



News from the Commons

Not a budget for working families

The first Tory only budget for 18 years was a throwback to the Thatcher and Major years where the Chancellor took from Peter to pay Paul. The Tory benches relished the announcements like a Roman crowd in the coliseum baying for blood.

Cuts to tax credits will hit working people on middle and lower incomes. Over three million working families will be worse off as a result of the changes. A family with one earner on average earnings will lose over £2,000 in tax credits from the changes announced. None of these changes will be offset by the introduction of the National Living Wage.



The National Living Wage is a total misnomer. It is in fact an increased minimum wage. By merging the two terms Osborne is trying to kill off the idea of a living wage. We should make this point, and insist on calling it the minimum wage.

Under 25s have been targeted with the loss of entitlement to housing benefit, changing the maintenance grants to loans and excluding them from the new "National Living Wage." The Intergenerational Foundation has found that since 2010 there has been a 10% decline in young people's prospects across a range of measures including housing, education, health, income and debt.

It was great to meet with the delegation from Neath Port Talbot that came to Parliament on budget day and chat with them on the Terrace about what affect these cuts will have on Local Government.

When the budget was debated I spoke in the debate on the economy and called on the Government to plan for a new type of long-term, sustainable growth that produces high-wage, high value-added jobs and gets the country making and exporting rather than perpetuating the agenda for the status quo of growth fuelled by debt and consumption. My full speech is available at

[http://www.stephenkinnock.co.uk/far from fixing the roof while the sun is shining the chancellor s budget will send roof tiles flying while the storm clouds gather](http://www.stephenkinnock.co.uk/far-from-fixing-the-roof-while-the-sun-is-shining-the-chancellor-s-budget-will-send-roof-tiles-flying-while-the-storm-clouds-gather)

Business Rates Holiday For Steel Industry

To increase competitiveness and productivity I called for a business rates holiday during a Westminster Hall debate so that industry can invest in machinery and technology to overcome the UK's productivity crisis. My contribution to the debate is available at http://www.stephenkinnock.co.uk/business_rates_holiday_for_steel_industry

Swingeing Cuts To Welsh Police Force

I took the opportunity to question the Policing Minister about the effect the cuts to the policing budget was having on front line policing in Wales and what measures were being taken to ensure Wales continues to have a functioning police force. The response I had back from the Minister was disproportionate to the question I asked and was picked up by the Independent:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/donald-macintyres-sketch-deep-dives-in-search-of-money-for-policing-10370290.html>

To read the full exchange visit: http://www.stephenkinnock.co.uk/swingeing_cuts_to_welsh_police_force



News from the Commons

Welfare Reform And Work Bill

My decision to abstain on the Welfare bill was not taken lightly. I had lobbied the leadership very hard to get the reasoned amendment tabled, and I was pleased when they did so. I then abstained as there are significant parts to the bill that we as a party are happy to support, including the increase in the National Minimum Wage and more apprenticeships, and other aspects that we are deeply opposed to, and that we will continue to oppose in the Autumn when the bill proceeds to committee stage.

This Welfare bill is a mixed bag of measures, and when the Opposition is presented with such a proposal the correct course of action is to abstain.

I understand the gravity of the situation and am deeply committed to improving the lives of all my constituents. However, the fact is that I will only be able to achieve that aim if I am an MP within a party of government rather than in a party of permanent opposition. The true betrayal of my constituents would be if we fail to return a Labour Government to power in 2020. That should be the principle that drives everything we say and do as an opposition over the next five years.

George Osborne set a trap for Labour with this Bill, where we would have been branded the party that is 'for welfare and against working people', opposed to the increase in the National Minimum Wage and being "out of control" on welfare spending. We must now beat the Chancellor at his own game. We have to box clever.

As the Bill passes through the Commons every facet of it will be forensically challenged by Labour MPs, in an attempt to get the best deal for working people by removing the measures we oppose. We will push to reverse the abolition of child poverty targets, we will oppose cuts to support for the sick and disabled who are not fit for work, and we will battle the restriction on Universal Credit to the first two children. Without these changes to the Bill we will vote against it when it returns to the House in September.

The fact is that we lost the election on 7 May because the majority of the electorate do not trust Labour on the economy. It will take us a long time to regain the trust of the British people, and we have to start doing that now. This means that we have to demonstrate our commitment to making tough choices, and our understanding that we will only win in 2020 if we have policies that strike the right balance between a fairer society and a stronger economy.

For all these reasons I took the tough decision to abstain on the Welfare & Work Bill.

