



Beth

A Voice for our Valleys
Llais dros ein Cymoedd

October Newsletter

I feel I must start with the dreadful situation in the Middle East, and the ongoing bombing campaign and siege of **Gaza**. We have witnessed horrific and unimaginable pain, death and destruction of people and entire communities over the past few weeks.

We see daily images of children shaking uncontrollably, crying, injured, traumatised, dead children's bodies carried by their family, screaming in pain and anguish at the loss of their loved ones. The anguish I feel when I see the bombing of innocent people is overwhelming. But it cannot compare to the unbearable suffering of those living through the conflict.

We have a duty to speak out and condemn what is happening. To condemn Hamas's attack on Israeli civilians and children which saw over 1400 killed and over 200 taken hostage. To condemn the collective punishment of a whole population of Palestinians in the Gaza strip by the Israeli state with almost 6500 Palestinians killed, including over 2,350 children, and the displacement of 1 million people from their homes at the time of writing. To condemn the war crimes being committed. To condemn the US & UK Governments who failed to support a Brazilian motion at the UN calling for a ceasefire.

More death and destruction is not the answer. Military action is not the solution. We need a lasting political solution, and peace cannot be built on revenge. **We need an immediate ceasefire.**

Closer to home, earlier this month, I was lucky enough to visit **Rhigos Primary School**, which is everything you could want from a school. An outstanding school, buzzing with activities, ideas and lots of fun that is properly embedded in the community. Last year they were due to visit Parliament as they won an award for the best breakfast club in Wales.

RCT Council is proposing to close the school, and send pupils to Hirwaun, but the community of Rhigos is opposing this and has formed a campaign group which has organised a demonstration, held public meetings and a petition has secured almost 700 signatures.

The campaign group has my full support, and I will stand with them as they campaign to save their brilliant school.

Unfortunately, RCT Council is also proposing to outsource all its remaining **long term home care**. This has been rushed through, without any consultation with trades unions.

I feel very strongly that the care of older and disabled people should not be treated as a commodity, and that the profit motive should have no place in delivering that care.

Solidarity with all those fighting to keep homecare in house, you too have my full support, however you choose to fight this privatisation.

Also set for closure are the **Taff Vale GP practices** in Cilfynydd and Ynysybwl. Once again, I stand with the local communities who are standing up to fight for the vital local services they value. People should not have to travel miles to see a GP.

www.bethwinter.wales

 @BethWinterMP  @BethWinterMP



Calling for a ceasefire
outside the Senedd



October Newsletter

Success in Cynon!

October has been a month of successes in Cynon Valley, so I'd like to use this newsletter to shout about a few of them. **Jacs Aberdare** was this month named Live Entertainment Venue of the Year at the Welsh Hospitality awards in Cardiff! Congratulations to everybody at Jacs, it is a credit to your hard work.

Llwydycoed band competed this month at the Albert Hall at the National Brass Band championships where they placed 7th. A phenomenal achievement and now the 7th best brass band in the UK! **Let's Talk Mens Mental Health** were nominated for an award this month at the Mental Health & Wellbeing Awards Wales.

Business Awards

I want to create more positivity and celebrate more of the amazing assets we have in Cynon Valley. Last year, almost 300 local businesses were nominated by the public of Cynon Valley in my first Cynon Valley Local Business Awards. **I have now opened my 2023 Cynon Valley Business Awards.**

Independent local businesses are at the heart of our communities, and help keep the wealth local. So please take a moment to nominate any business in Cynon you feel deserves a bit of recognition.

The overall winners will be the businesses with the most nominations. You can find more information on my website and Facebook page.

Casework

October has been an extremely busy month for my casework team. The work has been picking up, especially the number of people getting in touch about energy companies and utility bills, particularly issues with SSE and with OVO. This is causing people significant anxiety as we approach the winter.

I have written to the relevant Minister, as well as to OFGEM raising these concerns. I received a typically unhelpful response from the Tory Minister, and am waiting to hear from OFGEM.

This uptick in casework surrounding energy companies was why we held a Cuppa and a Cake in my office with RCT Council's Heat & Save team. With personal debts forming a mounting problem in our communities, Money Matters & Smart Money Community Banking will be our guests for the November coffee morning.

Finally, we have been contacted by the many residents concerned about the privatisation and cuts to services described above.

Coming Up

There is plenty on in Cynon Valley in November! As always I will be attending as many Remembrance services as time allows. Some other upcoming events include:

- Harvest Community Day, Hirwaun YMCA, 1st November
- All Shook Up - The Musical, Cwmaman Arts Centre, 2nd, 3rd & 4th November
- Winter Craft Fair, Cynon Linc, 4th November
- Fireworks at Abercynon RFC, 4th November
- Aberdare Christmas Festival, 30th November!

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Jacs's award for best Live Entertainment Venue



The advert for the Cynon Valley Business Awards



The Aberdare Christmas Festival Poster.

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Cynon Valley

This month, the public memorial celebrating the life and career of **Ann Clwyd**, my predecessor, took place in St Elvan's. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the service, but my thoughts remain with Ann's loved ones.

I recently secured a debate in parliament to celebrate Ann's life and work as the MP for Cynon Valley over 35 years. It was lovely to hear from so many colleagues about the impact she made on them.

