inflation**, with the prices of some basic food items rising in price by 30%. Back in May I secured a Westminster Hall debate on this and on the increase in people having to use food banks. The Govt needs to get a grip, lift pay and rein in profiteering. I used my speech in that debate to call for a windfall tax on the supermarkets and for the Government to consider price controls on some basic and essential food items.

Rather than take action on the cost-of-living, the Tory strategy is to attack people's rights to stand up to them. In May, they brought their appalling **Anti-strikes Bill** to the House of Commons. Under the bill, nurses, teachers and others could be sacked simply for exercising their right to strike. I voted against this draconian legislation and I also joined Trades Union comrades outside parliament to protest against it. I was glad to see Keir Starmer commit that Labour will repeal the bill once we are back in power. That day cannot come soon enough.

Also in May, I spoke against the scandal that HS2 continues to be labelled an 'England & Wales' project rather than an 'England-only' project. If it were more accurately categorised as an England-only project, that would result in **£5 billion** extra in consequential funding for Wales. That money would be enough fund the South Wales and Swansea Bay metros, to connect Aberystwyth to Swansea and more.

In June, I had the pleasure of welcoming Aberdare West Councillor Gareth Jones up to parliament. Gareth is now the South Wales **Chair of the Industrial Communities Alliance** and was in London for the publication of a new report, 'Next Steps in Levelling Up the Former Coalfields'. I look forward to working alongside Gareth and many others on the 12 important recommendations in the report.

Another Cynon Valley visitor to parliament this month was **Nina Finnigan from the Bryncynon Strategy**. Nina was visiting to discuss sustainable food policy in Wales and it was great to catch up.

I have contributed to several **Westminster Hall debates** in recent weeks, including a debate on the role local authorities play in supporting co-operatives and social enterprises, and a really important debate on loneliness and connecting communities. This is a topic that is really close to my heart and was the subject of my PhD, and I emphasised that people can often feel socially excluded because of their economic circumstances

As usual there have been a number of **Welsh Affairs Committee** sessions in recent weeks. Current inquiries include on water quality in Wales and on University research funding in Wales. I also had the opportunity to ask the Secretary of State for Wales about the much-needed HS2 money in our ongoing scrutiny of the role.

At the end of the rugby season, it was incredible to see **three** Cynon Valley teams promoted up into Division 1 of the Welsh Rugby Union East Central league! Congratulations to Aberdare, Abercwmboi and Abercynon who will join Mountain Ash and Ynysybwl in a Cynon Valley dominated Division 1 next year! I moved an **Early Day Motion** to celebrate the club officials, players, volunteers and fans who are making history, and ensuring rugby union continues to flourish in our communities.

On Saturday I also attended the annual **Cardiff Transformed** event where I spoke about the pressing need for a socialist alternative to this capitalist system, along with a strong call for collective action to tackle the existential dangers of climate change.



With Cllr Gareth Jones launching the Coalfields report.



Meeting Nina Finnigan from Bryncynon in Parliament



Protesting against the anti-strikes bill.