



**Alyn
Smith**
Members
December 2012

Dear Friend,

It's been a busy autumn, with a huge amount going on both in Scotland and Brussels. With the signing of the Edinburgh Agreement, we can now step up campaigning for the referendum - working with Yes Scotland to win the hearts and minds of the Scottish people in the run-up period to the 2014 vote.

With nothing less than all our futures at stake and the biggest prize in our lifetimes on offer, I've been busy on the doorstep, in the streets, in the media and at public meetings, selling the independence message on the doorsteps. I'm relishing it, and I'm sure you are too. More please!

It's been a good couple of months for the party. Our opponents are now stooping to desperate tactics in attacking us, at the same time displaying a chilling picture of the sort of Scotland they're planning for us should they ever once again win power.

It's a tormented landscape of more Labour cronyism; higher unemployment; bigger council tax bills - and a blueprint for human misery which includes ending free tuition fees, taking away pensioners' bus passes, privatising the NHS and bringing back taxes on the sick via prescription charges.

It's a pretty terrifying prospect, and one which you and I know the voters will reject in their droves.

In the SNP, the people of Scotland see a party which will never be complacent, but which is confident, mature, united, capable and fit to govern our country, both now and after independence.

We all have a unified vision of our country - a place with pride in itself; a burning desire for social justice; the elimination of child poverty; a land where ambitions can be realised, families no longer fear for the future of their children and all can share in community and prosperity.

And, of course, a Scotland with its rightful place in Europe and the world.

That's my vision. I know it's yours too. It binds us, strengthens us, and unites us.

It was Jim Mather who coined the phrase 'the SNP's a team game' and it is in my mind often. Your support helps me do my job, and I offer you my support back. If there is anything I can do

to help you, your branch, your local Yes Scotland group, your campaign, then you only have to get in touch.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter - you'll find it packed with information about the work I've been doing. If you'd like to register for future copies, then you can do so at my web site at www.alynsmith.eu. It only takes a moment and means you'll be kept fully informed in the future.

I look forward to working with you as we move towards that critical vote in 2014 and then beyond as an independent nation!

Yours for Scotland



Alyn Smith MEP

“ We all have a unified vision of our country - a place with pride in itself. ”



The Greens | European Free Alliance
in the European Parliament



Alyn Helps Win Safety Net For Europe's Sharks

Alyn has played a major part in winning vital new protection for Europe's fast-declining shark population by helping to close loopholes which allowed them to be barbarically slaughtered and their fins used for soup...

The European Parliament has voted in favour of much tougher measures against fishermen - largely from Spain and Portugal - who slice the fins off while the sharks are still alive, then throw them back to die slowly and in agony.

The victory follows a long campaign by Alyn against the practice. A few weeks before the vote, he went swimming with 10 sharks - some of them more than 12 feet long - in a special tank at Deep Sea World in North Queensferry.

The event helped generate publicity for the cause, featuring on the BBC's Reporting Scotland programme as well as on radio and in newspapers.

When the vote to close the loopholes and so ban the practice of so-called shark finning came before the European Parliament, it was comfortably passed by Alyn and his fellow MEPs.

He said afterwards: "Animal welfare is something I care passionately about. Scotland's own track record on shark finning is very strong and I'm delighted by that - and I'm equally delighted that the European Parliament has now followed our lead.

"Shark finning is not just immoral, but it's threatening the very survival of many native European species. It's astonishing to think that a third of European sharks are currently under threat - something which I hope will now change.



'In the deep end' - Alyn swims with sharks at Deep Sea World

Just before the vote, Alyn delivered a petition signed by visitors to Deep Sea World calling for a ban and also contacted every MEP urging them to vote for the European Commission's clampdown proposals.

"I'm so glad that this clearly paid off," he added. "I'm extremely proud to be a member of the European Parliament today. Hats off to my colleagues for voting sensibly to preserve such a wonderful species."

Alyn Urges Further Study On Fracking

[Efforts by the EU to regulate the controversial practice of oil and gas fracking are being opposed by Alyn - on the grounds that any legislation of this nature affecting Scotland should come from our own politicians...](#)

He strongly supports the view that the issuing of licences for fracking should come from the member states themselves and not from Brussels.

He abstained from a vote of the European Parliament's Environment Committee and voted against an Energy Committee report. Alyn believed that this was too much in favour of this method of extraction when the risks of the technology have not yet been fully assessed.

He explained that fracking - a technique which involves massive amounts of water, sand and chemicals being pumped underground under high pressure to fracture the rock surrounding an oil or gas well - was a potentially interesting technology but added: "There remain real question marks over how safe it is and what impacts it may have on the environment.

"We also need to discover what sort of resource we actually have as opposed to hypothetical projections."

Alyn added: "Fracking may well have a role to play in the EU's energy future but the jury is still very firmly out. In any event, it should be for national authorities to decide what is best for them."

Where's The Beef? In Brazil...

South America is becoming increasingly important as a global meat producer, and Alyn has just returned from a fact-finding trip to Brazil to investigate beef production standards and see how they compare to EU requirements...

He travelled to farms, feedlots and slaughterhouses in Mato Grosso do Sul, a state in the south west of the country. The aim was to get first hand information and to see if lower production standards justified the maintenance of European trade barriers.

