



Alyn
Smith

Members
Autumn 2012

Dear fellow SNP member,

Welcome to the latest edition of my newsletter.

It's been a busy summer during the recess away from Brussels – being in Scotland has allowed me to meet people, deliver speeches and do some writing and reading, which will be of huge value in coming months.

Unfortunately, economic chaos still abounds across Europe. The Euro remains in crisis, with the risk of a Greek default remaining, and there is still a real possibility of contagion spreading.

It's an unsettling background, and much of the work being done across the EU institutions in coming months may not make pretty viewing.

New regulation of the banks, the drafting of a seven-year budget and possible treaty changes to alter the functioning of the Eurozone are all likely to provoke more spats with the Tories, with Cameron and his colleagues engaging in the sort of petty, depressing and damaging posturing and fight-picking we've sadly become used to.

But there's good news too. In the parliament's Agriculture Committee, of which I'm a member, we've scored some successes in the ongoing reform of the CAP, and I've worked to adapt it more to Scottish interests. On regulation of oil and gas safety, too, I'm pushing for some major changes.

There's also more work on Horizon 2020 to be done. I'm Scotland's only representative on the parliament's Energy Committee, and this programme is hugely important as it will provide €80 billion across the EU to fund innovation in science and research – areas where Scots already have a world class record.

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With the 2014 referendum coming up, it's also important that EU officials, MEPs and interest and lobby groups in Brussels are fully aware of what's happening here in Scotland and why independence is so important.

Only if they understand the background can we expect them to support us, so I'll be working to ensure that the constitutional position here is properly explained and that they realise why an independent Scotland within the EU is both sustainable and desirable.

In this newsletter, you can read more about what I've been up to. I hope you find it interesting and useful.

If you'd like to receive regular updates on what I'm doing, then please do register for future editions on my web site at www.alynsmith.eu.

Yours for Scotland



Alyn Smith MEP



The Greens | European Free Alliance
in the European Parliament



Battling With Benn – And Winning



Alyn makes his case to the audience

It's not every day that you get to debate with Tony Benn in front of a paying audience – but Alyn had that opportunity when he appeared in a Guardian debate on Scotland's international future at the Edinburgh Book Festival...

Surprisingly, Benn damaged his reputation as a progressive socialist at the event when he rather oddly claimed that his family connections to Scotland were a good reason for rejecting independence.

Alyn's arguments on how and why an independent Scotland would be a strong collaborative partner internationally turned the tables on the veteran Labour campaigner and won support from the audience.

Alyn explains: "I argued that Scotland fared very badly at present because in organisations like the EU, the UK is the member state and Westminster government ministers always look after their own interests.

"This isn't sustainable. At present, Holyrood is responsible for implementing EU agreements, but has no role in their negotiation.

He adds: "With independence, however, we'll have our own representation and be able to develop relationships internationally in line with our distinctive outlook on the world. Small countries work effectively together to help solve many of the world's problems and Scotland will be able to make its own important contribution.

"I don't think I convinced Tony Benn, but the audience reacted well and they're the ones who really matter."

Offshore Rule Change Plans Should Be Scrapped

Wide-ranging proposals to regulate Europe's offshore oil and gas industry will do more harm than good...

Alyn has now lodged 18 amendments to proposed EU legislation to make it better fit Scotland's needs.

Bosses of North Sea oil operators and trade unions agree that proposed new regulation risks unravelling well-established and efficient safety systems which are already in place and work perfectly effectively.

Scotland already has some of the best oil and gas safety legislation in the world and there are worries that proposals for new EU rules will be well-intentioned but not fit for purpose.

Alyn says: "The European Commission's proposals have to change if we are to find a solution which adds any value to the safety of our offshore oil and gas industry.

"The amendments I've lodged will help to clarify the scope of the legislation and ensure the eventual package is workable. I'm determined to push the Scottish industry's case in this."

Crime Victims Get Better EU Deal

Becoming a victim of crime while away on holiday or business is hugely traumatic, but those involved often choose not to report it.

It's estimated that tens of thousands of Scots are affected by some sort of overseas crime every year.

Alyn has now thrown his support behind an EU plan to put those affected at the heart of the European criminal justice agenda.

A new directive allows victims to lodge complaints at their home police station when they return.

The police in the EU member state where the crime occurred are then compelled to act and if someone is caught, the victim

may well be able to give evidence to the court via video link. There will also be a minimum standard for compensation.

Alyn says: "Here in Scotland, we enjoy best practice when it comes to victims' rights. We now have a real opportunity to spread those rights across Europe.

"This is hugely important as it is about real people and real issues. This is an area where practice and procedure desperately need tightening up and I'm delighted to see it's happening."

News In Brief

Alyn has hit out at the UK government's refusal to make its flawed and discriminatory regime on electricity transmission charging fairer to Scots consumers.

Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) is hiking prices by nine per cent. It has blamed the high cost of using electricity and gas networks for the rise.

He says: "This is further evidence that the UK government's refusal to overhaul its unfair system of transmission charging is directly hitting us in the pocket.

"Scotland already faces some of the highest energy bills in Europe, leaving many in fuel poverty and struggling to make ends meet. Given that this country is Europe's energy powerhouse, this is disgraceful and must change."

Proposals by the Scottish Government to legislate for equal marriage have been given a warm welcome by Alyn, who has long been a vocal campaigner on the issue.

He says he is "absolutely delighted" at the news, adding: "This is about far more than LGBT rights, important though these are. It's about building a new and distinctive Scotland which is open and progressive."

In a separate move, Alyn has condemned Armenia – a potential future EU member – for its failure to protect its LGBT community. He is also pressing Europe to condemn homophobic attacks in Zimbabwe.

Sun cream helps protect against skin cancer – but it's currently classed as a cosmetic rather than a medical solution and so subject to VAT.

Alyn has written to Scottish public health minister Michael

Matheson, the UK Treasury and the European Commission making the case for the tax to be removed.

He is also looking at the possibility of lowering the power of sun lamps. These often emit the same level of radiation you'd find at midday in the Mediterranean, which is too high for pale Scots skins and can cause lasting damage.

Alyn has praised First Minister Alex Salmond for a "bold, exciting and inspired" reshuffle of government ministers at the start of the new Holyrood parliamentary session.

He adds: "With this move, a strong team is made even stronger. Giving Nicola Sturgeon responsibility for the referendum is a masterstroke and Alex Neil will do a terrific job as her replacement at health.

"I'm absolutely delighted with Humza Yousaf's promotion into government and congratulate him on his new role in dealing with Europe. He is a star talent in the party and the parliament and I'm really looking forward to working with him in taking forward our relationship with the EU."

Getting In Touch

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