

FIRST MINISTER CELEBRATES PONTY SCHOOL'S SUCCESS

It was great to see the First Minister placing such an emphasis on the PONT project, with a special mention for pupils from Pontypridd High School. The Tories meanwhile would scrap support for the scheme.



THE DRAFT WALES BILL

Page 2

The bill is symptomatic of the way that the Tories view Wales. So why aren't Plaid complaining?



Y LLYS GORUCHAF

Page 3

From a legal perspective England and Wales are one nation, so who's looking out for Wales at the Supreme Court?



COMMUNITY COUNCILS HAVE THEIR SAY

Page 4

I was delighted to welcome Councillors and Clerk's from our Community Councils to a discussion on the Williams Report.



HOSPITAL REORGANISATION

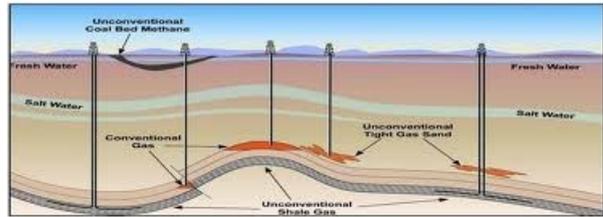
Page 4

The proposed transfer of neo-natal services from the Royal Glamorgan undervalues one of our hospital's core strengths.

Contact details on back page

Fracking debate highlights the 'Democratic Deficit' in Wales on energy policy.

In a debate at the National Assembly, I highlighted the 'democratic deficit' that exists in respect of energy policy decision making in Wales. Fracking is a controversial issue, characterised by uncertainty over safety, environmental impact and economic benefits. I continue to oppose any approval of exploratory work, such as that granted in Llantrisant, until health and safety concerns are satisfied beyond doubt.



My concern however, is that even if safety fears are satisfied, we have very limited decision making authority in Wales over energy policy. Whilst the Crown owns everything below ground and the UK Government licenses mineral exploitation, our responsibility is limited to dealing with the environmental consequences. This means that we do not stand to gain from the extraction of shale gas. In fact we get all the downside and none of the benefits.

The dash-for-shale-gas is being driven by the Conservative party and their business friends who have no interest in Wales other than the potential for big profits.

We need to close the democratic deficit on energy. It is essential that further devolution of energy policy takes place. It is the only way in which we can be sure that Wales enjoys the rewards as well as taking the risks of future developments in the energy sector.



BHF Ramp up the Red

I paid a visit to the British Heart Foundation Cymru shop in Pontypridd to offer them my support with their "Ramp up the Red" campaign.

Heart disease is a serious issue. Whilst there have been significant steps forward over the last few decades, such as halving the number of deaths, we still have more than 3500 people in Pontypridd who are suffering with some form of heart disease.

So despite the successes we mustn't become complacent.

Draft Wales Bill

I spoke in the debate at the Assembly on 12th February on the draft Wales Bill.

Overall I see the bill as a missed opportunity. In particular, the proposed income tax powers are unworkable. Everybody knows it, including the Tory Secretary of State (which is probably why he inserted it in the Bill).

The second real concern is what some people have dubbed the 'lucky losers clause.' Others call it 'Leann's lifeboat'. This is the reintroduction of dual candidacy, which means that candidates are able to stand in a constituency and on a list. This gives them two shots at getting elected and it's profoundly undemocratic and it's something Labour won't be doing on principle.

The fact that the Tories have inserted this into the Bill, without any mandate is symptomatic of the way in which they view Wales. The Welsh electoral system belongs to the people of Wales and any changes must have the people's consent through their elected representatives. Anything else breaches the principle of electoral trust that has been built up over many years



European Union European Social Fund

Investing in jobs and skills

It was good to have the opportunity to highlight the benefits the European social fund at First Minister's questions.

