



# Beth

A Voice for our Valleys  
Llais dros ein Cymoedd

## September Newsletter

This month I published a report setting out my experiences during the **selection for the new Merthyr Tydfil and Upper Cynon** constituency. I maintain that the selection process was unfair, undemocratic and discriminatory, as I said before the process had begun.

I have tried before during and since the process to discuss these issues directly with those involved, however I have not received responses to my queries. I therefore sent the report in its entirety to the Welsh Executive Committee and asked for responses to the questions raised. In order to restore some trust in Welsh Labour's democratic processes, I have requested an independent review into the selection process.

**Right to Food Week** took place in the week 18th – 23rd September. This vital new campaign was started by my friend and colleague Ian Byrne MP and Fans Supporting Foodbanks. The campaign aims to enshrine the Right to Food as a legal right for all. Demands include Universal Free School Meals and that the Government calculate and publish how much money is factored in for food when setting wages and benefits.

I give the campaign my full support and spent a lot of September getting out and speaking to local people who campaign against hunger and volunteer at food banks in Cynon Valley. It is truly shocking that 11 million people in the UK are experiencing food insecurity, but heartening to see the amount of support in Cynon Valley for the Right to Food being enshrined in law.

There has been a marked increase in food banks and food pantries in the few short years since I became an MP. I find that thoroughly upsetting, but it is also so inspiring to spend time with the people who go above and beyond to protect and care for others in their community.

September began with the **final few days of my Summer Roadshow**, and will end with preparations for **Labour conference**. In the days since the House rose for conference, I have been beginning to prepare for a series of fringes and events I will be at during Conference.

This month saw **dreadful natural disasters** hit the Mediterranean, with Storm Daniel causing widespread devastation in Greece, before crossing into Libya where over 10,000 are estimated to have died in floods. Thousands also died in Morocco after an earthquake hit the Marrakech region. My thoughts are with all those affected.

Finally, I want to thank **Joel Lewis** from Mountain Ash, who spent a week on Work Experience in my office this month. Joel travelled up to London for two days and spent the other three working in my Aberdare office. He is a very talented and political young man with a very bright future. You can read his column on the back of this newsletter. Diolch Joel!



Celebrating Right to Food week in parliament

[www.bethwinter.wales](http://www.bethwinter.wales)

 @BethWinterMP  @BethWinterMP





# Cynon Valley

I want to start by writing about **Rhigos Primary School**, with the news that RCT Council are consulting on closing the primary school. Rhigos Primary School is at the heart of the community, consistently well rated by Estyn, and due to its location, encourages learners to walk or cycle to school, rather than cause more traffic. In other words, **it is everything you could want from a school.**

I am currently holding discussions with local people who are vehemently opposed to the proposed closure to establish how I can best support them. I will also be expressing my views on the matter as part of the consultation process.

Some of our iconic Cynon Valley buildings have had big anniversaries this month. The **Aberdare Coliseum** marked its 85th anniversary, having opened on September 17th, 1938.

And I was delighted to attend the 60th birthday celebrations of **Aberdare Library**. Our Aberdare BID organised a funday on the Saturday, before we cut the cake to celebrate on Monday.

It's important that we don't take for granted these amazing assets we have in our communities and the much-needed service they continue to provide after all these years.

A much newer community asset in Cynon Valley is **The Basement at Little Lounge**, a café, green refill shop and community garden at Cilfynydd Community Centre, which will also now host the Cilfynydd Food Pantry. I was privileged to be invited to the opening.

Our Aberdare BID also organised the first **Aberdare Food & Drink Festival** this month. The sun was shining on us and it was lovely to see the town bustling. All credit to Angharad and everybody at the BID for all your hard work!

It has been sad though, to see the closure of Aberdare Wilko. While the shareholders had a payout of £77m, the workers were made redundant. There's something wrong with a system that allows that! I hope Poundland take on all the brilliant staff in the Aberdare store.

We have also held a spate of **Paned a Chacen** coffee mornings this month with different agencies. In addition to the monthly coffee morning, we held a Dystonia coffee morning to mark **Dystonia Awareness Month** and a Dementia one to mark **World Alzheimers Day**. Me and the team had brilliant **Dementia Friends training** the same day. Thanks to Hannah from RCT Council for delivering. We also held a regular **Cuppa with a Copper** session this week.

**Cwmbach Action Group** kindly invited me this month to judge their children's craft competition. All the entries were extremely good, so it was not easy to pick a winner. I also visited **Glynhafod Top Club**, where I thought I'd won the bingo, but it turned out I had been using the wrong sheet...

Another visit was to **Ysbyty Cwm Cynon**, where staff on the Dementia ward are skydiving to raise money for their patients! Most recently, I popped along to the closing of the brilliant stained glass exhibition **Prismatic Art** by Deanne Mangold at St Elvans.

The Bevan Foundation are hosting guests from **Blaenau Ffestiniog** this week to look at ways of building community wealth in Cynon Valley. I will be joining them at Cynon Linc, itself a social enterprise, for discussions at the end of this week.

My team and I have had regular meetings with **South Wales Police**, **Natural Resources Wales**, **Hiraeth Energy**, & **Coleg y Cymoedd** as well as monthly meetings of **Our Aberdare BID & Future Valleys**.



The cutting of Aberdare Library's 60th birthday cake!



