



Alyn
Smith
July 2013

Welcome to the July edition of my newsletter. It's been a packed month both in Scotland and on the Brussels treadmill but some key issues moved in the right direction.

The six month Irish EU Presidency saw us sorting out some big issues as reform of the Common Agricultural Policy finally made its way through all of the committee meetings and plenary sessions; the budget for the coming seven years is being finalised; fisheries policy is being reformed; and Structural Funds are well on the way to reform.

That represents a huge chunk of policy being reformed and well done to Ireland for steering us through it. Ireland has just handed the Presidency over to Lithuania as Croatia joined the EU and lined up to play its part in taking Europe forward. Three nations all with populations smaller than Scotland's making an impact in the EU, standing up for their own interests and showcasing what's best about themselves. That's what we should be doing.

We've got plenty to shout about; I've once again had the pleasure of the Royal Highland Show, some serious business and discussion as well as catching up with some excellent people. The best agriculture show in the land highlighting the best in livestock and new advances in farming technology is complemented by the educational trust; the renewable energy industry's showpieces and the very best of Scotland's food and drink.

Like SNP activists from all over the country, I was also tramping the streets of Aberdeen for the Donside by-election in my spare time last month, encouraging voters to back our candidate, Mark McDonald. He won and now he'll be busy working for his constituents and delivering on the promises he made. He'll do well and make us all glad we put in that effort.

That by-election made clear that politics here are moving in a different direction to UK politics; it was about social values. We're seeing the social contract renewed here with free prescriptions (and the NHS drugs bill reduced), hospitals kept in the public sector, student tuition paid by the government

as an investment in society, new social housing built, criminals' assets seized to put resources into community projects, and so on.

The rest of the UK is moving in a different direction; the latest idea down south to force schools to become profit-making businesses, the bedroom tax and the increasingly Eurosceptic Prime Minister demonstrate the growing gap between Scottish and UK politics.

Every party here has a greater focus on reinforcing society and creating a fairer community with greater opportunities for everyone. I believe we can build a better nation at home that can be a force for good internationally.

I hope you find this newsletter useful and, as always, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

All the contact details are on the back page, as well as my website, facebook and twitter accounts - don't forget you can register for regular updates at alynsmith.eu

“ I believe we can build a better nation at home that can be a force for good internationally. ”

Yours

Alyn Smith MEP



The Greens | European Free Alliance
in the European Parliament

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Roaming to Get Cheaper!

Ever come back from holiday abroad and been hit with a huge mobile phone bill?

It should be a thing of the past very soon thanks to the EU. Just now Scots travelling in Europe for business or pleasure face paying huge roaming charges for accessing mobile networks. They've already been limited by the EU but the new plans will see them completely abolished by next summer.

Alyn has campaigned for limits on the amount operators can charge and welcomed the new plans and the creation of a single European telecoms market as a victory for consumers. The single market will open up investment opportunities for telecommunications operators which should also offer advantages to phone users and give a boost to the technology.

Europe has been falling behind North America and Asia here, so the change will make it possible for European companies to compete globally and ensure our citizens get the best possible service.



Not ET, just us phoning home.

This should be the last summer we'll have to worry about the cost of phone bills on holiday. It's a win for keeping in touch.

Save The Skin You're In

Sunscreen is expensive but skin cancers are even more expensive - devastating for individuals and families, a big health burden and a social and financial burden as well. Everyone should protect the skin they're in but it's not always easy and it's more expensive than it should be.

Lynsey Paris, a mother and skin cancer patient, joined Alyn to launch a campaign backed by Melanoma Action & Support Scotland (MASScot) to reduce VAT on sun protection. There's 20% VAT on sun protection products just now, making them more expensive than they should be.

The number of people diagnosed with skin cancer in Scotland is increasing, sun cream is a necessity rather than a luxury and the tax on safe sun should go now. The campaign is calling on the UK Government to recognise the importance of high factor sunscreen and act on it. Legal complications and organisational buck-passing shouldn't get in the way.



