



Last week in Strasbourg, as well as the fallout from Thursday's summit, MEPs debated lots of practical matters: better public access to EU information, sustainable transport, relations with Europe's neighbours, protection orders for victims of crime and rights for citizens facing arrest and more.

European Summit

David Cameron's catastrophic mishandling of negotiations with our European partners at the recent summit in Brussels has been widely criticised at home and abroad. An essay detailing my worries and concerns at the implications for Wales was published in the Western Mail last Wednesday and can be read here:

<http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/columnists/2011/12/14/derek-vaughan-why-david-cameron-s-eu-veto-is-not-really-a-veto-91466-29949405/>

European Protection Orders

One of the first votes last week gave a much needed protection to the victims of crime who chose to work or live in another EU country. At the moment there is no recognition of protection orders from one Member State by another, but the European Protection order offers victims of crimes such as domestic violence, stalking, and abduction, equal protection in whichever country in the EU they reside. The EPO does this by enabling victims to move country whilst hampering the efforts of their aggressors to make advances towards their victims once they have moved. This is a crucial tool in combating both violent and psychological crimes by using the broadest possible range of protection measures issued by Member States, and I welcome the measures that we voted for.

Environmentally friendly detergents

MEPs approved measures to make washing powders and dishwasher detergents nearly phosphorous-free. The release of phosphorous in to the water can have damaging effects and can pose a threat to fish and other aquatic life. It can be extremely difficult and expensive to remove phosphorous from water, which is why the measure to dramatically reduce its use in cleaning products is welcome. This environmentally friendly step is good news 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

consumers who want to limit the environmental impact that detergents can have on waterways and seas around the world.

Animal transportation

Making sure that animals in the EU being transported for slaughter are caused as little distress and suffering on journeys is an issue close to many people's hearts. Following the 8hours.eu petition <http://www.8hours.eu/> which is supported by around 1 million Europeans, the European Parliament has tabled a written declaration calling for a maximum 8 hour limit on the journey times of animals being transported. At present, animals can be transported for several days in terrible conditions. This is unacceptable and I call on the Council and Commission to review the current rules and to bring an end to this unfair treatment of animals.

Public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents

I voted in favour of legislation that will make all European Union institutions more transparent and accessible to the public. This groundbreaking resolution was passed despite opposition from the largest group of centre-right MEPs who tried to block the idea that citizens should be involved in the democratic process. This legislation, guided through the Parliament by my colleague Michael Cashman, will be instrumental in bringing the EU closer to its citizens and encouraging public participation in the democratic process. Thanks to this resolution European citizens will have the right to know what decisions are taken by their national ministers in European Council meetings and be allowed to request documents held by an EU institution. The European Parliament, Commission and Council must be accountable for what they do on behalf of the public and this resolution is a huge step towards achieving a fully transparent and accountable EU.

Ospreys land in the European Parliament

At the end of November, I was delighted to host representatives from the Ospreys rugby club at the European Parliament.

During the visit the Ospreys showcased their plans to develop links with European partners in order to promote youth involvement, social inclusion and education in rugby. Representatives from the club presented their ideas to the European Parliament Rugby Union Intergroup at a meeting attended by a wide range of sport stakeholders. At the evening reception the Ospreys delegation, including Wales international Alun Wyn Jones and Scotland's Nikki Walker, shared the club's experiences and future aspirations with a lively and enthusiastic audience.

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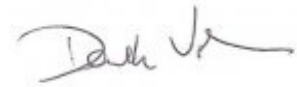
Season's Greetings

As we approach Christmas, I would like to thank you for all the support that I have received over the last year enabling me to fulfil my role as Member of the European Parliament for Wales.

It is a huge privilege to be able to represent you all and I am grateful for your help and assistance with campaigns, visits and enquiries in the last twelve months.

I hope you have a very Merry Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

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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