

Mid & West Wales

Cefin CAMPBELL MS

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CONTACT ME!

It's the end of February once again and 2023 is fast flying by.

The start of the year has been a very busy time for me – with plenty to do in the Senedd and across the region. I have also been fulfilling my responsibilities as a Designated Member, as part of the Co-Operation Agreement between Plaid Cymru and the Welsh Government.

The last few months have been a worrying time for everyone – with the cost of living crisis, the immense pressure on our health service, and strikes by workers in the health, education and transport sectors as they press for fair pay and working conditions. In the Senedd, the Plaid Cymru group has been pushing the Welsh Government to tackle these crises, and distance itself from the disastrous Conservative government in Westminster.

This newsletter is an opportunity to update you on some of the issues I've been raising in the Senedd and across the region over the past few weeks.


Please follow my social media pages for updates, or get in touch if I can be of any help.


With best wishes,


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COST OF LIVING CRISIS

Undoubtedly one of the biggest challenges facing constituents across the region in recent months has been the cost of living crisis – with prices of food, fuel and energy on the rise significantly. I have supported several efforts in the Senedd to try to support households facing immense pressure as incomes are squeezed.

I have been urging the expansion of the Rural Fuel Relief scheme for Wales – raising the issue directly with the First Minister. Currently, rural areas in Scotland and England benefit from the scheme – but parts of Wales do not qualify – despite the fact that we are heavily reliant on cars to commute to work. The UK Government urgently needs to reform this.

A disproportionate number of homes in Mid and West are off the gas grid – with over 70% of homes in Ceredigion and over half of Powys homes without a grid connection. These homes are being detrimentally impacted by unstable prices of LPG and heating oil, and I have been regularly pressing the Welsh Government to urge the Westminster Government to provide support for these households. At last, the UK Government has now announced that off-grid households will receive a £200 payment in February through their electricity provider. The next step for me is to push for more support for off-grid businesses affected by the cost of living crisis.



RURAL BANKING

The past few months have been a frustrating time for towns across the region as more and more banks on our high streets have closed.

The situation is now critical – with 36% of bank branches in Wales having closed between 2012 and 2021. The impact of losing banks on vulnerable people and small businesses is significant, and often a nail in the coffin of our rural towns which already face a number of challenges.

With the Welsh Government intending to develop a Community Bank for Wales by 2023, I had the opportunity to call on the Minister for the Economy to ensure that rural communities are prioritised in any plans to establish a new banking regime in Wales. In Tenby, which will be a no bank town within months, I have enquired about setting up a banking 'Hub' in the town to serve the local community.

RADIO GLANGWILI

It was a privilege to pay tribute to the community radio station 'Radio Glangwili' just before Christmas, as the station celebrated fifty years of broadcasting.

I know that the service has offered comfort and entertainment to a large number of patients and staff over the decades, as well as providing great opportunities and experience for many who have later become media stars.

The fact that the station continues to thrive, despite all the technological advances over the past half century is testament to its popularity, and the dedication of the tireless volunteer crew.

Congratulations to the station on reaching this historic milestone, and on to the next half century!

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Health conditions that affect women are often neglected – and it was a privilege to contribute to a Plaid Cymru debate last year to raise awareness of this.

During the debate, I had the opportunity to highlight the story of 23-year-old Emily, who suffers from Endometriosis. The condition has had an extremely detrimental effect on Emily's day to day life, and she has struggled to get the necessary medical attention needed to address the condition.

1 in 10 women suffer from the condition, but the provision to diagnose and treat Endometriosis remains inconsistent – especially in my region. I have often stressed the need for the Welsh Government and Health Boards to invest more resources to deal with the condition – and in particular to finally publish their women's health strategy.



Emily has done great work to increase awareness of the condition, and I was delighted to see her nominated for a *Womenspire* award by ChwaraeTeg for her tireless work in fighting for better healthcare.

(Above: Meeting with Emily, her mother and Cllr Carys Jones)



LLANDEILO BYPASS

The Welsh Government's delays on the development of the Llandeilo bypass are extremely frustrating.

The uncertainty and lack of clarity continues to have a detrimental effect on local businesses and residents. Alongside Adam Price MS I continue to press the Welsh Government to move forward urgently with clear plans and a timetable to build the bypass.