Alyn and Lynsey

Scotland-Sized Nations Lead The Way

The smaller nations of Europe are making a big impact. On the 1st of July Croatia (pop 4.4m) became the 28th member of the EU. It now has as big a say in European Affairs as Germany, France, or the UK.

Ireland (pop 4.5m) has just finished a successful six month presidency stint leading deals on the EU's seven year budget, reforming farming payments and fishing policy and bringing new ideas on other funds. The Presidency now passes to Lithuania (pop 3m). Scotland would be better represented as an independent EU state.

Country	Population	MEPs	Votes in European Council	Number of Commissioners
Scotland	5.3 Million	6	0	0
Ireland	4.5 Million	12	1	1
Croatia	4.4 Million	12	1	1
Lithuania	3.0 Million	12	1	1

Equal rights for LGBT taking shape around the world



Proud at Pride in Edinburgh

The equalisation of rights has taken some big strides forward recently, especially LGBT rights, not just in Scotland but in Europe and around the world.

Scotland's Government published the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill. This will see equal marriage become a reality in Scotland. There are also protections in there for churches and celebrants who don't want to participate.

It wasn't just here that headway was being made; there was a welcome move from the EU Council to upgrade its policy on the human rights of LGBT people around the globe.

The EU's 27 foreign affairs ministers adopted new guidelines to promote and protect the human rights of all LGBT people across the globe wherever the EU has influence. All EU member state embassies worldwide will follow a similar approach, and the EU's dealings with other areas will mean that protection of those rights will be central to new deals.

There was positive news from the United States as well with the Supreme Court striking down the Defence of Marriage Act (DOMA) and California's Proposition 8 which had removed equal marriage from the state's laws. All this happened over the space of just a few days, we really do live in interesting times.

Scotland Connected to the World

Scotland has a new air link to Canada with three flights a week from Edinburgh to Toronto. It's the latest improvement in Scotland's links to the world and offers good travel opportunities for us as well as bringing Canadian tourists to Scotland which will help our economy.

More than 100,000 visitors from Canada came to Scotland in 2011, and the new flights should boost those numbers. Business links between Scotland and Canada should improve as well.

John Rafferty, Honorary Consul of Canada in Edinburgh, said:

"Business and cultural links between Canada and Scotland are already strong, and I am also very pleased to see increasing numbers of students taking the opportunity to cross the Atlantic and to undertake part of their studies in one of the many academic institutions in the other country.



Rouge takes to the sky

"Tourism will of course also benefit from the convenient link, and I look forward to welcoming many more Canadians to Scotland."

In Brief

Fight to End EU Funding for Bullfighting continues

Alyn's campaign to end bullfighting has continued to gain momentum with supporters from across Europe joining together against the misuse of farming support funding.

You can sign the petition here: www.alynsmith.eu/bullfighting

Toward the Tobin Tax

Some good news on the financial markets coming out of Europe - the EU has agreed to a limited version of the Tobin Tax (also known as the Robin Hood Tax) - a tax on transactions in finance markets. Because the UK refused to take part it had to be done as cooperation rather than legislation but at least it's started. It's not quite the full package yet, but it's on the way towards it - a step in the right direction.

Alyn Judges Edinburgh's Top Dog

JFK Hairdressing organise an annual pets' photos event in support of the Edinburgh Cat and Dog Home and produce calendars featuring the winning dogs. As well as judging the competition Alyn presented the Cat and Dog Home with a cheque of £500.

Scotland as the "Centre of the Green Universe"

At a conference on ocean energy as part of EU Sustainable Energy Week (EUSEW) Scotland's advances in renewable energy and the oceans energy potential were highlighted. Alyn emphasised Scotland's role in harnessing this potential when he spoke alongside the European Commission and the Irish Energy Minister.

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