



Beth

A Voice for our Valleys
Llais dros ein Cymoedd

August Newsletter

August 15th marked 167 years since the birth of one of my predecessors, **Keir Hardie**. I wrote an article in the Morning Star this month about his tour of the South Wales coalfield in 1898, two years before he was elected as MP.

In a speech in 1898, he railed against politicians who were 'moderate' at times of hunger, starvation and ruin, and demanded that politicians fight for the working class. We are deep in a cost-of-living crisis making life extremely difficult for people in Cynon Valley.

Whilst I am not going to be the Labour candidate at the next General Election, I will continue to be inspired by Hardie, and to use my platform as the MP to stand up and fight for **working class interests**.

The First Minister of Wales has announced that Welsh Government will have to look to make "savings" over the next period. **Inadequate funding from Westminster**, the lack of a wealth tax and other such measures will mean that public services in Wales will suffer again.

It doesn't have to be like this. We need to fight back against further attacks on our services, the inequalities in our society and the cost-of-living crisis and be united in calling out the profiteers and this Tory government for the damage they are doing to the people of Wales and the UK.

That's why in September I am working with others to organise a **Hunger March** in September, 95 years after the hunger march from South Wales, and as part of the Right to Food campaign.

Basic food items have increased in price by more than 30% over the past two years. In the same timeframe, pay has only been increasing by 5 or 6%. Whilst supermarkets could be doing more, the Government must step in and tackle **profiteering**.

Also rocketing in price are energy bills. Research this month showed that energy costs are now **double** what they were in the winter of 2020/21. Standing charges on electricity prices have gone up by an outrageous **120%**, as companies find ways to continue to rake in huge profits, despite the Government's 'energy cap'.

The ruthless pursuit of profit by fossil fuel companies is not only driving the working class into poverty, but also threatening our life support systems.

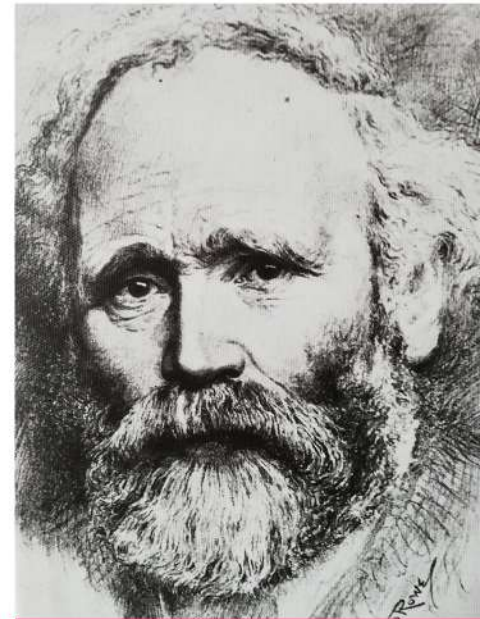
July of 2023 was the hottest month on record, with 21 of the hottest 30 days in recorded history, and devastating heatwaves across the world. In the words of the UN Secretary-General, the **era of global boiling has begun**.

As I wrote in Labour Outlook this month, our future depends upon the willingness of Governments around the world to **challenge the fossil fuel giants**.

Most of August has been taken up with my annual **Cynon Valley Roadshow**, but I have also been able to have a little bit of a break, spending some time with the family. I hope you have all enjoyed a relaxing summer.

www.bethwinter.wales

 @BethWinterMP  @BethWinterMP



A portrait of Keir Hardie in
my office, by Karin Mear



August 2023

Cynon Valley Champion!

This month I was pleased to award Angela Evans from Abercwmboi with a Cynon Valley Champion prize. Angela was nominated by members of the local community for her work fundraising and delivering meals to local residents.

Throughout the winter, Angela made hot meals from scratch in her kitchen and delivered them to older people in Abercwmboi. Often her calling by with a hot meal was the only social interaction people had, helping to fight social isolation and loneliness in the village. People like Angela play a vital role in our communities.

Huge credit to Angela for all her work; it doesn't go unnoticed.

