

# HELEDD FYCHAN MS

Plaid Cymru - South Wales Central



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**Happy Easter! This newsletter is in opportunity to update you on my work and some of the issues I have been raising in the Senedd and across the region in March.**

The past few months have been a difficult time for many, with concerns surrounding rising costs of living, the strain on our healthcare system, and strikes by workers in health, education, and transport sectors as they fight for fair pay and working conditions.

I raised a number of important issues in the Senedd on behalf of constituents, such as the threat to bus services, pollution in our rivers as well as lack of access to dental services.

If you have any issues or concerns that you would like me to raise, or if you need support, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

*Heledd Fychan*

**Heledd Fychan MS**

# Remembering Brian Arnold

Sadly, former Plaid Cymru Councillor Brian Arnold passed away on the 28th of January 2023. His funeral was held on the 6th of March in Glyntaf Crematorium followed by a funeral tea in Zion Chapel, Ynysybwl. Below is the eulogy I delivered at the service. I know many of you will have your own memories of Brian, and I hope there will be another Opportunity for us to come together soon to remember and celebrate his life.

A few months before the May 2021 Senedd election, when I was elected for the first time as a Senedd member, Brian rang me. He wanted to apologise that, because of ill health, he wasn't able to deliver leaflets, as he had always done and he wanted me to know how sorry he was. I could tell how heartfelt the apology was, and how painful it was for Brian that he couldn't do what he'd always done for decades to support countless other Plaid candidates. He was just as eager to be out on the streets, persuading people to vote for the party he'd dedicated his life to promoting and serving and was clearly frustrated that his body wouldn't allow it.

After the election, he was one of the first visitors to pop into my office in Pontypridd, making sure to bring me lots of reading material about different community groups in his beloved Ynysybwl. He pressed on me the importance of making contact, and offering support, making it very clear that I needed to prioritise Ynysybwl in my work.

In May 2022, no one was more delighted than Brian when Amanda Ellis and Tony Burnell were elected as Plaid Cymru County Borough Councillors for Ynysybwl, and then, following Tony's untimely death, Paula Evans was elected to succeed him. Though he couldn't be out on the streets campaigning, he made sure his support was known by plastering his window and car with Plaid Cymru posters leaving everyone in no doubt that the candidates had his full support.

After all, Brian had been a member of Plaid Cymru for 66 years, since he was sixteen and in his own words, he joined Plaid because he believed Wales is a nation and nations should be independent. In 1986, he was elected as a community Councillor and in 1999, was elected as the Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Councillor a role he retained until he stood down in 2012. The following year, he received the Outstanding Contribution Award from Plaid Cymru as a token of gratitude for the thousands of miles he had walked, delivering leaflets in Ynysybwl and beyond. Even in the last few years, he remained determined to play his part, delivering leaflets in his street.

Brian worked tirelessly for his community, and was at the heart of so many organisations. He started a youth club, the aelwyd, providing much needed entertainment for youth in the village. In everything he did, he did with integrity and humility. He became the Chairperson of RCT in 2003 and held his charity event with a James Bond theme. Brian not having married, tried to involve as many of his friends as possible in his mayoral duties and many of them had the honour of accompanying him on his official duties as the Chair's consort, making sure that everyone had the opportunity to enjoy the occasion as much as he did.

He was a perfect gentleman, mild mannered and always saw the good in people. He never raised his voice or talked badly about anyone. He was a proud, proud Welshman, a good friend and a tremendous colleague. He will be missed by not only by his Plaid colleagues and friends but by the whole community.

We stand on the shoulders on giants. And Brian was undoubtedly a giant in terms of his contribution, and his love for his community and his country. Diolch i Brian am bopeth – dros ei gymuned a'i genedl. Mawr yw ein dyled iddo, am ei ymroddiad a'i angerdd. Bydded iddo orffwys mewn



# Casework update

Over the past month we received several requests for help from residents in the region. This is not surprising considering some of the challenges facing people at the moment with the inflation in our living costs and the effects of the lockdown period still weighing heavily on children and young people in particular. Inquiries received from individuals were varied and covered issues such as bills, health waiting lists, floods, planning issues, education for people with additional learning needs, care homes, public transport, police issues, parking and housing.

