



Alyn
Smith
November 2013

October was a busy month with two plenary sessions in Strasbourg, a byelection in Dunfermline and, of course, our SNP party conference in the fair city of Perth.

SNP conference is great for catching up with old pals and hearing the news from all around the country that we sometimes miss in the hurly-burly of day-to-day politics. It's also good to hear from our Scottish Government ministers about what's going on in moving the nation forward. It's refreshing and invigorating to hear their vision of what we can do to make Scotland better now and how the country could look after independence. Other parties should set out their visions in the same way and we can have proper debates about where our country can go.

The egalitarian, outward looking nation we want Scotland to be can be inspiring. It's a picture of a society fairer and more equal with a positive voice in the international community, helping to make the world a better place.

That's the country I want to see, that's the country I want to live in and it's becoming increasingly clear – through the actions of the Westminster government – that independence is the only way to achieve it. It will take work to get there, though, we'll have

to do it together and it's clear that we still have to convince people that independence is what's best for Scotland.

The White Paper from the Scottish Government will be published in time for St. Andrew's and will lay out a lot more of the detail on our plans for Scotland post independence. That will give a lot more ammunition in the battle to win over the hearts and minds of the people.

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It's not going to be easy but the hard work will be worth it and, with the European election in May, it's going to be all hands to the pump.

There's still a lot of work for MEPs to do before the election, though, and I've got dozens of meetings with individuals, campaign groups and industry professionals the length and breadth of the country already in the diary. I look forward to seeing a lot of you on my travels.

I hope you find this newsletter useful and, as always, please get in touch if you have an issue you want to raise with me or if there's something you want to make me aware of.

Alyn Smith MEP



The Greens | European Free Alliance
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Design and typesetting by Patrick Robertshaw, Edinburgh: splateagle.com



Scotland Set To Cash In On New EU Funding Programme

Horizon 2020, the EU's new programme for research and innovation has been approved by the European Parliament's Research Committee. Scottish colleges & universities do world class research and Horizon 2020 will open up a host of opportunities for us to improve on our already impressive record. I'm encouraging Scots businesses, research institutions and individuals to get their bids in early.

There will be more than €70 billion available and I've been meeting with our colleges & universities and others in our innovation sector to make sure that we grab our fair share. From clean air research to focussing on industrial technology, there are real and tasty opportunities here for Scotland and we're looking good to cash in. For the first time there will be a funding stream for small and medium sized businesses, which will be a huge bonus to companies across the country.

Scotland can benefit if we act early and decisively.



Scrap The Bedroom Tax With Independence



image: morgfile.com

Westminster's abhorrent Bedroom Tax targets the weakest in our society for political advantage cutting housing benefit so that the UK Government can appear to be tough on 'benefits cheats' and cutting the welfare budget at the same time.

SNP conference delegates in Perth last month voted to brand it 'unjust and unworkable'; and welcome the commitment of the SNP Government to scrap it within a year of independence.

This benefit cut affects around 80,000 households in Scotland, 80% of which are the homes of disabled adults, and 16,000 of which are the homes of children.

All SNP councils across Scotland have already committed to a no evictions policy as a result of the cut but we're still trying to get Labour, LibDem and Tory controlled councils to follow the SNP's lead.

Ending Eu Funds For Bullfighting

After a summer of collecting signatures, I have submitted my petition to the European Commission calling for an end to EU subsidies for bullfighting. The petition, hosted on my website, alynsmith.eu, attracted more than 12,000 signatures from around Europe by the time it closed.

For anyone who missed it, shocking evidence came to light at the start of summer highlighting how bullfighting in Spain was getting EU subsidies that are intended for food production. Those breeding bulls for this barbaric practice have been getting funds from the Common Agriculture Fund (CAP) thanks to a loophole in the regulations.

CAP funding is supposed to support food production; it's not for breeding bulls for torture and death to satisfy the blood-lust of a few people. European taxpayers should not be paying anything towards supporting bullfighting and I've been working to end these subsidies.



Don't Lose Your Vote

250,000 people who are eligible to vote in next year's European election and independence referendum could be turned away at the ballot box because they have not registered.

Any EU citizen who lives in Scotland can vote in both polls, but many are not aware that they have the right to vote or don't know how to register. Thousands of Europeans choose to live here and contribute to this country and their contribution to Scotland is valuable and welcome; they deserve a voice.

The independence referendum will also see 16 and 17 year olds be given the right to vote for the first time across Scotland. They, too, must make sure they are signed up in order to have their say on Scotland's date with destiny.

Don't lose your vote, make sure you're registered with your local council – find out more online at aboutmyvote.co.uk.



image: morgefile.com

Fuel Bills Will Be Lower Under Independence

Fuel bills in an independent Scotland will be reduced thanks to Government action under plans announced by Deputy First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

Most of the UK's energy policy is controlled in London just now and the extra tariffs and charges levied by the UK Government weigh heavily on the fuel bills of all of us. From students to pensioners we're all paying extra on our fuel bills for a load of green measures and insulation costs.

Nicola pledged to seize the opportunity of independence to move those burdens from the energy companies to the Scottish Government to take advantage of economies of scale while still delivering the advantages that come from the spending. This would mean that the cost wouldn't be carried by individual consumers and fuel bills would be lower, helping people to get through these tough economic times.



image: morgefile.com

In Brief

Scotland International, an independent think-tank dedicated to analysing issues of significance to Scotland and its place in the world, released a 50 page blueprint detailing how an independent Scotland could handle its defence. Compiled by director Dr John MacDonald and Lieutenant-Colonel Andrew Parrot RTD it details how Scotland could have around an extra £500 million more per year to spend on ensuring our troops are adequately trained and have the necessary equipment and still spend less than we do currently. The full blueprint is available on their website: scotland-international.net

Westminster is holding back progress according to scientists. Leading expert in the Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) field Professor Stuart Haszeldine, who Alyn has worked with previously, has said that people trying to progress CCS are 'angry and depressed' by the lack of progress being made'. He hit out at the delays being imposed by the UK Government saying it's time; "we stop talking, we start doing".

Off to the United Nations! A visit to the United Nations this month to meet with some diplomats to discuss a variety of issues from agriculture to energy and how small nations work with supranational bodies like the UN. Straight from New York to Strasbourg for a week-long Parliament plenary.

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Prison Officers Association Scotland has backed independence after a vote at their conference in Peebles earlier this month. Delegates voted on a motion to voice their "frustration and dismay" at the Westminster government's pension arrangements and refusal to recognise prison officers as a key operational service like the police or fire brigade. The resolution also noted that the best interests of prison officers will be served by an independent Scotland.

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