'Bed & Board' charges for wrongfully imprisoned

This month we saw a scandal around Andrew Malkinson's imprisonment for a crime he didn't commit. It emerged that Mr Malkinson may have to pay 'bed and board' for the 17 years he was wrongfully imprisoned.

Michael O'Brien from Mountain Ash is someone who was put in a similar situation, having spent 11 years in prison following a wrongful conviction. Once the conviction was quashed, he had to pay a total of £37,000 in 'bed and board' in a deduction from his compensation. I find that totally unfair and insulting. Nobody who has gone through something so traumatic should be charged for time wrongfully spent behind bars. I have written to the Justice Secretary in support of Mr O'Brien.

I have therefore called for those who were wrongfully convicted to have their 'bed and board' costs reimbursed. You can read the story on [the i](#) website.

Casework

Whilst I have managed to get a little bit of a break this summer, the casework team has been hard at work, with the office remaining open for people to drop in.

There seems to have been an uptick in problems with utility companies, who are often pursuing repayments in a very forceful manner, even though it is later found that they have miscalculated. If you have any issues with your utility company, I'd like to hear about it.

The casework team put time aside for advice surgeries with constituents every week and they are normally available by phone too, so if there is ever anything that you need help with, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

What's On in Cynon Valley in September?

Plenty on in Cynon Valley this month as always:

- Aberdare food festival! - 9th September
- Cwmaman Music Festival - 23rd September
- Hirwaun & Penderyn Garden Show - 2nd September
- Lunch Club @ Bryncynon Strategy - 14th September
- Evening of Song @ Cilfynydd Community Centre - 20th Sept
- Aberdare Art Society @ Cynon Valley Museum - 7th - 20th



With Angela Evans at the Abercwmboi social club



Wrongfully imprisoned Andrew Malkinson. Photo: Josh Pettitt, PA



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Cynon Valley

Whilst I spent a lot of August out and about on my summer roadshow, there was still plenty of other activity in the office and across Cynon Valley!

August began with the latest '**Cuppa with a copper**' session in my Aberdare office, giving local people the chance to come and raise any issues directly with local police officers and PCSOs.

This summer there has been a flurry of activity in Aberdare, with **Our Aberdare BID** continuing to go from strength to strength. The BID organised a brilliant music festival in August, as well as Summer of Fun events every Thursday throughout the summer holidays in Library Square. All of that will be followed by a first Aberdare Food Festival in September.

We've also seen a **craft fair** run in conjunction with Aberdare market, and the **Festival of Unity** in St Elvans, organised by Project Unity. The event featured free food, music and dancing, as well as panel discussions on identity, unity & creativity.

Now is the perfect time to discuss the future of Aberdare, as RCT Council are currently consulting on their **plan for Aberdare town centre**. You can have your say online, or at in-person events scheduled to take place in Llwydcoed and ASDA Cwmbach in September. Head to the Council's website for more information.

In August I attended the St Elvans opening of a new exhibition of stained glass called '**Prismatic Art**', by artist Deanne Mangold. Deanne recently designed the window for the late Paul Wigley, which you can see in Hirwaun library.

I also spoke at a **New Horizons** event at Cynon Linc this month to celebrate their being awarded with £280,000, which will help them carry out vital mental health support work in Cynon Valley and across Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

August 6th is **Hiroshima Day**, when we contemplate the disastrous effects of war, and resolve to call for peace throughout the world. I could not make it to the peace pole in Aberdare this year, but Cynon Valley CND held an event to remember all those who suffered because of the use of nuclear weapons, and to promote peace and non-nuclear policies.

My office in Aberdare is a '**Hey Girls!**' donation partner, so we have a selection of free period products in the office, open to anyone who needs them, no questions asked. If you or anyone you know would like to take some free period products, you can simply take what you need from the accessible toilet in my office.

My team have continued to attend regular progress briefings with the **Future Valleys** Construction company who are responsible for the Heads of the Valleys dualling. If you have any questions about the dualling or it is impacting on you, please get in touch with my office and we can raise issues with Future Valleys on your behalf. You can also contact Future Valleys directly or attend fortnightly community updates in Hirwaun.

