



Thank you for reading my January newsletter. 2024 was a momentous year, ushering in a UK Labour Government determined to deliver change for working people. This work is now well underway.

We have already taken swift action to fix the foundations of the economy, invest in our public services to make them fit for the future, and we're now firmly on the path towards growing the economy, creating new jobs and putting more money in people's pockets.

In 2025, we will continue to drive forward with the same determination. Discover more about what the UK Labour Government has planned for 2025 by reading my latest blog [here](#).

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## In Cardiff East

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## On the Doorstep

It was great to start the year out on doorsteps across Cardiff East, chatting with residents, taking up casework, and listening to your hopes and concerns in your area. I am committed to continuing to be accessible to you, as I have done since I was first elected in 2015.

If you have missed me at one of my recent door-knocking sessions and have an issue you would like to raise, you can easily contact me using the information below.

Email: [jo.stevens.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:jo.stevens.mp@parliament.uk)

Phone: 02921 329 736

You can also keep up to date with my work on my social media channels:

[Facebook](#)

[X \(formerly Twitter\)](#)

[Instagram](#)



## Next Stop: Cardiff Parkway

Reports have estimated that Cardiff Parkway, which will include a railway station with four platforms and a business park in the east of Cardiff, could boost the Welsh economy by more than £265m a year.

I am delighted that this project has now taken an important step forward following the First Minister's decision to approve this much-needed infrastructure. This follows a long fought, tireless campaign from our local Cardiff East Labour team, including calls for its approval by

your local councillors, Bob and Jackie and questions about the delay from Vaughan Gething MS in the Senedd.

Cardiff Parkway will be transformational. Here are just a few of the benefits for residents of Rumney and the wider Cardiff East area:

- Serving 40,000 residents
- As little as a 7-minute connection to Cardiff City Centre
- Create up to 6,000 local jobs
- An annual economic benefit of £265m and £5bn over 20 years
- Improved green space for people to visit and enjoy

I look forward to the positive impact this project will have on our communities and economy as we look to build a better-connected Cardiff and Cardiff Capital Region.



**Pensioners' Advice Day**

More than £12.3 million worth of Pension Credit has gone unclaimed in Cardiff, with many residents unaware that they are entitled to receive it.

This month, I held my second Pensioners' Advice Day at the Powerhouse in Llanedeyrn to help residents over the age of 65 access the support available to them.

Thank you again to all the organisations who came and provided their expert advice and support to nearly 50 constituents who came along. It was great to meet you all.



**Cardiff Council Budget**

Cardiff Council has received its most generous funding settlement since 2010, outside of the pandemic period. This demonstrates the power of partnership between our two Labour Governments in Westminster and Wales.

Thanks to increased funding, the Council's projected budget gap for 2025/26 has been significantly reduced from over £60 million to £23.4 million.

Whilst challenges obviously remain after 14 years of Tory austerity, this marks a significant step forward in rebuilding our public services. The Council is committed to addressing the remaining shortfall by focusing on savings and efficiencies to deliver these vital services.

Cardiff Council is prioritising our essential public services, by committing:

- An additional £19.8 million for schools, ensuring no overall savings targets for schools in 2025/26.
- £8.8 million more for central education services.
- £7.5 million more for children's services (e.g. Fostering and Adoption Services)
- £12.1 million more for adult services (e.g. Supported Living).

[Click here](#) for more information.

# KEY BUDGET PROPOSALS 2025/26



All figures in comparison to current 2024/25 budgets

## INCREASING INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES TO COVER RISING COSTS

### SCHOOLS

to receive an extra

**£19.8m**

ensuring no overall  
savings targets for  
schools in 2025/26



### EDUCATION SERVICES

to receive an extra

**£8.8m**

### CHILDREN'S SERVICES

to receive an extra

**£7.5m**



### ADULT SERVICES

to receive an extra

**£12.1m**

## New Homes for Young People Facing Homelessness

It was an honour to join Andrew Templeton, Chief Executive of the YMCA and his team to cut the ribbon and open their latest new housing development in Roath.

The new 18-apartment building will provide hope, stability, and security to young people at risk of homelessness in Cardiff East. I had a tour of the new apartments, which have been designed and built to the highest quality and environmental. This means low heating bills for the new residents who will be moving in over the next few weeks.



## Papyrus: Saving Young Lives

Suicide remains the leading cause of death among young people under 35 in the UK. Papyrus is dedicated to preventing these tragedies.