I also think that the blog from Andrew Gwynne MP really outlines the situation, why as a party we took the decision to abstain and what will happen next. <http://andrewgwynne.co.uk/2015/07/21/gwynne-blog-debunking-the-myths-on-commons-procedure-and-the-welfare-bill/>

Aggressive Fundraising Tactics By Charities

I raised with the Secretary of State the worrying issue of aggressive tactics used by charities to raise funds and called on her to ensure that other charities take the same steps as Oxfam and suspend all telephone fundraising while it investigates claims of malpractice. The whole exchange and the Secretary of State's response is available at http://www.stephenkinnock.co.uk/aggressive_fundraising_tactics_by_charities



News from the Commons

UN Report On Gaza



The report was debated in Westminster Hall and I spoke about how difficult it is to reflect the proportionality of the situation in Gaza and Israel. I also spoke about how counterintuitive and counterproductive it is for the Department for International Development to cut its contribution to the UN Relief and Works Agency and questioned whether the Minister would now be looking at the potential for a one-state solution given Obama's comments that the world no longer believes 'that Israel is serious about the two-state solution'.

To read my full contribution to the debate visit http://www.stephenkinnock.co.uk/un_report_on_gaza

Hunting Act

I have been inundated with emails and letters from constituents about the Government's attempts to amend the Hunting Act and make it unenforceable. Needless to say I will be voting to keep the Hunting Act.

http://www.stephenkinnock.co.uk/hunting_act

Government Must Keep Its Foot On The Accelerator Over Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon

The Government announcement to go ahead with Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon will be a major social and economic boost to the constituency that's why I urged the Government not to take their foot off the accelerator which could jeopardise the future of the project and called on them to ensure the project is not held up in Brussels.

http://www.stephenkinnock.co.uk/stephen_urges_government_to_keep_its_foot_on_the_accelerator_over_swansea_bay_tidal_lagoon

Protect Port Business

During Transport questions I called on the Minister to provide reassurance that he has a clear plan of action to protect the UK's interests and block any regulations that damage port business and threaten workers' interests in Aberavon in respect of the EU port services regulation.

To see the Minister's response visit http://www.stephenkinnock.co.uk/protect_port_business

London 2012 Legacy Squandered By The Government

I took the opportunity to raise in Parliament how the legacy of the London Olympics was failing as cuts begin to really bite in Aberavon including how the £1.5 billion cut to the block grant has had a deeply damaging effect on Local Authority budgets and subsequently on facilities like Cymmer community pool which plays a crucial role in community life and public health.

http://www.stephenkinnock.co.uk/london_2012_legacy_squandered_by_the_government

Severn Bridge Tolls

Newport East MP, Jessica Morden, tabled a debate on the Severn bridge tolls just before Parliament went into recess. I was able to contribute to the debate raising the issue that the tolls are a false economy and while they may create revenue they are a disincentive to cross-border trade and activity which deprives the Exchequer of much-needed tax revenues through corporation tax, business rates and additional economic activity.

I also called on the Minister to provide clarity on when the decision over cuts to the tolls will be made given 2018 is not that far away.

You can read the exchange at

http://www.stephenkinnock.co.uk/severn_bridge_tolls



News from the Constituency

Community Coffee Morning



I hosted a successful morning with local community groups including the Rhondda Tunnel Society, Friends of Margam Park, Skewen Historical Society, Brunel Docks Regeneration, South Wales Miners Museum, Keep Wales Tidy and NSA Afan. It was a very productive and useful session where we were able to discuss a range of issues that were affecting the groups, from funding to bureaucracy to support and also how I can support the various groups.

The feedback from the morning was positive and I am now looking to host a follow up meeting for groups that are involved in tourism.

Child Poverty Summit

The measures contained in the Chancellor's budget will bring another five difficult years for families in the constituency on top of the difficult years of the last Government. Child poverty is a very serious concern which is why I hosted a summit bringing together key stakeholders including Neath Port Talbot Council, NPTCVS, Children In Wales, Barnardos and the Deputy Children's Commissioner.

There are some shocking figures relating to child poverty in Aberavon with an estimated 9,400 to be affected by the changes in tax credits and child poverty set to rise over the course of the Parliament. Worryingly two thirds of children in poverty are in an in-work family.

The aim of the meeting was to look at ways to work together and produce joined up working to mitigate the worst effects of these callous changes and reach as many children as possible. By bringing together the various groups with wide ranging university expertise across the spectrum we were able to make good progress in facilitating joined up working to help more children.