FUW BREAKFAST

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day! It was a pleasure to attend FUW breakfasts in Cardiff Bay and Llanarthne in Carmarthenshire in January, taking the opportunity to taste the best of Welsh produce and discuss the future of the agriculture sector. It was also an opportunity to raise money for the **DPJ Foundation** charity which undertakes vital work in tackling mental health stigma in the agriculture sector.



SCHOOL VISIT

Without a doubt, one of the highlights of the job is getting to meet school and college students – the next generation of politicians!

Over the past few months, I have met with several schools and colleges in the Senedd – including Ysgol y Felin, Llanelli and Coleg Sir Gâr.

I've also had the opportunity to drop in on a number of schools in the region over the past few weeks – including Ysgol Bancyfelin, Ysgol Hafan y Môr, Tenby, Ysgol Bro Myrddin and Ysgol Rhys Prichard, Llandovery.



PROMOTING WELSH WOOL



Wool is a remarkable resource that offers significant potential for the agriculture sector and businesses across Wales.

In November, I sponsored an event in Senedd highlighting the wide range of uses wool has – from clothing, to heating buildings to creating jewellery.

In addition, I was delighted to establish a Cross-Party Group on Welsh Wool, while also being appointed as Chair of the group. I look forward to working with the sector and stakeholder over the coming months for the benefit of this particular industry.

AIR AMBULANCE

I know that a large number of residents in Powys, Ceredigion and Dwyfor-Meirionnydd are very concerned about plans to relocate the Air Ambulance sites from Welshpool and Caernarfon and centralise them in Rhuddlan.

There are still big questions about these plans, and alongside my colleagues in Plaid Cymru I have been pressing the Government to intervene in this case. I had the opportunity to speak at a debate in the Senedd in January calling on the Air Ambulance to continue to be based in Welshpool and Caernarfon. During the debate, I raised specific concerns the possible relocation may have on the response times of the Rapid Response Vehicles (RRVs), which are an important component of the service.

CO-OPERATION AGREEMENT

A significant amount of my time is spent on my role as a Designated Member as part of the Plaid Cymru Co-Operation Agreement – working with Welsh Government Ministers to help develop and implement the 46 policies in the agreement.

There has been significant progress in many areas in recent months – setting up expert panels to investigate the future of social care in Wales as well as devolving broadcasting and media.

I have been leading discussions on the future of agriculture in Wales – working on the framework of the Sustainable Farming Plan and the Agriculture Bill, as well as winning key concessions on the NVZs regulations that will help Welsh farmers.

The Agreement has secured significant steps to address the second home crisis which is a pressing problem in many parts of my region, as well as starting the process of reviewing Council Tax and drawing up a Bill for the development of Welsh language education.



Launching the Arfor 2 scheme in the Egin, Carmarthen, delivering £11million for west Wales councils to support the Welsh language

Significant constitutional steps have also been announced - including increasing the size of the Senedd - a move that will ensure a mature and equitable democracy for Wales. It is also good to see primary children across Wales benefitting from one of the most progressive gains of the Agreement to date - free school meals - which continue to help households across the country, especially as the cost of living crisis intensifies.

TYWI VALLEY PYLONS?

I know that many residents of the Tywi Valley are concerned about possible plans to install electricity pylons along the valley to transport electricity from Radnorshire.

Along with Adam Price MP, I have met with Bute Energy to discuss these concerns further.

While I am fully supportive of renewable energy, it is vital that the company considers the local concerns about the impact these pylons can have on the natural beauty of the area – and in particular consider options such as undergrounding the cables. Adam Price and I have set up an online petition to oppose the pylons and attended local public meetings,



RURAL OSCARS AWARDS

It was great to attend the Countryside Alliance's 'Rural Oscars' awards ceremony in the Senedd last month.

It was an opportunity to recognise and reward the best of rural Wales – including pubs, rural enterprises and local shops.

Congratulations to the businesses who were nominated for an award - it was great to meet you on the night.

LOSS OF EUROPEAN FUNDING

In January the successful projects were announced in the latest round of the UK Government's Levelling Up fund. Mid and West Wales did not receive a penny of investment – despite the Conservatives' empty promises that Wales would not lose out by leaving the European Union.