RCT tops the league of local authorities, when it comes to ESF funding. Almost 60,000 people have participated since the scheme's launch in 2007. 6700 have entered employment, more than 5000 have entered further learning and over 21 000 have gained qualifications.

A survey of people who have completed their scheme also shows that they become more confident, have a greater appetite for learning and a better sense of well being as a result.

The figures are by some distance, the best in Wales. We should be proud of all those who have made the most of these opportunities and also recognise that benefits of this sort can only continue if we engage fully and positively in the EU.

Order in court

Of the 12 members of the Supreme Court, 9 are English, 2 are Scots and 1 is from Northern Ireland.

Wales is playing a leading constitutional role and devolved issues come before the court, so isn't it right that there's a Welsh judge?

I've raised this with the Counsel General. After all, without a Welsh voice who appreciates the distinctive qualities of Welsh society and culture, can we really say that we in Wales can be confident that justice will be served?

Hospital Reorganisation

The recommendation to move maternity and the most serious A&E cases from the Royal Glamorgan is extremely disappointing. The health-board has however rejected this proposal, so there will now be a further period of discussion, during which I will be making representations, particularly in respect of neo-natal care where I believe the Royal Glamorgan's capacity has been under-estimated.



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

It's important to stress that even if the recommendation is implemented, the vast majority of A&E cases will still be dealt with at the Royal Glamorgan. I also welcome the proposed new and leading role for the Royal Glamorgan in the fields of acute medicine and paediatric delivery.

The RG's role forms part of a wider South Wales plan. The fact that the recommendations have been clinically driven should give us all an assurance that quality of care is central to this reorganisation. Having larger specialist centres which provide the breadth, depth and volume of cases required for medical training will also ensure that Wales can recruit sufficient medical professionals.

School catchment changes

I continue to support parents who are impacted by the proposed catchment changes for Bryncelynnog and Y Pant.

In addition to highlighting safety concerns in respect of children getting to Bryncelynnog from Llantrisant, my consultation submission focuses on the potential impact on the 6th form in Bryncelynnog.

Williams report—Community Councils have their say

The Williams report leaves the door open for an increased role for Town and Community Councils and judging by the response of the Community Councillors and Clerks who joined me for a meeting at the Constituency office, they are up for the challenge!

What's clear about the future shape of local authorities is that they will be much larger and there will be less Councillors. The danger is that people will feel even more remote from the decision makers. As a result there could be less engagement I local issues and from there, it's a downward spiral. The strength of Community Councils is that they are closest to the people and they have the experience and local knowledge to make the right decisions. At our meeting we started work on a template for an enlarged Community Council role. We'll be meeting again soon to finalise a submission to the Welsh Government.

Compulsory registration of Hairdressers

I fully support the campaign to register all hairdressers and barbers. It would help raise standards of professionalism and health & safety across the sector.

I was pleased to sign a Statement of Opinion at the assembly and promote the campaign in the media, along with Lloyd Griffiths (pictured above)



It's amazing that of the 250 hairdressing businesses across RCT only 34 are currently registered. This cannot be good for the industry.

Lloyd who employs 12 staff at Just Lloyds salon in Tonyrefail summed it up, saying: "I have been registered since 1969 and right now somebody with no experience or qualifications can open up next door to me, that can't be good for consumers."

We should also remember that hairdressing s a potentially hazardous occupation. For example, the industry has one of the highest incident rates of occupational dermatitis.

Proper regulation and the improved training that comes with it would help significantly in addressing this worrying statistic.

I agree with Lloyd who believes that a local authority controlled registration scheme is the best way to ensure standards are high.

Contacts

Telephone: 01443 406400

Email: mick.antoniw@wales.gov.uk

Address: GMB House, Morgan St, Pontypridd CF37 2DS

Website: www.mickantoniw.co.uk

Twitter: [@mickantoniwam](https://twitter.com/mickantoniwam)

If you need Mick's help, have a question or want to sign up for this newsletter, please contact Mick on one of the above addresses .