Crucial Crew



Great to meet local school pupils at the Crucial Crew event in Margam park

Foodbank



Terrific response to the Foodbank drive in Tesco Port Talbot, happy to help them out

Tata Steel School Kit



Great morning with David Rees at the home of the Wizards presenting new sports kit to local youngsters



News from the Constituency

Contaminated Blood

The position of people infected with HIV and Hepatitis C after being given contaminated blood is truly appalling. I have met with families in Aberavon affected and their stories are horrific. Haemophiliacs were given blood contaminated with HIV and Hepatitis C during the 1970s and 1980s, since then their lives have been unimaginably altered.

I have joined the All Party Parliamentary Group and have given the constituents my full support as they fight for recognition from the government and for compensation. I was also able to speak on the emotional and psychological effect this has had on the families in the Commons

http://www.stephenkinnock.co.uk/contaminated_blood_had_awful_emotional_and_psychological_impact_on_families

Surgeries

I have completed two months of advice surgeries across the constituency including in Cymmer, Briton Ferry, Port Talbot, Cwmavon, Taibach and Skewen.

My next confirmed surgeries are:

4 September, Tesco Port Talbot, 5:30pm-6:30pm

11 September, Gwynfi Miners Hall, 5:30pm-6:30pm

18 September, Dalton Road Community Centre, Sandfields, 5:30pm-6:30pm

25 September, Briton Ferry Community Centre, 5:30pm-6:30pm

2 October, Tesco Port Talbot, 5:30pm-6:30pm

9 October, Noddfa Community Centre, Glynccorwg 5pm-6pm

30 October, Carnegie Hall, Skewen, 5:30pm-6:30pm

6 November, Tesco Port Talbot, 5:30pm-6:30pm

27 November, Briton Ferry Community Centre, 5:30pm-6:30pm

4 December, Tesco Port Talbot, 5:30pm-6:30pm

11 December, Carnegie Hall, Skewen, 5:30pm-6:30pm

Royal Mail Sorting Office



It was great to visit Eagle Street sorting office. The Royal Mail is still a national treasure.

Aberavon Beach Fest



Spoke to a number of people at Aberavon Beach Fest and received a good response on the Labour stall. I also managed to chat to a number of other groups who had stalls there.

Dic Penderyn Pardon

Following on from the call I made in my Maiden Speech for a posthumous pardon for Dic Penderyn I am now collecting signatures for an open letter to the Lord Chancellor. It has already been signed by Michael Sheen and you can add your signature by going to

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1QIKiVxk2zc6Nq7qXq-FitoTwi3LiRuFivbMK8USKtQ/viewform>



Political Digest

English Votes For English Laws

Labour got its first small victory over the Government on EVEL by winning the vote to have an extra day of debate on the proposals. The Government have tried to rush these profound constitutional changes through Parliament when what is needed is cross party consensus similar to what was achieved in 1997.

The proposals are not about addressing the English question in terms of devolution but an effort to fan the flames of nationalism and secure party-political advantage for the Conservative Party. The effect of the changes would be to create an English Parliament within the UK Parliament, laying the foundations for a certain constitutional clash between English and non-English MPs sometime in the future.

The English question is one that needs to be addressed to create a more even devolution settlement across the UK but what is being shoved through Parliament will create a two-tier system of MPs and effectively create an English Parliament within the UK Parliament. It is a quick fix band-aid not a serious solution.

Leadership & Deputy Leadership



It was great to support Yvette in the Leadership debate in Cardiff. The hustings were well attended and a robust debate was had by the candidates. Following the Leadership debate I hosted a question and answer session in Cardiff with Deputy Leader hopeful Caroline Flint.



Community Union Conference



I took part in a debate at Community Union conference in Glasgow on the European Union Referendum

Trade Union Bill

The Bill is the latest in a long line of attempts by the Government to stifle reasonable democratic scrutiny, protest and challenge. It represents the biggest shake-up in the rules on industrial action in 30 years and would force unions to give employers 14 days notice of strike action and allow them to bring in agency staff to cover for striking workers. The Bill if it became law would impose a minimum 50% turnout - and public sector strikes would need the backing of at least 40% of those eligible to vote.

Daily Politics



I was a guest on the Daily Politics show where we discussed the situation in Greece and the details of the Budget. One point that I made was picked up across a

number of new outlets (including the Daily Mail) was how the Government was going to deal with the tragic cases of women becoming pregnant due to rape when implementing the limit on tax credits and Universal Credit to two children.

This Bill does nothing to tackle the pressing national challenge our public services, businesses and industries alike are facing; that of addressing Britain's productivity gap and skills shortages and comes at a time when industrial action is at an all time low.

Instead the Bill tries to drive a false wedge between government, industry, employees and the public by restricting rights - and at worst criminalising - ordinary working people, from midwives to factory workers to challenge low-pay or health and safety concerns