At the official opening of The Basement at Little Lounge



Staff at the Dementia ward before their charity skydive!



# In Parliament

We had a very short parliamentary sitting this month, with parliament reconvening after summer on 1st September, only to rise for the Conference recess on 19th September.

I led an adjournment debate to pay tribute to my predecessor **Ann Clwyd** in the final session of the sitting, and was joined by other MPs from Wales and beyond. Thanks to all those who took the time to attend the debate. I quoted Ann's speeches about the Miners Strike and about benefits for lone parents. There is a Remembrance Service for Ann at St Elvans on Friday 13th October at 2pm.

The **Mineworkers Pension Scheme** Campaign this month met with Jonathan Reynolds, Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The purpose of the meeting was to press for the incoming Labour Government to adopt the recommendations of a recent BEIS Committee report on the Pension Scheme. I was glad to be able to co-ordinate this positive discussion. The Government should not be in the business of profiting from Miners' pensions and I was glad to hear Jonathan agree with that.

Another policy I would like to see Labour implement once we are in power is to **scrap the 2-child limit**. Whilst I understand wanting to demonstrate fiscal responsibility, fighting child poverty must be a defining mission. There is no better policy to fight child poverty than to abolish the two-child limit. I wrote an article for Labour Outlook calling for the 2-child limit to be scrapped.

Poverty among older people must be another priority so it was incredibly concerning to see Rishi Sunak toying with getting rid of the **Triple Lock**. British pensions are among the least generous in Europe, and we should be talking about putting more money in pensioners' pockets, not less. I am glad that reason has prevailed and Sunak has shelved those plans and re-committed to the triple lock.

I spoke during an urgent question on the Tory failure to secure any new **offshore wind** farms. Tory reliance on the private sector leaves us vulnerable to the profit margins of big companies. We need a just transition now, so if the private sector won't build wind farms, the public sector must.

Retrofitting and renewable energy is how we will reduce Carbon emissions and your bills, that's why I'm joining colleagues in supporting the **Climate and Ecology Bill**.

The **TUC Conference** passed a resolution that the Government should commit to an inflation-proofed public sector pay rise. Real weekly wages remain below what they were in 2008, that cannot continue. I tabled a Motion in Parliament this month in support of the TUC's policy. Thanks to Joel for helping draft the motion!

This month I have asked a series of **written questions** including on animal welfare, human rights and health services in developing countries.

Finally, I must comment on the **20mph** rollout. Whilst transport is devolved, I have tried to be vocal in support of our Welsh Labour Government and their bold leadership on this important policy. The World Health Organisation are clear that the most effective way to improve pedestrian safety is to reduce the speed of vehicles. So I think it is vital that we stand up in support of Lee Waters and Mark Drakeford in the face of a lot of noise and anger being whipped up by the Welsh Tories and the right-wing press.



Welcoming Joel Lewis to parliament



leaves the transition

Speaking during an urgent question on offshore wind



Showing my support for the Climate & Ecology Bill



# Work Experience

Hello, I'm Joel and I have just finished a week's work experience in the office of Beth Winter, the MP for the Cynon Valley.

I've just finished my first year studying PPE at Oxford University, and I thought that work experience with Beth would really help me with my studies.

I wanted to do this work experience to get a true grasp of what it's like to work in Westminster, to get a sense of the day-to-day of her role, and to see how the people are truly represented in Parliament.

Beth was incredibly generous with the insight she offered, and helped me to get a proper sense of the work that she does day in and day out.

This work experience included a two-day trip to Westminster, where I saw the inner workings of Parliament and had a chance to speak to a number of MPs. All of the MPs that I spoke to told me how lucky I was to have Beth as an MP, and I appreciate that not every MP would be as willing as Beth to allow me to have this access.

I was really lucky to be able to actually help with some of the work in Beth's office, from helping to draft motions and written questions in Parliament, to helping to prepare briefing documents for meetings in Cynon.

I really enjoyed getting a chance to see the inner workings of how laws get passed, and how the decisions are made that affect each and every one of our lives. Not everyone gets the insight that I was lucky enough to get, and for too many people politics seems like a totally alien world.

Being in Westminster, you can see how isolated it can be from the real world, which means that it's hard for ordinary people's voices to be heard and heeded.

Parliament is full of politicians but not actually full of proper politics. Proper politics consists of the things that really matter to ordinary people, and it's so important that we get our voices heard.

In the Valleys, we often believe politics isn't for people like us. It's for other people who are part of another world. That's not the case, and that's something I realised during my work experience.

My first ever impression of politics was being told that it all revolves around backhanders and dodgy dealings, and that can be true in so many cases. The news is constantly full of politicians being in it for themselves, and not actually working for the people who put them into office.

That's not how politics should be. I've always thought that politics can be a force for good. Politics is the way to change people's lives for the better, and to guarantee that every generation has better opportunities than the generation before them.

We need to fix politics so that it works for ordinary people, and the only way to do that is to get involved and make sure that you share what you believe. Politicians are there to work for the people, meaning it's so incredibly important that people get involved at every level to help ensure that the country works for you.

I'd like to give a huge thank you to Beth and all the team in the office who have given me the chance to learn. I'm very grateful to have had the opportunity.

Diolch o galon i bawb.



Joel hard at work on the front desk.