In fact, Alyn says he was pleasantly surprised by the conditions he encountered. "The environmental rules are in many ways considerably stricter than our farmers have to face, and their farmers don't get a penny in subsidy."

"I was also generally impressed by the standards of animal welfare and the slaughterhouse we visited was absolutely top of the line for efficiency, use of technology and hygiene."

Alyn added: "I think the message is clear - free trade is coming and complaints about inferior standards and quality can only take us so far. They are not so far behind us and are catching up fast, and we will have to be able to adapt to the new market realities."

But he added: "I don't want to be too gloomy. Several of the Brazilian farmers we spoke to didn't view Europe as a very attractive market - the amount of work and effort to meet EU animal health and traceability requirements was felt to be excessive."

"They feel there are other equally lucrative markets emerging which do not have the same requirements such as East Asia, Russia and the Middle East."

Vets The Way To Do It!

Alyn's passionate commitment to animal welfare has been honoured by one of Europe's most respected professional bodies...

The British Veterinary Association (BVA) has made him an Honorary Associate in recognition of his long standing interest in the work they do.

Alyn is a leading member of the parliament's Agriculture Committee where he regularly fights animal welfare causes - for instance, he recently led a campaign against exploitation of sharks by fishermen. He is also Honorary Vice President of the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

As well as supporting Scotland's vets, Alyn also works relentlessly on behalf of the country's farmers, campaigning on a range of issues from reform of the Common Agricultural Policy through to commercial animal transport.

He received his award in a presentation at the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Science at Easter Bush near Edinburgh. The award was handed over by Robert Anderson, the President of the BVA's Scottish branch and Ronnie Soutar, the organisation's Scottish Branch Junior Vice President.

Alyn was given a short tour of the world-famous school and its linked Small Animals Hospital where he watched a number of veterinary techniques being carried out by students - and even helped bandage a dog's paw.

He said after his visit: "I'm both delighted and humbled to be offered this Honorary Associate Membership of the BVA."



Alyn helps trainee vet Alex Hayne bandage border terrier Millie

"It means a huge amount to me to have this relationship with an organisation which upholds the very highest standard of animal welfare practice and which is recognised internationally for its knowledge, integrity and professionalism."

"Hopefully I'll be able to help the BVA to explain its agenda to politicians and officials in Brussels in a useful way. I'll also be able to give them feedback about what is going on and provide guidance and advice."

CAP Reform Slips Back

Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy is now set to slide into next year as a result of disputes over the EU's budget - but Alyn believes this may be no bad thing...

The delay moves the final decision, which needs to be approved by the European Parliament by next March, back into the period when the Irish hold the rotating EU Presidency.

This, Alyn believes, could be good for Scotland as having the Irish in the chair at such a crucial time means that their Presidency is likely to understand the Scottish perspective on the negotiations.

"The delay wasn't unexpected, and has been largely driven by the stramash over the EU budget rather than any delays in the parliament itself," he explained. "It actually gives us a bit more time to do this properly.

"Of course, what Scotland's farmers want is as much certainty as possible, and the negotiations are still going full steam ahead.

"But having an eye over our shoulders at the parallel discussion over the EU budget is also crucial and I think this short delay will allow us to adopt a more nuanced package in the final vote."

News In Brief

Reflecting on NATO

I've had a long think about my speech to conference in the NATO debate. Being honest with myself as well as you, I regret the words I used and I'm sorry. I've been in elected politics long enough to know there are different ways to make a point, and I could have said it better.

I've written a longer article about it in the excellent Independence Magazine, very much worth subscribing to! The article will also be available on www.alynsmith.eu.

An agreement between the EU and Israel which determines terms of trade between the two for pharmaceutical goods has been extended by the European Parliament - a move Alyn voted against.

He has criticised the lengthening of the Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of industrial Products (ACAA) because it does not protect or promote human rights and does not allow for checking if the goods were produced illegally in the Occupied Territories.

Alyn added: "I'm bitterly disappointed that the parliament voted in favour of protecting the consumer protection principles of the European single market and leaving the rights of the Palestinian people in the lurch."

Some of the most influential business figures in the Scottish Borders turned up to listen to Alyn deliver an address on the importance of agriculture and food production to the local economy.

Speaking in Kelso at the invitation of the Scottish Borders Chamber of Commerce, he said: "Agriculture is at the centre of the rural economy and of course that's particularly true here.

A working, prosperous and efficient countryside is vital to us all."

Alyn has backed Glasgow's nomination to become European Green Capital in 2015. It is one of eight cities currently in the running.

He said he was "delighted" to see his home city on the shortlist, adding: "It has made concerted efforts towards becoming a sustainable example to others. Glasgow City Council has been a valuable partner in realising the SNP government's green vision."

News that 16 and 17 year olds will be able to vote in the 2014 referendum on independence has been warmly welcomed by Alyn, who is Honorary President of both Young Scots for Independence and the Federation of Student Nationalists.

"Quite simply, it's the right thing to do," he said. "The contribution our young people can make to politics is immense. I know from personal experience that they're responsible and wise - they're thoughtful, mature and take politics seriously.

"If you're a 16 or 17 year old then Scotland is your country and its future is in your hands. So it's only right that you're going to get a say in how it is run."

Getting In Touch



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