



Welcome to the March 2013 edition of my regular enewsletter.

If you require any further information on any EU related issues then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Ongoing negotiations on the EU budget

Following last month's summit, the European Parliament and Member States will begin a series of negotiations to finalise a deal on the next seven year EU budget. The European Parliament understands that there is little chance to change the overall figures but will be pushing for more flexibility and a mid-term review of the budget. The deal agreed by the Prime Minister last month failed to secure safeguards for Wales' structural funding and, as a result, Wales could lose over £400m in structural funds over the next seven years. I will be working closely with colleagues in the European Parliament to aim to secure more flexibility for the UK's regions so that Member States have the flexibility to transfer 4% of their structural funds between regions, and if successful in negotiations, I will be pushing the PM to transfer funds from richer English regions to Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, who all lose out in the current deal.

Lack of reform on Common Agricultural Policy

Last week Labour MEPs voted on a range of proposals which will determine how CAP funds are spent in the next financial period. There are aspects of the reform that can be welcomed, particularly greater transparency which means that information about beneficiaries of CAP funding will be published. A large number of MEPs supported this measure, but in other parts of the package, the reform was not as far reaching. Labour MEPs have been calling for more focus on rural development (pillar 2 of the CAP), which is particularly beneficial to our rural communities, through stimulating innovation and competitiveness and improving environmental measures. I opposed the proposal to allow "double funding", which would allow money to be paid out twice for the same practice (agri environment schemes in pillar 1 and "greening" in pillar 2.) I was disappointed that this measure was not passed by the European Parliament. Labour MEPs also tabled amendments to scrap export subsidies for products such as tobacco and alcohol, which cost over 1bn EUR a year, and which distort trade patterns in developing countries.

I welcome the start of negotiations between the Council and Parliament on this legislation and hope that further reform can be achieved.

New initiative to limit asbestos related illnesses

Labour MEPs last week gave their full backing to an own initiative report calling for all asbestos to be removed from public buildings by 2028. The report, drafted by a Labour MEP, calls for a screening and registration programme for buildings contaminated by asbestos to be set up, as well as a road map for its removal. Even since the adoption of an EU wide ban on asbestos in 1999, many buildings, including schools and offices, still contain this dangerous substance. World Health Organisation (WHO) figures show that there are between 20,000 and 30,000 cases of asbestos related diseases each year in the EU and Wales is no exception. Action needs to be taken to make sure that asbestos does not continue to be the UK's biggest work related killer and to provide people with better information about how asbestos, whether it be blue, brown or white, can affect their lives.

EU's fight against racism, xenophobia and hate crime

Last week in Strasbourg MEPs adopted a resolution on strengthening the fight against racism, xenophobia and hate crime. Citizens in Wales and throughout the EU fall victim to discrimination, intolerance and hate on a daily basis and the EU must now focus on introducing measures to combat this. The resolution includes a call to revise



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the Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia so that it extends to other types of discrimination, such as religious issues and homophobia. All forms of racism, xenophobia and hate crimes are completely incompatible with the EU's values and principles and action must be taken to combat all forms of discrimination. Many Member States are taking important steps to address this issue, but fighting discrimination and racism must also be a priority at EU level.

St David's Day in Brussels

St David's Day was marked in Brussels with a special reception designed to showcase the varied and top quality produce that Wales has to offer. First Minister Carwyn Jones AM, who hosted the occasion, used his speech to praise our proud tradition of turning out exceptional local produce and to highlight the important relationship between Wales and the EU. Celebrating our national day at the heart of the EU allows our small country to shine at an international level, as well as being a fantastic opportunity to promote Welsh businesses, culture and tourism.

Fairtrade Fortnight



Fairtrade Fortnight (25th February - 10th March) was recently put under the spotlight in the European Parliament. The success of the Fairtrade movement is underlined by some impressive statistics - last year we drank 3.2 billion cups of Fairtrade tea in the UK alone - but public support is not always backed up by the policies needed to ensure that farmers in developing countries get a fair deal. Around 500m smallholders currently produce a staggering 70% of the world's food, but sadly many go without food themselves. My Labour colleagues and I are supporting Fairtrade's campaign to urge the government to use the G8 summit later this year as a platform to get a fair deal for struggling farmers.

****INVITATIONS****

Welsh Labour Conference, Llandudno – Fringe Meeting

This Saturday (23rd March 2013), I will be hosting a special Welsh Labour Conference Fringe Meeting entitled "The Patriotic Case for Wales in Europe" beginning at 12.30pm in the Harlech Room, Venue Cymru, Llandudno.

I will be joined on the panel by Wayne David MP and Alun Davies AM and if you are attending Welsh Labour Conference, I would be delighted to see you there. A buffet lunch will be provided.

Policy Events



Earlier this month, my programme of EU policy discussion events designed to encourage debate on European issues by Welsh Labour members continued with a gathering in Cwmbran Community Council Chamber (above).

The next meetings will take place in Llanelli, Neath & Pontypridd as follows:

Friday, 26 April 2013 at 7pm

Thomas Arms Hotel, Thomas St, Llanelli

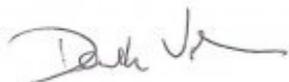
Speakers: Nia Griffith MP, Alun Davies AM

Friday, 10 May 2013 at 7pm
Gwyn Hall, Orchard Street, Neath
Speakers: Owen Smith MP, Alun Davies AM

Friday, 7 June 2013 at 7pm
Pontypridd RFC Clubhouse
Speakers: Owen Smith MP, Vaughan Gething AM

If you would like to attend one of these events then please contact my Cardiff office to reserve a place.

Best Wishes



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