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Beth

A Voice for our Valleys
Llais dros ein Cymoedd

January Newsletter

I hope you have enjoyed a lovely and peaceful Christmas and New Year!

2024 is an extremely significant year in Cynon Valley, and across the whole South Wales coalfield, as it marks **40 years since the Miners' Strike** of 1984/85, when Margaret Thatcher waged war on the miners and the working class.

This period in our history shaped communities like Cynon Valley. It was also a time that had a profound personal impact on me and my politics growing up in Aberdare.

I well remember joining picket lines across the valley with my parents as a young child, and the sense of strength, togetherness and solidarity you felt marching behind union banners.

It was an extremely difficult time for many in our Valley, but a time we must not forget, and I'm sure there will be a host of events and exhibitions to commemorate the anniversary across Cynon Valley and South Wales.

Another important period in South Wales's history was the 1920s: In 1927, miners from the South Wales coalfield marched on Westminster in the **first ever Hunger March**.

97 years later, at the end of this month, RCT Trades Union Council are holding a **Hunger March** of their own, to protest about hunger and the cost-of-living today. Speakers will include **Neville Southall**, food bank representatives and Jason Richards from RCT Trades Council.

It is a sad reflection on modern Britain, when communities like ours who organised hunger marches back in the 1920s are now having to do the same in the 2020s.

And it's no surprise really: we have now had almost 14 years of brutal cuts, the longest squeeze on incomes in more than 200 years.

A general election cannot come soon enough.

Head to the [RCT Trades Union Council Facebook page](#) for more information about the Hunger March, which is taking place in Pontypridd on Saturday 27th January.

www.bethwinter.wales



@BethWinterMP



@BethWinterMP



RIGHT TO FOOD RALLY & HUNGER MARCH
Saturday 27th January

Assemble 12.30pm outside NatWest in Pontypridd
Rally starts at YMa in Taff St at 1pm

Speakers include:
Neville Southall MBE, Welsh football legend
Ceide Corraio, Merthyr Cynon Foodbank
Amanda Heydon Hall, Pontypridd Foodbank
Jason Richards, RCT Trades Council
Beth Winter, Cynon Valley MP

Music—Big Hearts International Cultural Ensemble
A Community Dinner—Free food for attendees

We will be collecting for local food banks on the day, so please bring a tin if you are able.

www.righttofood.wales

Poster for the upcoming Hunger March



January Newsletter

Business Awards Winners

Back in December, on Small Business Saturday, I was delighted to announce **Grow with Kieron** as the Overall Winner of the 2023 Cynon Valley Business Awards!

We had thousands of individual nominations for almost 300 businesses across Cynon Valley, and the business with the most nominations was Grow.

Kieron is such an infectious personality and it's clear how hard he works, running groups across the Valleys and online.

As well as the overall winner, I was delighted to announce winners in five different categories. Llongyfarchiadau to Dec-Elec Electrical Contractors, Bark Lane, Balloonery, Pop-In Café & the LA Performance Academy.

Christmas Card Winners

This year's competition attracted some amazing entries from children and adults of all ages.

Olivia, Year 8, from St John Baptist CIW High School was the overall winner, and her fabulous design was sent out to all my contacts in Cynon Valley and beyond.

I hosted Olivia, and some other winners at my office to congratulate them and present them with a pack of their cards to send to friends and family.

You can see Olivia's design, and some of my other favourite designs on my [Facebook page](#). Congratulations to Olivia, and thank you to everyone who took part. We have got so much talent in our communities!

TATA Steel & Port Talbot

The 40th anniversary of the Miners' strike is a good time to reflect on the devastation caused in coalfield communities by the rapid de-industrialisation of places like Cynon Valley. We know all too well the impact of sudden losses of 1000s of jobs.

That is what is facing workers at TATA steel in Port Talbot, with the news that almost 3000 jobs will be lost at the steelworks.

What we know in Cynon Valley is that more livelihoods will be at risk, not only across the supply chain, but also local businesses that rely on the incomes of steelworkers. Solidarity with all steelworkers at this difficult time.

