



Alyn Smith MEP 



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From left to right: Alyn Smith (Scotland), Jill Evans (Wales), Neil Parish (England), Mairead McGuinness (Ireland) and Jim Nicholson (Northern Ireland).

MOVES AGAINST PROPOSALS FOR ELECTRONIC ID

Further progress has been made this month in the battle to halt plans to introduce mandatory electronic tagging of sheep across the EU. Alyn has teamed up with the National Sheep Association, NFU Scotland and the Scottish Farmer to take their arguments to Brussels.

As with Alyn's successful battle to halt Brazilian beef imports into the EU while traceability issues remain unresolved, the next steps for this campaign will be:

- a presentation to the Agriculture Committee outlining the difficulties likely to be faced by those implementing the scheme;
- the presentation of the Scottish Farmer's petition to the Petitions Committee of the European Parliament;
- the submission of a written declaration by five MEPs (see picture on left) setting out their opposition and proposed changes to the plans.

This is likely to get underway at the start of the next parliamentary session in September.

ALYN MARKS EU ANNIVERSARY

Alyn marked the fourth anniversary of his election in June 2004 by committing himself to being part of a group of four MEPs after the next election in June 2009. His commitment comes in the wake of the news that the UK Government intends to cut Scotland's representation in the European Parliament from seven MEPs currently to six MEPs. Six MEPs will mean that Scotland has the same representation as Malta, though without the votes in the European Council or the representation in the European Commission. Were Scotland an independent state then Scotland would have fifteen MEPs, the same as Denmark now.

Alyn said: "It has been a roller coaster four years, Scottish politics has come a long way. I'm proud to have played my part and thought long and hard about whether I should put myself forward for re-election, as I think all politicians should be honest about whether they are actually moving things forward or just keeping the seat warm.

"I decided that there remains a lot to do for Scotland in Europe, and that I still have a lot to give. I have also had a number of successes I'm very proud of. I have worked with the MSPs, Councillors and MPs like never before to network the European message into our national work. I have created my internship programme which has seen over thirty bright Scots through the doors, gaining real experience of Brussels, while at home I was voted Honorary President of the Young Scots for Independence. I brought the EU Commissioner for Energy to Scotland to see our glittering energy potential; I've put down more parliamentary questions than any other Scots MEP; and was nominated in the MEP of the Year awards for my work in bringing EU money to Scotland.

"More recently on the Agriculture Committee I have worked hard and well for Scotland's Agriculture. So much so that I was appointed Honorary President of the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Scotland, and the National Farmers Union of Scotland described my knowledge of agricultural issues as "second to none".

"I'm proud to be part of a team of seven candidates every one of which I can say hand on heart I would be delighted to serve alongside in Brussels. I have also examined the numbers and best polling data to hand and I think four out of six seats is, given politics in Scotland today, very much within our grasp.

"The people of Scotland like the work the SNP Government has been doing at Holyrood, and like having SNP councillors. The SNP works as a team across all Chambers and Parliaments, and I'm confident that we have a team the like of which the SNP has never had before.

"I am a candidate in the elections, but until May 2009 meantime I am a serving Parliamentarian with a job to do. If in June 2009 the SNP does not win four out of six seats I will take it as a personal failure."



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ALYN HITS THE HIGHLAND SHOW

Alyn was at the Highland Show at Ingliston this month, meeting farmer constituents, taking in the events and enjoying the craic. Alyn, who is midway through his "Ask me, Tell me, Chin me" farming surgery tour, has been meeting farmers nationwide and taking points back to Brussels.

Speaking after the show, Alyn said: "The Highland Show is always a highlight of my calendar, and this year's did not disappoint. There's a real buzz to Scottish agriculture right now and the work of the Scottish government is still winning us friends and allies, and I hope I'm playing my part over the water in Brussels. This feeling of positivity was easy to pick up on while talking to people at the show.

"My 'Ask me, tell me, chin me' tour is going well, and I have met a stack of people in the Highlands, Stirling, Anstruther, and am looking forward to more meetings yet. I will be taking forward the points raised with me when I am back in the Agriculture Committee over in Brussels.

"Just wandering around the show is an education, and I thoroughly enjoyed catching up, formally and perhaps less so too, with folk at the show."

SNP MEP BACKS CALLS FOR EU BULLFIGHTING BAN

Alyn has backed the campaign for an end to bullfighting across the EU. His move came ahead of a two day seminar in the European Parliament to highlight the diversity of opinion in Spain on the topic. The groups brought a white bull to the Parliament for signature by MEPs backing their campaign.

Alyn said: "Bullfighting is an issue which provokes strong emotions, and rightly so. I have no difficulty with animals being killed for food, or pest or vermin control, but to make a sport out of it is beyond the pale. I would ordinarily not voice an opinion on the internal matters of another country but the presentations I have seen on bullfighting are difficult to ignore.

"I have heard allegations of how the bulls are kept without food, water or light for 24 hours before being thrown into the ring dazed and confused, and in effect tortured before being dragged away, often paralysed but still alive, to be killed.

"The seminar organised by Spanish animal rights groups is well-timed to highlight the diversity of opinion in Spain, and indeed many Spanish friends of mine are against bull fighting. I hope that the Spanish government will take good note of the strength of opinion on this issue."

"BRITS ABROAD" ROW DOING SCOTLAND NO GOOD

Alyn waded into the ongoing row between UK and German newspapers over which country's holidaymakers have the worst reputation. The row comes after the German tabloid Bild issued a guide to the resorts most favoured by "britische lager louts" and advised their readers to avoid them.

He commented: "All Scots know the difference in response from our continental friends when they find out we are Scots. I have watched this depressing Anglo-German spat with a sinking feeling and while it might be a bit of fun I resent seeing Scots lumped in with the "Brit Abroad" label and it is clear the British tag does us no favours on our holidays or in any other sense. The Scots national football fans are known the world over for their friendly and fun behaviour. I cannot imagine Bild Magazine running a story like this advising their millions of readers to avoid the Scots."



Alyn makes friends at the Highland Show.

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