



It's been another busy couple of months in the EU Parliament. We've signed off on the new EU budget which will see more £2.1bn delivered to Welsh communities over the next seven years. I've spent time with Welsh universities to discuss how they can make best use of EU research funds and we've secured additional support for small to medium businesses in Wales.

Below is an overview of my work in the European Parliament over the past month. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to get in touch.

[EU Budget 2014-2020](#)

The European Parliament has now signed off on the EU's budget for the next seven years. The multiannual financial framework, (MFF) sets out spending plans for a wide range of issues including research and innovation, international development, agriculture and regional funding. Now that this agreement has been reached, essential EU funding programmes can get underway in Wales from the beginning of 2014.

I've worked hard to secure the best possible deal for Wales and fought against initial UK Govt proposals which would have seen funding cut by 22%. As a result of my lobbying Wales will be £130m better off over the next seven years. This means more EU money to support Welsh businesses, research and jobs.

[Support for Welsh SMEs](#)

In November I voted in favour of a new EU program which will facilitate better access to finance for small and medium sized Welsh enterprises and improve their access to European markets.

In 2012 there were 192,825 small to medium sized businesses in Wales and 59% of who have applied for finance have encountered some form of difficulty. A further 57% of SME owners in Wales currently hope to expand their markets abroad. That's why this program is so important. The Welsh economy relies heavily on these smaller businesses for both growth and employment and this support will help to secure the future of these businesses and create many new ones.

[Labour MEPs press governments to save taxpayers millions](#)

Labour MEPs have put pressure on national governments to scrap the monthly plenary sittings in Strasbourg – a move which would save over 150 million and cut CO2 emissions by over 19,000 tonnes each year. I was disappointed to see that UKIP MEPs abstained on this report which could potentially save taxpayers millions.

Fortunately, a large majority of MEPs voted in favour of the report which calls for a single seat for the European Parliament. This is an important step towards giving MEPs the power to answer the calls of voters who strongly support making savings in this area.

[Cardiff Uni leads on new innovation policy](#)

Last month Cardiff University and I hosted the *Smart Specialisation for Regional Innovation Conference*. Smart specialisation is a new innovation policy designed to promote the effective use of public investment in research.

The event brought together leading academic researchers, policy-makers and practitioners and offered an opportunity to discuss what Smart Specialisation means for research and innovation in Wales. It is great to see a Welsh University trailblazing in such an important new area of research, and I hope to see more Welsh Universities showcasing their work on a European platform.



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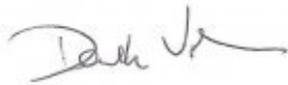
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Constituency news

A reader in Wales has asked me to include an update on blacklisting. This has been an important issue for Labour MEPs this year and we will be working hard over the coming months to ensure that blacklisting is explicitly illegal under EU law. Using data on someone's trade union membership or activities to discriminate against them, or compiling or distributing a blacklist is unacceptable and enacting laws in the EU Parliament is the best way to ensure governments across the EU take action and penalise offenders.

Another reader has asked me to include information about Erasmus +. I am wary that a number of organisations in Wales may require guidance to access this funding. From January 2014, Erasmus+ will be the new EU funding programme for education, training, youth and sport. Erasmus+ will have a new, simpler structure that combines current funding programmes in the sector including the Lifelong Learning Programme, Youth in Action, Jean Monnet, Tempus and Erasmus Mundus. For more information, eligibility criteria and to find out how to apply visit erasmusplus.org.uk.

A number of constituents have asked if I intend to sign the Eurogroup for Animals 'Animal Welfare Pledge'. The answer is yes, I have signed it. This means I have pledged that if I am elected in 2014 I will work to ensure an animal welfare framework law is adopted that provides the highest level of welfare possible. You can find more information about the pledge at eurogroupforanimals.org.



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