Wales will now lose out on over £1 billion as a result of leaving the European Union, and the 'Levelling Up' scheme ignores the needs of our communities, while also undermining our devolution settlement. This is not 'levelling up' – but more hammering down.



ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

Recent weeks have seen workers in a large number of sectors striking for better pay, working conditions and pensions.

While the Tories and Labour have ignored the strikes, shoulder to shoulder with my friends in Plaid Cymru, it has been a privilege to stand with those calling for better pay and working conditions.

Over the past few weeks, I have supported nurses and ambulance workers in Carmarthen and Cardiff, and will continue to stand alongside strikers over the coming weeks – as well as keeping the pressure on the Governments in Cardiff Bay and Westminster to offer them better conditions.



TACKLING RURAL POVERTY

Over the past few weeks, I have been very keen to raise awareness of rural poverty – something that often lurks beneath the surface in communities across Mid and West Wales.

Over a third of my region's children live in poverty, while factors such as a lack of public transport, the housing crisis and low wages mean many households face significant hardship.

According to one recent survey, residents in rural areas are likely to spend over 10% more on goods and services than those in urban areas.

The Government's response to this type of poverty has been too slow, and I had the opportunity in January to call on the First Minister to commit to developing a specific strategy to deal with rural poverty. This will continue to be a priority for me over the coming months.

CRISIS IN OUR HEALTH SERVICE

There is no doubt that our health service is facing a crisis in Wales. From extensive waiting lists, to endless ambulance delays, poor working conditions and demoralised staff.

While more of a decade of Conservative rule in Westminster has cut Welsh funding, it is vital to remember that Labour has been responsible for health in Wales since 1999 – and these failings in our health service need to be urgently addressed.

Last month, I had the opportunity to contribute to Plaid Cymru's debate on the crisis in our health service.

In the debate, I had the opportunity to focus on the shortcomings in the ambulance service – which are a clear concern in Mid and West Wales. Plaid Cymru has now launched a 5-Point Plan to tackle the crisis within the health service.

The steps include giving our NHS workers fair pay, better working conditions and putting more emphasis on preventive health measures, and creating a resilient health and care service.

This will remain my priority over the coming weeks and months.

BACKING OUR FARMERS

The coming months will be an important time for the future of the agriculture sector in Wales as the Agriculture Bill is debated in the Senedd.

I remain in close contact with farmers across the region, and it was great to meet farmers recently in Dolgellau and Pont-rhyd-y-groes to discuss their concerns.

It is vital that any legislation protects the key role of farmers as food producers, as well as recognising their role in caring for the environment and responding to the climate change agenda.



HERE TO HELP

Along with Council Leader Darren Price, I recently had the opportunity to visit Carmarthenshire County Council's Hub in Carmarthen. The Hub offers advice to county residents on a wide range of issues, particularly support to tackle the cost of living crisis. They have helped hundreds of residents over the past few months, and it's worth getting in touch for an appointment if you're facing a problem or hardship.



BACKING OFFSHORE WIND

It was a pleasure to co-sponsor an event in the Senedd recently to promote the huge potential of the Milford Haven Waterway in creating a low carbon future.

South west Wales has the potential to be a global leader in a green energy revolution – delivering huge economic and social benefit to local communities.

I remain in discussions with a number of authorities and stakeholders in the area, and will be pressing the Welsh and UK Government to ensure that Pembrokeshire can benefit from this huge potential.



COALTOWN VISIT

Accompanied by Adam Price MS and Plaid Cymru's Economy spokesman Luke Fletcher MS, I had a hugely beneficial visit to Coaltown Coffee in Ammanford in January.

It was a pleasure to learn more about how the business has grown from strength to strength over the past few years, as well as the challenges the company faces in the current economic climate.

It was also a chance to sample their wonderful coffee which is now hugely popular across Wales!

SHEEP DIP FEES

A consultation by Natural Resources Wales proposes to raise the cost of disposing of sheep dip to £3,728 - a huge increase of over 800%!

This increase would deal a significant blow to our farmers in a cost of living crisis, as well as undermining wider efforts to tackle Sheep Scab in Wales. I had the opportunity to challenge the Agriculture Minister about this proposed hike recently.