In August, **GCSE and A-level students** receive their results. Huge congratulations to all learners on their hard work. I hope you all got what you were hoping for, but it's important to remember that your exam results don't determine who you are and what you can be. There will always be other exciting options.



Cuppa with a copper in my Aberdare office



Members of Cynon Valley CND marking Hiroshima Day



Free 'Hey Girls!' period products in my office

Roadshow

With parliament in recess, I spent my summer trying to speak to as many local people as possible, with my third **annual Cynon Valley roadshow**.

As usual, I am spending time in all wards in Cynon Valley, from Glyncoch and Cilfynydd to Hirwaun & Rhigos, knocking doors, attending events and dropping into businesses and community groups.

A few organisations had been unable to attend the recent appreciation event in my office in July so I used the summer roadshow to drop their awards round.

One such organisation was **Penrhiwceiber Workmen's Hall**. It is such a beautiful building and a living lesson in what can be achieved when a community pulls together and pitches in for the good of everybody in that community. For me, that is **the story of Cynon Valley**, from the welfare halls, to the paddling pools, and is a story we mustn't forget.

Indeed it is one we can build on, as witnessed by the work of so many local groups from the **Bryncynon Strategy** which I was so pleased to visit again this month, to **Rowan Tree Cancer Care** in Mountain Ash where I stopped for a cuppa, the **Cornerstone Church** in Cwmbach and the breakfast club and community garden built by the **Heol y Mynydd Residents Association** in Aberdare.

These are just a few of the groups and activities that I visited this summer and I'm so glad that I am a part of this community. Thank you to all of you who met with me, and for all those chats, cuppas and bites to eat.

I also want to say a few words about all the tremendous **local businesses** in Cynon Valley. All the money that is spent in local businesses, instead of online or in out-of-town retail parks, stays in our local economies and builds wealth and prosperity in our communities.

It was so lovely to pop in and see some of our wonderful local small businesses, from **Rhian's Hair House** in Abercwmboi, to the Mountain Ash **Town Hall Cafe**, to **Moto Bites Cafe** in Aberaman and **Cafe Nix** in Cwmbach.

While I was in Tynte, it was lovely to meet and share memories with **the son of Harri Parfitt**, who was an old family friend and comrade. Harri was a stalwart of the trade union movement in Cynon Valley and was a well-known character in his local community, always prepared to stand up for the working class.

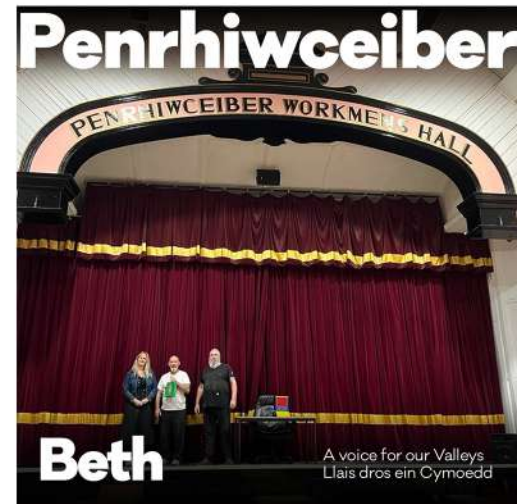
Many thanks to all those constituents who gave me such a warm welcome and raised their concerns with me – all of which my staff and I are pursuing with the appropriate authorities.

Housing Association Trivallis also organised a summer roadshow, with their **Trivallis Connects Roadshow** throughout August across RCT. I had planned to join them in Penywaun but unfortunately was unable to make it due to a family illness. Julia & Tina from my team went along in my place.

At the time of writing, I have just finished doorknocking in Llwydcoed and Cwmdare. The roadshow started at the end of July, when Parliament went into recess, and it will continue into September.

So keep watching my social media pages for the days I will be in Hirwaun, Rhigos and Penderyn next month. Looking forward to seeing you then.

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Handing an award to Penrhiwceiber Institute



At Rhian's Hair House in Abercwmboi



Out and about with my trolley in Glyncoch

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