

An issue of great concern in the past week has been the tax adjustments announced at Westminster.

Research by the Institute of Fiscal Studies shows those earning up to £18,500 per annum will lose out. This tax hike on the low paid comes into effect in the same week that Plaid Cymru in government continues to deliver free prescription charges and cheaper hospital parking.

Many people on low wages face higher tax bills next week because of the actions of Gordon Brown. The 10 pence rate will be taken away so tax cuts can be offered to middle England.

Many Welsh tax payers who only pay the 10% rate will see their tax double this week when the Labour Government puts up taxes for low earners from 10% to 20%.

Labour's silence on this tax hike is deafening. Hundreds of thousands of people who can least afford it will find themselves paying more in tax. For those previously close to the limit for the 10 pence rate, without earning a penny more they could lose over £200.

This tax hike will hit those on low incomes particularly hard as rising food and energy prices push bills through the roof and hit low wage earners disproportionately. Instead of helping the less well off and the vulnerable this Labour tax increase will punish them. Mr Brown may be going to look again at the impact but he is not going to stop the tax hike.

The claim that this hike is offset by tax credits is bogus. Many people on low incomes are not eligible for tax credits and others do not claim. The tax credit system has become so discredited many do not want to apply.

In contrast, Plaid Cymru in government are delivering for the people of Wales with free hospital parking and free prescription charges.

I must also mention the debate recently held at the Assembly on the future of Post Offices.

Assembly members voted to support Plaid Cymru's continued opposition to the Westminster government's Post Office closure plan. Following a debate on the issue in the Senedd, members from all parties supported Plaid's stance, calling for the future of all viable Post offices to be safeguarded.

Plaid has also called for further action by local government to help ensure that Post Offices are still viable and remain a vital resource for communities across Wales.