Steel is part of our heritage in South Wales, but not only that: If we are to build much-needed green infrastructure in the UK, steel is a vital part of our future too. This is a crucial strategic industry and we must not lose the capacity to make steel from scratch in the UK.



2023 Business Awards Winner: Grow with Kieron!



Christmas Card Competition Winner: Olivia, Year 8, St Johns



TATA Steelworks at Port Talbot

Cynon Valley

The scale of the human suffering continuing to unfold in **Gaza** is absolutely horrific.

The Rhondda Cynon Taf branch of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (RCTPSC) organised a very moving vigil at Aberdare Library to coincide with the major national demonstration in London, and I was glad to join them. RCTPSC are now organising **Gaza fundraiser** in Treforest to take place on Saturday 10th February. Find out more [here](#).

RCT Council this month progressed with their plans to close Rhigos Primary School. After RCT Cabinet had voted to close the school, local Councillors requested a 'Call-in', which led to a special meeting of the Council's scrutiny committee. Members of the **Save Rhigos Primary School** campaign requested that I speak on their behalf at the meeting. I was only too happy to do so, but I was surprised and disappointed that my request to speak was denied. Rhigos Primary School is a vital part of life in the village, and I know campaigners will not give up easily. I stand with them.

Speaking of schools, I was delighted to spend some time at **Cwmbach Community Primary School** this month, following the school's participation in UK parliament week. Thank you to school staff for arranging, and to learners for so many brilliant questions! I hope to visit again soon.

The **Constitution Commission report** was published last week which determined that the status quo is not a viable option for the future Wales. This is an important document and may be one the CLP would consider tabling for debate at a future meeting. It is clear that greater devolution of powers is a much-needed development, and I am pleased to be involved also in the campaign being launched at this time for **Devolution of the Crown Estates to Wales**. [There](#) will be an open meeting to discuss this further on Tuesday 30th January at 7 p.m.

The **regular Cuppa and a Cake** sessions continue in my office, this month we had **Pobl Housing Group** drop-in for a cuppa and a chat to offer their expertise to local people on housing and homelessness. In February, we will be joined by another housing organisation, this time **Platfform**.

In the context of 14 years of real-terms pay cuts across the public sector, **junior doctors** in the BMA union voted to take three days of strike action in Wales this month. I joined them **on the picket line** at Prince Charles Hospital, and will continue to stand with them in their fight for fair pay and conditions.

We have had a number of meetings with police over the last month, and PCSOs now drop into my office regularly for a catch up. If you have any issues for South Wales Police, please let us know, and we will pass your concerns on.

Finally, we have been extremely **busy with casework** over the winter so far, the busiest it has been in my time as an MP. We have seen ever increasing number of constituents in energy debt, and unfortunately are issuing food and fuel bank vouchers at a faster rate than ever before. **We really need to get the Tories out.**



With local people at the recent Gaza for vigil in Aberdare



Getting quizzed at Cwmbach Community School



With Junior Doctors at Prince Charles Hospital

In Parliament

January has seen an **escalation in the Middle East**, with UK & US forces bombing Yemen. In such a dangerous moment, reckless acts of escalation like this risk a wider conflict. There is no military solution to this conflict, there must be a diplomatic one. The sooner that diplomatic solution is achieved, the better for all involved, so the recent rhetoric from Netanyahu that Israel will not accept a 2-state solution is extremely concerning.

It was a disgrace that the Prime Minister did not consult parliament on the bombing. When will we learn from our mistakes and realise that **more death & destruction is not the answer?**!

Our Government has been consistently ignoring Israel's many and repeated violations of international law. Indeed, an Israeli Minister this month backed "the emigration of hundreds of thousands from Gaza". The UK Government Minister failed to condemn this when [I asked him about it](#).

The **Horizon scandal** captured everyone's attention at the start of the year. It is outrageous that it took an ITV drama for the UK Government to show any sort of interest in putting things right for the hundreds of sub-postmasters impacted.