In a previous newsletter, I wrote about how **three Cynon Valley rugby teams were promoted** up into the East Central Division One. **Abercwmboi RFC, Abercynon RFC** and **Aberdare RFC** were all promoted up to the third tier of Welsh rugby, where they join Mountain Ash RFC and Ynysybwl RFC in a division dominated by Cynon Valley. At the time, I moved an **Early Day Motion** in parliament celebrating their achievements.

This month, I caught up with representatives from the three promoted clubs, presenting them with framed copies of the motion in my office, and later in the **National Tap** for a drink and some snacks. Thanks to all three clubs for coming and to Tracey at Grey Trees for hosting us!

At the end of September, I was able to meet with friends from **Blaenau Ffestiniog** who were visiting RCT as part of a study visit organised by the Bevan Foundation. Blaenau Ffestiniog has the highest density of social enterprises in Wales, and on our visit to them in the summer, we stayed at a community owned hotel, drank at the community owned pub, and visited the community owned mountain biking centre. Together, the social enterprises in the area employ over 150 people and contribute £1.5m a year to the local economy. That money circulates in the local economy, instead of being siphoned away by larger businesses.

There is much we can learn from them, but they were equally impressed by what is being done here in the Cynon Valley, when they visited **Cynon Linc, Bryncynon Strategy** and **Cynon Valley Organic Adventures**.

After it looked like **Wilko Aberdare** workers had a reprieve due to the deal with Poundland, we heard the devastating news this month that Poundland have pulled out due to crumbling concrete (RAAC) in the building. If you or anyone you know worked at Wilko and needs support, please get in touch. We will do what we can to help.

The amazing **Mothers Matter** are currently holding a weekly drop-in at my office on Monday mornings. Mothers Matter is a fantastic community project offering pre & postnatal mental health support. Pop in from 10am on a Monday or contact my office for more information.

We have continued to host **Cuppa and a Cake** coffee mornings in my office alongside a host of local organisations. This month, we held three, with a coffee morning to mark **World Mental Health Day** with New Horizons, one with **Dystonia UK**, and one with **Trivallis** and **Cynon Taf Community Housing**. In the month ahead, we will hold a coffee morning with **Money Matters & Smart Money Cymru**, as well as the next **Cuppa with a Copper** in my office.

Finally, I popped down to Pontypridd this month for an event by Kinship Cymru to mark **Kinship Care Week**. Kinship care is in crisis. Kinship carers really are such a caring, selfless group of people. They deserve better recognition, resources & support.



Ann Clwyd, who was my predecessor in Cynon Valley



With reps from Abercynon RFC at my office



Meeting kinship carers on Kinship Care Week

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In Parliament

The Conference Season continued into the middle of October, and after two short weeks of parliamentary activity, Parliament will now be prorogued ahead of the Kings speech.

Tory Conference was a disaster, compounded by the farce of the Prime Minister announcing the scrapping of HS2 to Manchester during the conference, which was taking place in Manchester.

It is clear, not only from Tory Conference, but also from the subsequent by-elections, that **the Conservative Party is in freefall**, and will lose the next election, whenever they decide to call it.

As they try desperately to find other people to blame for the mess they have made, creating and exacerbating culture wars at every opportunity, **they are poisoning our politics**. Labour needs to refute this cynical Trumpism, but the Party also needs to go further, to offer a positive vision for Britain, and differentiate themselves from the Conservatives on the things that matter.

It was in that context that I travelled up to Liverpool for **Labour Conference**. It was a packed agenda, as I tried to fit in a host of fringes and events in two days. I spoke at fringes organised by CND, PCS Union, Labour for a New Democracy, the Socialist Campaign Group, Momentum, the Morning Star, and Peace and Justice. I used the opportunity to campaign against the 2-child limit, and for wealth taxes, two vital policies which I will continue to press for the Labour Party to adopt.

Underpinning all my speeches was the demand for **inflation-proofed pay rises for working class people**. With the cost-of-living rocketing, real wages have fallen, and people's lives are getting harder. Key workers are the backbone of our society, it is time we paid them properly.

The Conference was overshadowed by the deteriorating situation in **Gaza and Israel**. Upon our return to parliament, I asked a series of **written questions** to the Foreign Office about the conflict and the role of UK Government. At the time of writing, I am yet to receive any responses.

I also co-sponsored my colleague Richard Burgon's **Early Day Motion** calling for a ceasefire and for greater protections for civilians in Gaza and Israel. This has since been signed by 80 MPs, as support for a ceasefire grows. I repeated my call for a ceasefire at a **demonstration in Cardiff** organised by the PSC, as well as making repeated calls across social media. Our voice is the most powerful thing we have, and I will continue to use my voice to call for peace.

At the end of September, I spoke at the **Gwyn Alf Williams lecture** in Merthyr Tydfil, organised by Yes Cymru. It was interesting to debate the nature of devolution, independence and the future of the UK. Whilst I don't share all the views of YesCymru activists, I recognise the growing strength of feeling in support of independence, and I understand it. **Westminster is not working for Wales**. In my opinion, this is a critical debate, and one we in the Labour Party should not shy away from.

Finally, it was a delight to spend some time with **Youth Members of Parliament** in Cardiff as they campaign on the Right to Food, and for Universal Free School Meals. It was so inspiring to speak to the next generation as they fight such an important campaign.



Campaigning for public sector pay rises at Conference



The Gwyn Alf Williams lecture in Merthyr Tydfil [📷 Steve Jones]



Presenting to Youth Parliament Members on Right to Food