



Alyn  
Smith  
December 2013

## Season's greetings!

This is my last newsletter of 2013 and as we turn now to the year ahead, it is clear to see – if it wasn't obvious already – that 2014 is going to be a big one for Scotland.

I will be taking some holiday in the next couple of weeks to rest, recharge and gather my wits, I'm looking forward to playing my part in the European election in May, and the referendum in September. We've all been doing seven day weeks for ages and 2014 will be no different! I'm back in Brussels on the 6th but clearing the decks for as much campaigning time in Scotland as the job allows.

The European election in May will see voters across the 28 member countries of the EU go to the polls to vote for their representatives in Brussels and Strasbourg. I'm looking forward to the campaign and confident of our prospects. We will stand on our record of achievement and our vision for Scotland at the centre of European decision making.

We have the team, we have the record and we have the vision.

The same is true for the referendum. Whilst opinion polls at the moment show a gradual turn towards a yes vote, we know there is a lot to do to ensure a positive result next September.

We are up to that challenge though. I've been campaigning the length and breadth of the country and I'm seeing a real change in the body language. People are up for this, and many are wanting to be persuaded. We can do this. Winning over the 'don't knows/not sure yets/tell me mores' and the rest is the key to success and as I speak to people across the country, it is clear that more people are coming towards us and the rest are paying more and more attention.

This fills me with confidence. We are on right side of the argument and we will win if we get that message across to enough people. So the next year is going to be a tough one; it's going to be non-stop on the doorsteps and I can't wait.

It's not just a big year for Scotland because of politics however. The eyes of the world will be on us for the Commonwealth Games as they return to Scotland for the first time since 1986; we've a second Homecoming with many of our diaspora coming home; and finally the Ryder Cup – the pinnacle of golf – will be taking place in Gleneagles with Europe battling it out against the United States.

**“As I speak to people across the country, it is clear that more people are coming towards us and the rest are paying more and more attention.”**

It's going to be a great one and I'll hopefully see many friends, old and new, as I travel across the country. If you have not been in touch to get me to your patch yet, why not?

I hope you find this newsletter useful and, as always, please get in touch if you have an issue you want to raise with me or if there's something you want to make me aware of.

I have, as usual, not sent any Christmas cards but have made a donation, this year to the Glasgow Winter Shelter. We don't live in the nation we could be yet but there's lots of people working hard to make it better.

**Have a very happy festive season and a guid New Year!**

**Alyn Smith MEP**



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# The Choice Of Two Futures



Last month, the Scottish government published the White Paper on how independence will work and how much better a country we could be. Scotland's referendum on 18 September 2014 is a choice between two futures.

If we vote Yes, we take the next step on Scotland's journey. We will move forward with confidence, ready to make the most of the many opportunities that lie ahead. The most important decisions about our economy and society will be taken by the people who care most about Scotland, that is by the people of Scotland.

We've an opportunity next September. It's a chance to rejoin the international community whilst also remaining in the European family, but with our own distinct voice. We will not only be able to decide on our own future but steer Europe also. I want to see a progressive, egalitarian EU and that's what I believe an independent Scotland will fight for.

The white paper is the largest blueprint for a nation aspiring to independence that has ever been produced and covers virtually every detail of what Scotland will look like, including answering 650 questions.

Visit [scotreferendum.com](http://scotreferendum.com) to view the white paper or order a paper copy by calling **0300 023 1809**.

## Major Opportunity For Scots Exports



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Also this month the European Commission published a revised funding package for the promotion of agricultural products, which could be a "major opportunity for Scottish exports".

Although eligible schemes can target both the internal market and third countries, the Commission, as part of a new targeted strategy, wants to focus on external markets, with a higher EU funding rate and an aim to spend 75% of the budget on these measures, coordinated with potential free trade deals.

This is a golden age for Scotland's food and drink, thanks to the determined efforts of the Scottish Government to support expansion of the sector through our first ever National Food and Drink Strategy. Overall food and drink exports increased from £3.7 billion in 2007 to £5.3 billion in 2011, while our red meat exports beyond the UK increased from £38m to £81m over the same period.

This fund is an added bonus for our producers and all Scottish food and drink organisations are encouraged to take the opportunity to apply.

# Aberdeen Launch Hydrogen Strategy

Aberdeen City Council has launched a new Hydrogen Strategy in Brussels.

As part of the strategy, the city has been awarded €9.3 million by the European Commission to invest in Europe's largest fleet of hydrogen-powered buses, and has also been selected to lead the development of hydrogen technologies in cities all across the North Sea Region.

Chairing the launch, Alyn was joined by Cllr Barney Crockett (Leader of Aberdeen City Council) and Tudor Constantinescu (Principle Adviser to the European Energy Commissioner) to discuss what the new strategy means for the development of hydrogen economies across Europe.

As Europe's biggest energy hub with a pre-existing energy infrastructure, Aberdeen is uniquely well-placed to lead the development of hydrogen technology. The funding that Aberdeen has secured is a shining example of how a city can gain recognition across Europe for its expertise simply by being proactive in the EU arena.



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## In Brief

**The European Parliament voted earlier this month** to extend the EU's Generalised System of Preferences ("GSP+") to ten non-EU countries, including Pakistan. GSP+ grants additional trade preferences to countries which commit to human and labour rights, protect the environment and promote good governance. The extension of GSP+ to Pakistan is good news for Scotland, the EU and Pakistan itself in terms of trade, but also in terms of raising standards in Pakistan. It is a real world example of EU "soft power" encouraging long term change and progress, not by guns and tanks and bombs but by quiet effective diplomacy.

**Alyn visited the United Nations in November** to meet with a number of ambassadors and bureaucrats to discuss a host of issues. Of course, Scottish independence was discussed and there's no doubt that when we do take up our seat inside the General Assembly, we'll be welcomed with open arms.

**Edinburgh Airport has secured a number of new direct routes** over the past year. Direct routes to New York and Toronto are already in operation and it's been announced that from next year, two new direct flights will operate to Chicago and Philadelphia. Both routes will bring a significant economic boost to the country and also open up Scotland to a number of new destinations with Chicago, Toronto and New York all acting as major transport hubs.

**€70 billion in EU funds are now up for grabs** for Scotland's scientists and small businesses and there's an online guide to find out how to claim a share of it. As part of Horizon 2020, the EU's new funding programme for research and innovation, the funding will support development across a number of sectors. The online guide for Horizon 2020 funding can be found at <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal4/desktop/en/funding/index.html>.

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