There needs to be full and proper compensation for sub-postmasters, but there needs to be accountability too. The Post Office needs to be held accountable, Fujitsu should not be getting any public money, and the series of Govt Ministers who've failed to act until now must be held accountable too. I signed Kate Osborne MP's motion calling for justice and accountability.

I discussed this on S4C's political show [y Byd yn ei le](#). Another topic of discussion was the **scandal at S4C**. My thoughts go out to the staff and former staff at S4C who have obviously been through a very tumultuous time. It is shocking that the Govt Minister has never once met with the Chair of S4C.

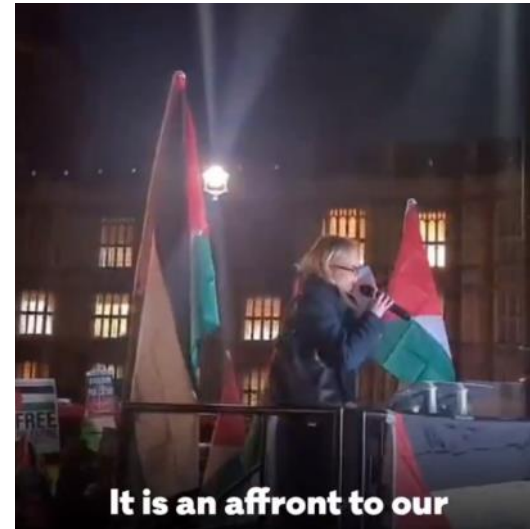
I led a debate on [public sector pay](#) this month. Teachers are getting £12,000 less in real terms than they were in 2010. Social workers £15,000 less. Paramedics £16,000 less. Workers are being driven into poverty. That cannot go on. Putting money in workers' pockets is the way out of the cost-of-living crisis. I tabled an Early Day Motion calling on the Govt to deliver pay restoration.

It was great to catch up with Cllr Gareth Jones this month at the launch of the latest report by the **Industrial Communities Alliance** in Westminster. This important new report emphasises the need for [more jobs, and better jobs closer to home](#).

Last week at [Energy questions](#), I asked the Govt why they are pushing forward a bill to grant more offshore oil licences, when they know full well it will not bring down bills, but will make the climate crisis worse. The Govt must invest in renewable energy & focus on consumer bills.

Last week also saw the **Rwanda Bill** return to the House of Commons for its third reading. I joined my Labour colleagues in voting against this cruel bill which is costing the country millions of pounds and will not resolve the issue of people crossing the channel in unsafe boats. We need solutions that treat those seeking to come to our country with the humanity and compassion that they deserve.

Finally, the **Welsh Labour Leadership** contest is ongoing. I have not endorsed either candidate, and I am bitterly disappointed that there is not a woman in the race. I wrote in Tribune this month raising some ideas around the socialist vision I feel the next leader of Welsh Labour should commit to. Read the article on the [Tribune website](#).



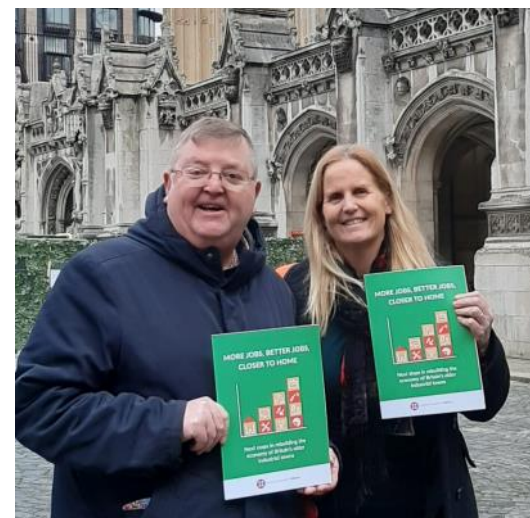
It is an affront to our

Speaking at an anti-war demonstration in London



because one thing I agree

Discussing the scandal at S4C on Y Byd yn Ei Le



With Cllr Gareth Jones at Westminster

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