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Welcome to the latest edition of my regular newsletter.

### **In the European Parliament**

Last week in Strasbourg I voted on a variety of very important issues. Along with other Labour MEPs I supported a **resolution to continue food distribution to those most in need in our society**. The UK Conservative MEPs voted against the resolution that extended funding for this successful programme, which supports almost 18 million people including the unemployed, homeless, single parents and the disabled. In the current economic climate schemes such as this are vital in helping to guarantee the welfare of EU citizens.

The **Deposit Guarantee Scheme Directive** was also voted on last week. This ensures that savers are compensated for the failures of the banks. Protection for account holders is vitally important, especially given the events of the recent economic crisis with panicked scenes as customers attempted to withdraw their money from collapsing banks.

A **resolution on access to books for blind people**, which I voted in favour of last week, will make it easier to buy and sell Braille, large print and audio books internationally. The lack of publications currently available to blind and visually impaired people restricts the independence of these citizens and has a negative cultural and social impact throughout the EU. This resolution is a positive step towards addressing this.

### **Budget priorities**

MEPs from all mainstream parties voted overwhelmingly to support **my call for a freeze in the 2013 budget for all administrative budgets**. In my report on the "Guidelines for the 2013 budget" I have called for budgetary discipline and restraint across the EU institutions and for a better management of existing budgets. For the European Parliament's budget I have called for an independent evaluation to find out the areas where savings can best be made.

This month I have been given the rapporteurship on an Own Initiative Report (the equivalent of a Private Members Bill) looking at how European funding can be better used at local and regional level. I will be working closely with Welsh experts and others from elsewhere in Europe over the next few months to ensure that the report focuses on



### **Contact me:**

4th Floor

Transport House

1 Cathedral Road

Cardiff

CF11 9SD

T: 029 20 227660

Vernon House

39 Rhosddu Road

Wrexham

LL11 2NS

T: 01978 350052

E: [contact@derekvaughanmep.org.uk](mailto:contact@derekvaughanmep.org.uk)

W: [www.derekvaughanmep.org.uk](http://www.derekvaughanmep.org.uk)

the most important issues.

### **In the constituency**

Since my last enewsletter, I have had the pleasure of meeting with groups and organisations in Aberdare, Pontypridd and Port Talbot with visits already in the diary over the next few weeks to include Anglesey, Brecon, Llandudno and Merthyr.

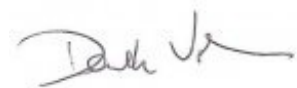
On Saturday, 10 February, I spoke at the **Unite Against Fascism – Wales** Annual Conference and outlined the dangerous rise of far-right parties throughout Europe. Extremism is on the increase in a number of countries and we must continue to keep a close eye on the activities of these organisations whilst at the same time providing clear and coherent policies and actions that prevent such groups gaining ground.

Last weekend, I hosted a fringe meeting at the Welsh Labour Conference in the SWALEC Stadium. Well attended, the event looked at the crisis within the Eurozone and included contributions from **Emma Reynolds MP** (Shadow Minister for Europe) and **Alun Davies AM** (Welsh Government Deputy Minister for European Programmes). The increasingly isolated position being assumed by the Tory-Lib Dem government in its relationship with the EU is clearly damaging their ability to get the best possible deals for the UK and for Wales.

In my speech to Conference, when I took to the platform on Saturday morning, I made the case for positive engagement with the EU and other Member States if we are to maintain any level of influence in deciding future direction on issues ranging from Structural Funding to CAP. Wales benefits to the tune of around £1bn worth of investment from the EU per year, used to tackle economic, social and educational disparities in some of our most deprived communities and to support our universities and rural areas. I firmly believe that the patriotic case for Wales is for us to play an active role in Europe and not, as other parties propose, one where we are left on the sidelines twiddling our thumbs, looking on when important decisions are being made.

I hope you find this enewsletter helpful. If you require any further information on any of the topics mentioned then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Best Wishes



**Derek Vaughan MEP**

**Member of the European Parliament**

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Derek Vaughan MEP  
4th Floor, Transport House, 1 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9SD, United Kingdom.

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