As a team, we always listen and try to respond in a practical and supportive way. This month it has been especially heartening to be involved with two families who now have suitable homes and one family who got a refund for a mistake in their benefits.

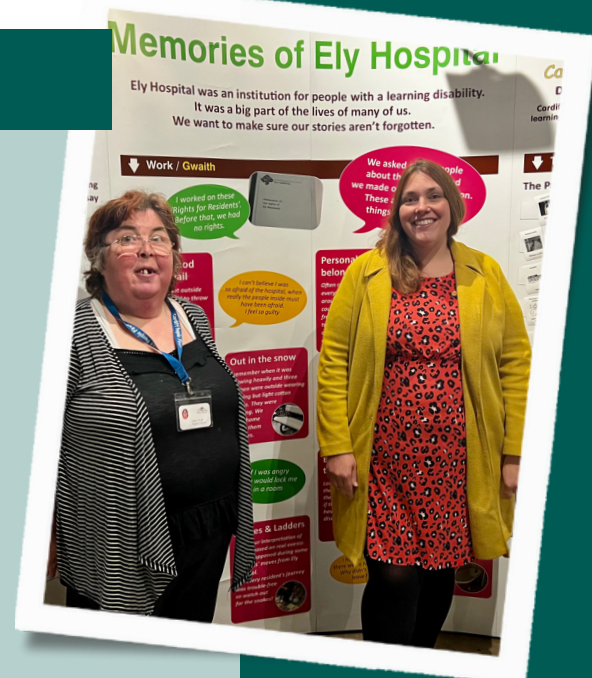


## In our community

I have had the pleasure of visiting and meeting with several community groups and organisations.

Highlights include attending the Nation of Sanctuary Awards, visiting Pobl's Castle House project, and learning more about Cardiff People First at Corporation Market, Cardiff. I also had the opportunity to visit the newly opened Siop Fach Sero in Ferndale, and met with Newid Ffem - a student group in Ysgol Plas Mawr, where we discussed issues such as gender inequality and sexism in schools and society. It's always great to hear about the fantastic work being done in the region, and I'm honored to support and visit these projects.

If you would like me to visit a group or business in your area or if you'd like to get advice, please get in touch. You can learn more about my visits across the region [here](#).



## LeadHERsip

I was delighted to welcome Hafsa to the Senedd as part of Chwarae Teg #LeadHERship programme.

Women continue to be underrepresented in Welsh public life and programmes like this play a crucial role in empowering young women to become key decision-makers.



# Llantwit Major Unites Against Racism

Last month, the far-right group Patriotic Alternative planned a protest in Llantwit Major in response to the building of temporary accommodation for refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine.

However, the community quickly rallied together to make it clear that there is no place for racism in their town. The local football club, Llantwit Major AFC / CPD Llanilltud Fawr, issued a statement condemning racism and xenophobia, which was shared worldwide.

The town united to oppose the far-right group, with banner-making workshops and a planned counter-march and rally. The community's response has been a testament to the town's values of inclusivity and hospitality.

As a Member of the Senedd, I am proud to see the people of Llantwit Major standing up against hate and ensuring that their town remains a welcoming place for everyone. Let's continue to fight against racism.



## Treherbert Line Closure

Many residents living in the Rhondda will be concerned by the announcement that the Treherbert to Pontypridd line will close for a period of eight months, from 29 April 2023 to early 2024, as part of the South Wales Metro works.

In July 2022, I wrote to both Transport for Wales and the Deputy Minister for Climate Change to request detailed plans on how they would ensure the impact on residents would be minimised and to ask what other options were being considered. Whilst I received some assurances from Transport for Wales at the time, these seem to be at odds with the information now available. A rail replacement bus service is being promised, consisting of a core timetable of one bus every 30 minutes stopping at all stations, a dedicated school support plan for Treorchy Comprehensive School and morning and evening peak enhancement.

So many residents rely on the train to access services and go to school, college or work, and don't have alternative ways to travel. I will be monitoring the situation closely as works commence, and raising any issues that arise directly with Transport for Wales and the Welsh Government.

