

# EUROPARL



THE REGULAR NEWSLETTER OF SNP EURO-MP

## IAN HUDGHTON

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### RETHINK ON NUMBER PLATES SNP TO KEEP UP THE PRESSURE

Car drivers who want to use the Scottish flag on their registration plates could be set for a last minute reprieve. A change in UK regulations means that special plates, which have "SCO", the Saltire logo and European Union flag on them, will be banned from 1 September.

All cars registered in the UK have the option to carry the European symbol on the number plate and the letters GB. But the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is now having second thoughts and the Scottish Executive is under pressure to back calls to keep the personalised Saltire plates. But New Labour's opponents depicted the move as a climb down in response to SNP pressure.

Kenny MacAskill MSP claimed Helen Liddell had voted for the banning of SCO plates in the Commons in April - and that Sarah Boyack had performed a late u-turn. "The SNP want a Scottish victory over London's legislative dogma - not a fudge," said Mr MacAskill.

The SNP MSP says the right to have SCO plates in law must now be conceded in full. "After a week of pressure from the SNP, Scottish drivers and the Scottish media, and a week of silence from the Scottish Transport Minister, the Scottish Secretary has been forced to condemn her own Government's SCO ban, which she voted for. What a farce."

SNP MEP Ian Hudghton, whose own car carries the Scottish insignia, wrote earlier this year to the European Commissioner for Transport, Loyola de Palacio, asking her to comment on recent attempts by UK Government ministers to blame Europe for the Saltire ban. Reporting on the reply he received, Mr Hudghton said:

"The Commissioner's letter confirms that recognition of the Saltire and SCO on our Number plates is a matter for the United Kingdom Government."

"My advice, as an SNP MEP, to all motorists who have proudly chosen the Saltire as their traditional means of identification is to keep up the pressure on the Government by continuing to fly the flag!"



Pictured above with Ian Hudghton MEP are Cllr. Jack Gibb, Andrew Welsh MSP, Mike Weir MP and Cllr. Sandy West following a recent SNP summit meeting in Montrose to address economic development issues in the light of difficulties facing local food processor Esk Foods and the threats to employment at Glaxo Smithkline.

### SCOTS ISLANDS "SHORT-CHANGED"

The SNP's Ian Hudghton MEP says London and Edinburgh have failed to take advantage of European Union rules permitting "social aid" to be granted to island residents to offset travel costs. Mr Hudghton, who recently flew to Shetland to meet with the fishing industry, says that the £290 return air fare from Aberdeen is a disgrace and that high fares are crippling to the communities in the Northern and Western Isles.

The MEP took up the matter with the European Commission following concerns raised with him by islanders. In the course of enquiries Mr Hudghton has discovered that the Governments of France, Spain and Greece use European Structural Funds to help with travel costs from their islands to mainland cities. The Government in London, which has overall responsibility for EU representation, and the Scottish Executive, in terms of its transport brief, have failed to take such action. Meanwhile, the residents of Scotland's islands continue to pay through the nose. Speaking from Shetland, Mr Hudghton said:

"I have been approached by island residents who feel they have paid inflated transport costs for far too long. The European Commission recognises that island living can make travel difficult for citizens living in offshore communities. Government expenditure to offset some of these costs is in keeping with proper use of Structural Funds, whose purpose is to help reduce the economic disparities between areas, and I believe that assisting Scottish islanders with transport costs merits such expenditure."

"Scots islanders should ask just why London Labour and the Lib/Lab Executive in Edinburgh have failed to look after their interests while politicians in Paris, Madrid and Athens want to help their island communities."



P6/7 at Inverkeilor School in Angus (pictured above) enjoyed grilling their local MEP Ian Hudghton, on subjects ranging from the Euro currency to Foot and Mouth disease, as part of their EU project. A similar session took place recently at Portlethen Primary School.



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## TOWN TWINNING FUNDING BATTLE

Ian Hudghton MEP has expressed his anger that town twinning associations are, once again, being threatened with a cut in EU funding.

The MEP was referring to a European Commission proposal to cut 3 million Euros (£1.8million) in funding for town twinning from the EU's budget for 2002.