Through their HOPELINE247 service, staffed by trained suicide prevention advisers, they provide critical support to young people and those concerned about their well-being. Their work extends to training organisations and schools to recognise the signs, increase awareness, and equip communities to support those who need it.

Papyrus is transforming the conversation around suicide and saving lives. Read more about their work and how you or someone you know can access support [here](#).



## Supporting Small Local Businesses

Brød, the Danish Bakery in Penylan, is a thriving local business that was started by Betina Skovbro ten years ago. Betina has expanded the business, which now employs 40 people across the bakery and a number of coffee shops. Her bread, cakes and pastries are absolutely delicious. I really enjoyed meeting Betina and her team and seeing their baking skills in action.

Brød has a number of locations across Cardiff which you can find [here](#). Pop in and treat yourself!





## Supporting Local Talent

Cardiff Council has launched a new pilot scheme to support local bands looking to put on self-promoted gigs.

The scheme, which will be delivered through Cardiff Music City, is designed to increase the number of gigs in our city and provide the best start to local talent and those who already have a proven track record.

[Click here for more information.](#)



## **Estyn Praise for St Cadoc's R.C. Primary School**

Congratulations to teachers, support staff and pupils at St Cadoc's R.C. Primary School in Llanrumney on their successful Estyn inspection.

In its report, Estyn highlighted the school's strong leadership, positive learning culture, and effective teaching practices.

The school was also commended for fostering a happy and safe environment where pupils thrive, behave exceptionally well and form strong relationships.

Read more about the report [here](#).



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**Across Wales**

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**Welsh Affairs Committee**

This month I appeared before the Welsh Affairs Committee to be scrutinised and questioned by MPs from all parties and to set out my priorities for Wales as Secretary of State for Wales.

The UK Labour Government was elected with a core mission: to grow our economy to put more money in the peoples' pockets. I am committed to ensuring that this growth reaches every corner of Wales.

Watch my first appearance [here](#).



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## Support for Workers & Businesses in Port Talbot

The UK Labour Government is acting decisively to support workers and businesses in Port Talbot as the town transitions from making steel in the old way to a new clean, green way.

Through the Port Talbot Tata Steel Transition Board, which I chair, we are doubling the funding available to affected businesses and workers and widening access to non-repayable loans to ensure we support as many people and supply chain businesses as possible.

Watch Michael Sheen outline the support available below.



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## Rail Investment is a Priority

Over the past 14 years, Conservative UK Governments took a clear political decision not to make the necessary investment in rail in Wales, particularly in the context of major investments such as HS2.

I am determined that this will change. Working in partnership with my UK Labour Government colleague, Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander and our Welsh Government Transport Minister, we have agreed that the priority for spending should be focussed on the key recommendations from the Burns Commissions for North and South-East Wales and the Union Connectivity Review.

Read more about prioritising rail investment [here](#).

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## Warm Homes for Wales

The UK and Welsh Labour Governments are working together to deliver transformative energy and housing policies that improve lives across Wales.

With initiatives like the ECO scheme, the Nest Warm Homes Programme, and the Optimised Retrofit Programme, many households are receiving vital support, including energy-efficient upgrades and sustainable solutions that help reduce heating bills.

[Read my blog](#) to learn how you can access the support delivered by our two Labour Governments.



## **Wales' Freeports Open for Business**

Two new freeports are now open for business in Wales, each supported by £26 million funding from the UK Labour Government.

Freeports are defined local areas with business rates reliefs and other taxes and incentives to help encourage investment by companies to create new jobs. The Celtic Freeport (Port Talbot and Milford Haven) and the Anglesey Freeport aim to attract around £10bn of investment with the capacity to create 15,000 new jobs, driving economic growth across Wales.



## Supporting Growth Across Wales

In November's Budget, Rachel Reeves allocated £88m in funding for city and growth deals to unlock investment in every corner of Wales.

I recently met with leaders from Growth Deals and Local Authorities to discuss creating jobs and putting more money in people's pockets in communities around Wales.

