



Welcome to the latest edition of my regular e-newsletter bringing you up to speed with the latest developments from the European Parliament.

ACP-EU Joint Assembly

I have recently been elected vice president of the African Caribbean and Pacific-EU Joint Assembly. The joint ACP-EU Assembly brings together Members of the European Parliament and elected representatives of the African, Caribbean and Pacific states ("ACP countries"). The Joint Parliamentary Assembly works to promote human rights and democracy and meets for a plenary session twice a year. At the end of May, I will take part in the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary assembly in Horsens, Denmark, where a number of issues will be discussed. In my interventions I will focus particularly on Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and the developing the role of regional integration in ACP countries.

Equal pay for equal work

The European Parliament last week passed a resolution calling for legislation on equal pay for equal work to be fully respected and implemented by Member States. Progress in this area has been slow and some member states have even seen the pay gap become wider. Action needs to be taken when it comes to the principle of equal pay for men and women. Currently, women across the EU earn 16.4% less than men. In addition to this, the gender pay gap can have an adverse effect on women's pensions and as a result a larger number of women will live in poverty in their old age. I supported calls for employers to become more transparent regarding wages, bonuses and other perks paid to staff to ensure that people doing the same job get the same deal. It also goes without saying that the concept of the value of work should be based on qualifications and skills, with the aim of promoting equality between men and women.

Protecting Vulnerable Consumers

Labour MEPs voted last week to protect elderly, disabled and very young consumers against rip off suppliers playing on their vulnerability. Consumers in the EU still lack sufficient protection and I believe more needs to be done to strengthen their rights, which is why I voted in favour of an important report that aims to strengthen the rights of vulnerable consumers. MEPs voted in Strasbourg calling on the European Commission to bring forward policies next year introducing the concept of the "vulnerable consumer" into the different EU legislative and policy instruments designed for consumer protection. Young people and children need to be better protected against misleading TV and online advertising. Passengers with mobility problems need to be able to easily find out any problems before they buy tickets, and energy companies and telecoms companies need to be particularly careful when dealing with the elderly. There are many areas where vulnerable consumers need proper protection. The European Parliament's proposed solutions for tackling common problems in sectors such as transport, finance and the internet reflect that the protection and promotion of consumer rights are at the heart of European policies.

Bluefin tuna

Overfishing of Bluefin tuna and illegal catches have led to stocks decreasing significantly, this is why there is a need for a renewed effort to preserve the species in Europe. Last week MEPs voted in favour of measures aiming to reduce fishing quotas and strengthen controls over Bluefin tuna fishing in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean. 56% of all the legally captured Bluefin tuna comes from EU waters and the main countries fishing it are Spain, France and Italy with the main importer as Japan. In this resolution which I voted in favour, the Parliament aims to tighten rules protecting EU Bluefin tuna stocks, along the lines proposed by the International Commission for



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

W: www.derekvaughanmep.org.uk

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/derekvaughanmep

Twitter:

<http://twitter.com/derekvaughan>

the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT). I voted in favour of these proposals as I believe direct action needs to be taken to ensure the Bluefin tuna population is sustained. The proposals, which include reducing the allowable quotas and establishing sanctuaries for Bluefin tuna, are vital in helping to rebuild the tuna population.

Blueprint Touch Rugby Tournament

This year I was invited to be patron of the 'Blueprint Touch Rugby Tournament', which is held in Brussels every year. The tournament is a fantastic social occasion with over a hundred people taking part in matches every Wednesday evening during May and June. All profits from the tournament are shared between two charities; RETRAK, which supports street children in Kampala, Uganda and Ecole Chanterelle, a school for disabled children in Brussels. Last year the organisers raised over 10,000 EUR for these charities and this year they hope that the total will be even more. I was delighted to be able to attend the opening round of matches this month and to see the fantastic spirit in which the game is played.

Better protection for pigs

Last week in Strasbourg I signed a Written Declaration on the implementation of the ban on individual sow stalls by January 2013. This Written Declaration, which if passed will form the Parliament's position on the subject, highlights the need to ensure EU animal welfare standards are equally respected across the EU. Following the agreement in 2008 on implementing an EU-wide ban on the use of individual sow stalls in pig farming, this Written Declaration calls on the Commission and the Council Presidency to stick to the deadline of 1st January 2013 for Member States to implement these changes.

Youth Unemployment



Last week in Strasbourg I supported a resolution on measures to tackle youth unemployment as I believe the EU must play its part in helping young people find work. Devising a "European Investment Plan" to create new jobs, reallocating EU structural funds to projects to create jobs for young people, and introducing a "European Youth Guarantee" (above) to ensure that they are not without jobs for more than four months, are among the proposals adopted this week on measures to tackle youth unemployment. Further information on the European Youth Guarantee campaign organised by the Party of European Socialists can be found here: <http://www.youth-guarantee.eu/>

In the constituency

My casework postbag and inbox continues to be busy and over the last few weeks I have campaigned on a range of issues on behalf of constituents including animal welfare and workers' rights. I have also continued with a busy diary of visits and public discussion events.

At a recent meeting held at Swansea University, I spoke in support of the fight to have the Great Western mainline electrified further west than Cardiff. I was joined by a number of prominent Labour politicians, business leaders, local authority representatives and others. With a final decision on electrification expected next month, it is vital for the West Wales economy that the stretch of line running from Cardiff to at least as far as Swansea is upgraded so that the region can maximise opportunities to attract inward investment, trade, tourism and growth.

Local elections

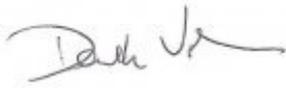
In the run up to the local elections at the start of May, I had the

pleasure of travelling around Wales to campaign alongside Welsh Labour candidates in the vast majority of local authority areas.

It was pleasing to see the hard work of candidates and activists paying off with the best set of results for Welsh Labour since local government reorganisation, regaining control of several authorities and strengthening our position on many others. I look forward to working with our first class team of councillors to help get the best deal we can for communities right across the country.

If you have any questions or wish to find out more about European issues, including those covered in this e-newsletter, then please do not hesitate to contact one of my offices.

Best Wishes



Derek Vaughan MEP

Member of the European Parliament

Labour, Wales

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

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This email was delivered to anthony.taylor@derekvaughanmep.org.uk.
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