Mr Hudghton commented:

*"Last year the European Parliament successfully resisted a similar cut in the budget, and I just can't believe that we have the same fight on our hands again this year."*

*"The latest threat to town twinning is causing anger across Europe and I know that MEP's from several countries raised their concerns when we returned to Brussels last week by tabling amendments to the European Commission's draft budget."*

*SNP elected members from all levels of Government attended Alyth Branch SNP annual coffee morning last month, taking the opportunity to listen to constituents' views on a range of issues from agricultural matters to problems caused by Perth and Kinross Council cuts to care assistant provision in schools, which the SNP have strongly opposed. Pictured below are (l. to r.) Pete Wishart MP, Cllr. Ian Miller, Ian Hudghton MEP and John Swinney MSP.*



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This newsletter is published by Ian Hudghton and distributed free of charge to keep constituents in touch with developments in the European Parliament and the work of the SNP Euro-MP.



## SNP Conference Preview

19th to 24th September 2001 will see the Annual National Conference of the SNP returning to Dundee for the first time in 14 years.

Delegates to the city's Caird Hall will debate a diverse range of topics. Not only will the Party outline its domestic priorities including housing, health, transport, but will also tackle subjects relating to Scotland's role on the World stage and the SNP's approach to the WTO, globalisation and the plight of other nations.

A debate on an independent Scotland's relationship with NATO and the European Rapid Reaction force has already generated considerable interest.

There are debates on issues over which deliberations in the European Parliament have a bearing too. In the aftermath of this year's Foot and Mouth epidemic, Conference will examine the future of farming, and will seek to address Scottish farmers' concerns such as changes to the Less Favoured Area rules.

A comprehensive motion on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, enshrining arguments raised by the SNP in the European Parliament has been submitted. This will give delegates an opportunity to contribute to this Europe-wide debate, whose outcome is so crucial to the many fishery-dependent areas of Scotland.

Issues debated in the Employment and Social Affairs Committee of the European Parliament also feature on the agenda such as measures to enhance equal opportunities and to combat discrimination. And, in this European Year of Languages it is appropriate that Conference will debate Gaelic education in our schools.



*SNP members in Mid Scotland and Fife gathered in Perth last week to take part in an exchange of views on the Party's campaign strategy leading up to the next elections to the Scottish Parliament and Local Authorities.*

*National Convener John Swinney gave the keynote address, supported by MSP colleagues Bruce Crawford and Tricia Marwick. Chairing the session, Ian Hudghton MEP backed calls for a continuous campaigning strategy designed to increase voter support for Scottish Independence.*

## IAN HUDGHTON'S DIARY

24 AUGUST

Fisheries mtg. Lerwick, Shetland

27 AUGUST

Visit to P6/7, Inverkeilor Primary School, By Arbroath

Mid Scotland & Fife SNP Regional mtg., Perth

28-30 AUGUST

Group mtgs. Brussels

1 SEPTEMBER

SNP National Assembly, Perth

3-6 SEPTEMBER

EP Plenary session, Strasbourg

8 SEPTEMBER

SNP National Executive Committee, Edinburgh

10-13 SEPTEMBER

Employment/Social Affairs Cttee, Brussels

Fisheries Cttee, Brussels

14 SEPTEMBER

North East Scotland SNP Regional mtg, Aberdeen

15 SEPTEMBER

Highlands & Islands SNP Regional briefing mtg. Inverness

17-19 SEPTEMBER

Group mtgs. Brussels

19-22 SEPTEMBER

SNP Annual Conference, Dundee

24-27 SEPTEMBER

Group mtgs. Brussels

1-4 OCTOBER

EP Plenary, Strasbourg

8-11 OCTOBER

Fisheries Cttee, Brussels  
Employment/Social Affairs Cttee, Brussels

12 OCTOBER

Action for Churches Together in Scotland mtg., Edinburgh

15 OCTOBER

Volunteer Development Scotland, Seminar, Brussels

15-18 OCTOBER

Group mtgs. Brussels

22-26 OCTOBER