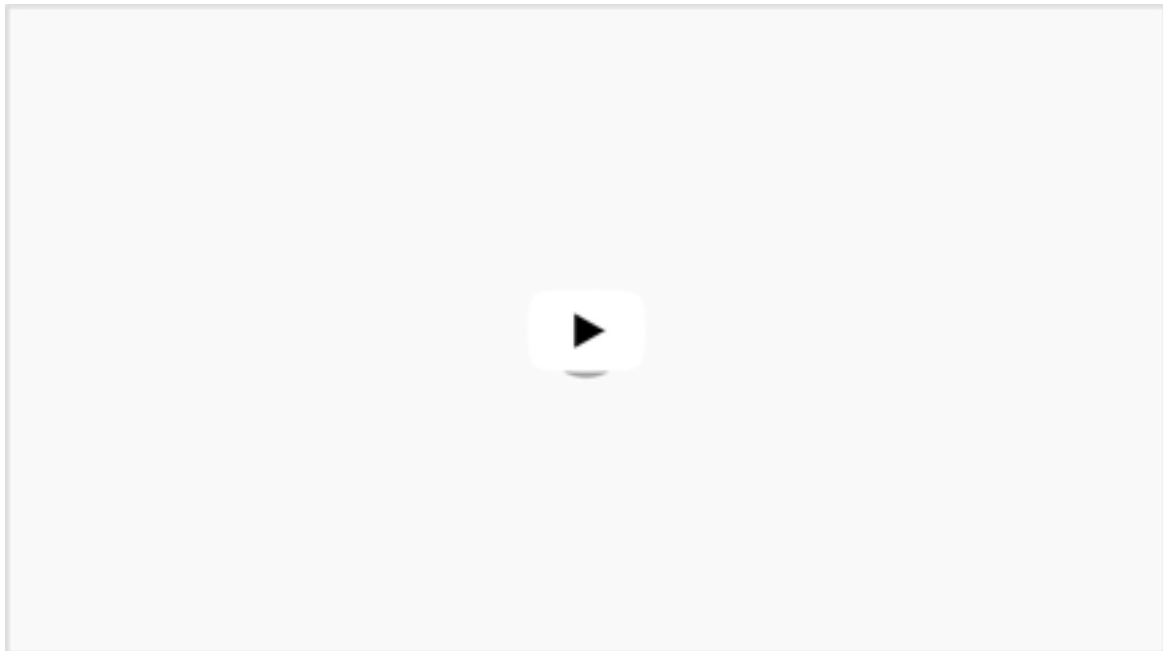


## Life Sciences

The growing life sciences sector conducts groundbreaking research in areas like healthcare, including bespoke cancer treatment vaccines & employs over 12,000 people across 300 companies in Wales.

Life sciences are a real strength in Cardiff and have the potential to grow significantly. The jobs are secure, well-paid ones and deliver results that make a real difference. I recently met with industry leaders at Life Science Hub Wales and Visited TrakCel and the All-Wales Medical Genomics Service to see the latest developments in this hugely important field.

Find out more about my visit [here](#).



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## Pembrokeshire Leading Clean Energy Mission

The UK Labour Government is putting Wales at the heart of its plans to make Britain a clean energy superpower.

I was pleased to visit Pembroke Power Station, Dragon LNG and Ledwood Engineering, all of whom are both of key employers in the West Wales economy. I met with lots of apprentices



who are trained in clean energy engineering skills and want to see their future in these industries in their home county.

The UK Labour Government has just announced nearly a million pounds in regional skills funding for Pembrokeshire to help make that dream a reality.



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**In Parliament**

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**The UK is the Second Most Attractive  
Place to Invest**

The UK has been ranked the second most attractive country for investment behind the US, according to an annual survey of global business leaders by PwC. This is the highest ranking for the UK in the survey's 28-year history.

These results show that businesses are backing the UK. It's this investment that will help drive economic growth and improve living standards right across the country.

# UK set to be the fastest growing European economy IMF forecasts

The Independent January 2025



## Welsh Questions

My mission as Secretary of State for Wales is to create wealth in every community across Wales. At Welsh Questions, I was pleased to update MPs on the progress we've made in the

last 7 months, including the recent announcement of two investment zones freeports, which will drive growth across Wales.

It was also an opportunity to call on opposition parties in the Senedd to vote for the Welsh Labour Government's budget, which will deliver on the priorities of Welsh people.

Watch some of my interactions [here](#).

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## Ceasefire in Gaza

After months of devastating bloodshed and countless lives lost, there is finally hope for the Israeli and Palestinian people. On 15 January 2025, US President Biden and Qatari Prime Minister Al Thani confirmed a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, marking the beginning of the end of one of the darkest chapters in recent history.

From day one in office, this UK Labour government has pressed, at every opportunity, to free the hostages, get more aid into Gaza and open up a path to lasting peace. We welcome the progress that has been achieved, but much remains to be done.

Read more in my recent [blog](#).

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## Holocaust Memorial Day

On 27th January 1945, allied forces liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi extermination camp in Europe. On their arrival, they discovered the smouldering remains of the gas chambers and crematoria after the Nazis had attempted to destroy the evidence of their crimes against humanity.

