



# EUROPARL



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*Shetland SNP representative Willie Ross and Ian Hudghton MEP visited Lerwick harbour (above), and the island of Whalsay to meet fishermen and their families.*

## BETRAYED AGAIN!

Scotland's beleaguered fisheries dependent communities are outraged at the disastrous deal negotiated and voted for by the UK Fisheries Minister at the December 2003 Council meeting in Brussels.

Despite making massive sacrifices during 2003, including scrapping large numbers of whitefish boats and being forced to limit days at sea to 15 per month, the Scots whitefish fleet have once again been hit disproportionately hard by the latest 2004 regulations. Commenting, Ian Hudghton said:

"It is unbelievable that the UK-led ministerial team have returned from Brussels expecting a welcome, when in fact they have supported a set of regulations which could kill off our remaining whitefish industry.

"During my visit to Whalsay, Scalloway and Lerwick in December it was clear that communities such as Shetland could take no more of the drastic downturn in income being forced upon so many families, and yet Ministers have ignored their pleas."

## EURO MP MEETS VISITSCOTLAND

SNP MEP Ian Hudghton had an informative and constructive meeting in Dundee with VisitScotland's Corporate Affairs team. Commenting the MEP said:

"Scotland has tremendous potential as a venue for the increasingly lucrative business tourism market and I commend VisitScotland for their positive approach to increasing Scotland's profile. I was, however, keen to discuss how we include the whole of Scotland.

"Discussion centred on what Scotland's cities, and the smaller towns which can and regularly do play host to conferences, have on offer. We also talked about the conference suites available at our world famous championship golf courses, and at a wide range of hotels in attractive rural settings up and down the country - good options for business travellers keen to mix business with some leisure. Offering something more than just good conference facilities goes a long way to turning this year's business tourist into next year's family holidaymaker.

"There is a need for better transport links to ensure that tourists are encouraged to choose Scotland, and on arrival can move around with greater ease. Tourism currently puts £4.5 billion per annum into the Scottish economy and employs around 200,000 people. The Scottish Executive must back up VisitScotland's strategy with hard cash to improve our transport infrastructure if Scotland's full potential as a tourist destination is to be fulfilled."

## IRELAND TAKES THE LEAD

2004 sees Ireland holding the rotating presidency of the European Union. An independent country, smaller than Scotland, will be setting the agenda and leading the process of negotiation and agreement on major EU policies and programmes.

The Irish Presidency Programme identifies four priority objectives. These are: a successful enlargement of the EU to include 10 new Member States; working together for economic growth; a safer Europe by developing as an area of freedom, security and justice; global engagement with the outside world.

Ireland holds the Presidency of the Council for the first six months of this year before handing over to the Netherlands for the second half. It will engage on a period of reflection with regard to the draft Constitution in an attempt to see whether agreement can be reached among the soon to be 25 Member States.

Meanwhile the UK unionists will be telling us that Scotland has more influence as part of the big and powerful UK, (try telling that to our fishing communities) but, almost in the same breath what a good idea it is that 10 more independent countries, many smaller than Scotland, will be joining the Club this year.

## IN BRIEF

Ian Hudghton sponsored a visit to the European Parliament in Brussels on behalf of the North East Regional SNP. A 30 strong contingent participated in the visit which included an opportunity to see the Parliament at work in a plenary session.

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MSPs Nicola Sturgeon and Michael Matheson, the SNP Justice Team at the Scottish Parliament, visited Brussels to meet with relevant officials of the European Commission and Council. Accompanied by Ian Hudghton MEP they also toured a Belgium government reception centre for asylum seekers.

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Ian Hudghton will be taking part in cross-Party European Question Time events organised in the Universities of St. Andrews and Stirling, and at Inverness College in the early part of this year as part of the build-up to the European Parliament elections on 10 June.

## ANIMAL TRANSPORT PLANS MUST CATER FOR SCOTLAND

Commenting on the publication of the European Commission's proposals for tighter restrictions on transport of animals for slaughter, Ian Hudghton MEP said:

"Scotland produces some of the best, naturally reared, high quality livestock in the world, and it is in producers own interests to ensure that no harm comes to animals while in transit, but in framing new rules, the EU must recognise that remote rural and island areas require to be catered for. Many small scale abattoirs have been forced out of business by EU regulation, meaning that producers often have no alternative but to send their animals to distant facilities. During the passage of this new proposal through the European Parliament I will be calling for a sensible compromise in order to enable Scotland's geographic situation to be taken due account of."

## SCOTS STUDENTS MEET MEP

Ian Hudghton frequently meets with young Scots at schools and colleges. Recent visits included Q & A sessions at Keith Grammar School, Hayshead Primary, Arbroath and Breadalbane Academy in Aberfeldy.

In addition, College groups from Ayr and Aberdeen visited Strasbourg at the end of 2003, taking the opportunity to debate current issues with MEPs.

## SCOTTISH AID AGENCIES MEET MEPS

A group representing Scottish aid agencies and international development charities visited Brussels to lobby both the European Commission and the European Parliament for a timetable for meeting the UN target of spending 0.7 per cent of wealth on aid.

The group, which included representatives from Oxfam, NIDOS (Network of Int. Development Organisations in Scotland), the UN Association and the Conference of European Churches met with European Commission officials and with MEPs from across the political spectrum, including Ian Hudghton (pictured below).



## PAISLEY UNIVERSITY DEBATE

As part of a pre-election series, Ian Hudghton MEP took part in a cross-Party European question time at the University of Paisley.

An enthusiastic audience ensured that the session was extremely lively, particularly while debating the adequacy of Scotland's representation in the EU, contrasted with the power of current and future independent member states.

## IAN HUDGHTON'S DIARY

12-15 JANUARY  
Plenary Session, Strasbourg

15 JANUARY  
SNP North East Regional Association Executive, Dundee

17 JANUARY  
Euro campaigning, Dingwall

19-21 JANUARY  
Fisheries Committee, Brussels

22 JANUARY  
Aberdeenshire Schools Languages Event, RGU Aberdeen

23 JANUARY  
'Vote 2004' seminar, Edinburgh

Perth & Kinross Forum, Perth

24 JANUARY  
SNP 'Taste of Scotland', Banchory

26 JANUARY  
EP Burns Supper, Brussels

27-29 JANUARY  
EP Plenary session, Brussels

30 JANUARY  
SNP Aberdeen City Burns Supper

31 JANUARY  
SNP Peterhead Burns Supper

2 FEBRUARY  
Euro Election campaigning

SNP Kirriemuir Branch AGM

3 FEBRUARY  
Euro Election campaigning

SNP Ellon Branch meeting

4-5 FEBRUARY  
Group meetings, Brussels

6 FEBRUARY  
Cross Party Euro Question Time, Inverness

Meet Church leaders, Dunblane

## IAN HUDGHTON

Scottish National Party Member of the European Parliament

DUNDEE

8 Old Glamis Road, Dundee DD3 8HP

Parliamentary Assistant - Kate Young

eMail: [kyoung@mep.sol.co.uk](mailto:kyoung@mep.sol.co.uk)

Tel: 01382 903206/623200 Fax: 01382 903205

ABERDEEN

70 Rosemount Place, Aberdeen AB25 2XJ.

Tel: 01224 623150 Fax: 01224 623160

eMail: [ihudghton@europarl.eu.int](mailto:ihudghton@europarl.eu.int)

Website: [www.hudghtonmep.com](http://www.hudghtonmep.com)



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[www.hudghtonmep.com](http://www.hudghtonmep.com)