Whilst the investment and improvements to the line is of course welcomed, we must ensure that everything possible is done to minimise the impact on those affected. Should you have any specific concerns about the closure of the service, please get in touch.



# Listening to residents: An update on the independent flood review



Flooding is a serious issue that has affected communities across Wales. In South Wales Central we have seen the devastating impact that floods can have on homes, businesses, and public infrastructure. As a Senedd member, I am committed to standing up for residents and fighting for answers.

Last year Plaid Cymru secured an independent flood review as part of the cooperation agreement with the Welsh Government. As part of this ongoing work, I have commissioned independent research to gather evidence from local residents and businesses that were severely affected by floods. This will help to ensure that their voices are heard and hopefully lead to the Welsh Government taking the necessary steps to mitigate the impact of floods and support those who have been affected.

It is important that we understand the impact of floods on communities so that we can work towards finding solutions to prevent future damage and support those who have been impacted. If you have been affected by flooding and have not yet shared your experience, please get in touch.



## Senedd Business

I have been contacted by a number of resident concerned about the end of the emergency bus scheme and what this means to local services.

Without reliable bus services, people miss appointments, are late to school and work, and feel isolated. It's time for the Welsh Government to prioritize access to reliable public transport for all. Funding cuts to bus services will only exacerbate the issues faced by those who rely on them. It's important that the Welsh Government ensures equity of access to reliable public transport to improve the lives of individuals and also to reduce our carbon footprint and promote more sustainable modes of transportation.



# Tackling Fuel Poverty and the Prepayment Scandal in South Wales

Recently I have been contacted by a number of individuals and families who are struggling to afford to heat their homes. As energy prices continue to increase, more people are being disconnected or going into debt just to keep the lights on. Research from Citizens Advice has shown that 32% of people who use prepayment meters have chosen to be disconnected, and 29% are using personal heaters instead of heating their homes. The situation is dire, with some people resorting to stealing or drug dealing just to pay for energy costs.

The problem is not just prepayment meters, but rather, the high cost of energy in general. It is unacceptable that energy companies are making vast profits while people are suffering and dying because they cannot afford to heat their homes. While I welcome the work the Welsh Government has done to provide practical support to residents, this is not enough.

Access to essentials like heating and warm water should be a basic human right. We need urgent solutions to address fuel poverty and the prepayment scandal. I will continue call for urgent change from the UK Government. If you are a resident living in South Wales Central and are struggling with energy costs, further information is available [here](#).

# Access to Welsh medium education in North Pontypridd

The Welsh Government has recently announced funding for a new English medium school in Glyncoch, which was met with disappointment by many in the community. While the decision to build a net zero carbon school is welcomed, the fact that it will be an English medium school instead of a Welsh medium school has left many feeling let down.

For years, campaigners have been calling for a new Welsh medium school to be built on the same site as the only other Welsh medium school Pont Sion Norton will be closing with pupils having to travel further from home to receive an education.

With the provision of transport to a Welsh medium school deemed not feasible for many parents, the need for a Welsh medium school on the doorstep of the community is much needed to ensure the children of Glyncoch have the right to become fluent Welsh Speakers.

The Welsh Government must reconsider its decision and invest in the future of Welsh medium education in the area.







Healthy Air Cymru



## Jenipher and Nimrod



Covid-19 bereaved families for  
Justice Cymru



## Meeting Papyrus



Plaid Cymru  
Conference Llanelli 2023



## Meeting with Student Nurses



## Meet the team

Danny Grehan - Community Engagement Officer

Amanda Ellis - Community Engagement Officer

Brooke Webb - Communications Officer

Eleri Griffiths - Caseworker

Wendy Allsop - Administrative Officer

Ken Moon - Sustainable Futures Coordinator

## How we can help

I am holding regular telephone and in person advice surgeries offering help and support to local people.

Myself and my team are able to help with a range of issues including Health, Housing, Transport, Education and Local Government.

If there's anything we can do to help you please contact us to book an appointment via the details below.



## Contact Heledd

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