An estimated six million Jews were exterminated in death camps across Europe, including over one million people who were deported to Auschwitz. I signed Holocaust UK's Book of Commitment at No. 10 Downing Street, pledging to remember the lives of all the victims of the Holocaust and Nazi persecution of other groups and all those killed in subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

We must also remember that the Holocaust did not begin with the concentration camps, ghettos or deportations. We must continue to combat the prejudice and hatred that has birthed some of the darkest periods of world history.



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## Supporting Ukraine

Vladimir Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine has proven to be a monumental strategic failure. Far from achieving his aims, he has united Ukraine's allies, strengthening their resolve and fostering deeper partnerships.

Keir Starmer recently visited Kyiv to solidify a 100-year partnership, laying the foundation for a closer and enduring friendship between the United Kingdom and Ukraine. This historic agreement establishes a framework for long-term investment in both nations, focusing on technological advancement, scientific collaboration, and cultural exchange.

By working together, we will build resilient economies that deliver for our citizens, ensuring security at home and abroad and fostering prosperous, thriving nations for generations to come.

Read more about the partnership [here](#).

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## Renters' Rights Bill

The UK Labour Government is delivering **fairness and security** for renters.

In Wales, we've already led the way with **strong tenant protections** through the Renting Homes (Wales) Act. Now, Labour is **building on that progress** to create a fairer, more secure future for renters across the UK. This includes new measures to **ban discrimination** against tenants receiving benefits or those with children.

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## VAT on Private Schools

For far too long, private schools have benefited from an unfair tax break, while state schools have faced funding challenges. Labour is ending this privilege by applying VAT to private school fees.

This policy isn't about punishing those who choose private education - it's about investing in the future of **all** children. The money raised will be used to improve state schools, recruit more teachers, and give every child the opportunity to succeed.

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## Armed Forces Commissioner Bill

The UK Labour Government is delivering on its commitment to support our armed service personnel and their families with the Armed Forces Commissioner Bill. This is a significant step towards improving conditions and strengthening protections for those who serve our country.

The new and independent Armed Forces Commissioner will champion the rights of service personnel. They will investigate concerns, highlight issues such as housing, pay, and equipment, and hold the government accountable for delivering tangible improvements.

I am pleased to have voted and be a named backer of this very important Bill.

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## Water (Special Measures) Bill

Labour is committed to holding water companies to account and ensuring cleaner, safer water for our communities. Our Water (Special Measures) Bill introduces:

- Stronger penalties for polluting water companies

- Greater executive accountability, ensuring company leaders take responsibility
- Enhanced regulation to improve environmental and public health standards

While water companies prioritise profits, the UK Labour Government is taking decisive action to put consumers first, protect our environment and deliver the clean water Britain deserves.

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## Action on Ticket Touts

Fans face an uphill battle to find face-value tickets to see their favourite artist perform or sports team play live. This needs to change.

The UK Labour Government won't stand around and continue to fail fans like the previous Conservative Government – we are delivering on our manifesto commitment to protect fans.

We have launched a public consultation that aims to better protect fans, improve access to live events and support the growth of the UK's world-leading live events sector. Learn more [here](#).



## Tackling Fraud

The UK Labour Government is committed to safeguarding public finances and protecting taxpayers' money. The introduction of the Public Authorities (Fraud, Error & Recovery) Bill this month will ensure that every pound is spent effectively.

We are building a fairer, more accountable system that works for everyone and delivers on our commitment to restoring trust in politics. Read more in my [blog](#).



🔍 How is this Labour Government **protecting taxpayers' money?**

**Labour is delivering the biggest fraud crackdown in a generation.**

- Labour's new Bill targets criminals who steal from taxpayers and cheat the system.
- The Bill will boost the fight against welfare fraud with more resources, powers, and stricter penalties.
- New powers will be granted to the Public Sector Fraud Authority to investigate fraud.
- The time limit for civil claims on COVID fraud will be increased from 6 to 12 years, aiding the recovery of stolen funds.

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## **A.I Action Plan**

We need to harness emerging Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to get the economy growing, make our public services fit for the future and drive change.



The UK Government's action plan, announced this month by the Prime Minister, will put the UK at the front of AI deployment, which is already prevalent in our day-to-day lives. Make Britain the world leader. It will give the industry the foundation it needs, making Britain a world leader in this revolutionary sector. That means more jobs and investment in the UK, more money in people's pockets, and transformed public services.

Read more about our A.I. Action Plan [here](#).

