



EUROPARL



ISSUE 37

15 APR–25 MAY 2003



IN BRIEF

- Ian Hudghton MEP presented the prizes at Aberdeen City Schools Europe Day Competition, which encouraged students to focus on EU enlargement.
- The Annual Seafood Europe Expo in Brussels—now the largest event of its kind in the world—once again saw Scotland hosting the biggest single national pavilion. Speaking at the Shetland Seafood stand, Ian Hudghton praised all the participating companies for their continuing success in providing high quality produce in a very competitive world market.
- P4-7 pupils at Old Rayne School in Aberdeenshire provided a “hot seat” for MEP Ian Hudghton recently, when an enthusiastic and wide-ranging question and answer session was held as part of their EU project.
- The Website recently launched by Ian Hudghton MEP has proved already to be a popular attraction for information-seekers. In its few weeks of existence, www.hudghtonmep.com has had over 6,000 hits.

HISTORICAL RIGHTS MUST BE PROTECTED

The Scottish National Party is seeking cross-party support in a campaign for the retention of Scotland's historical fishing rights. SNP Euro MP Ian Hudghton has written to the leaders of all parties represented in the Scottish Parliament seeking their support for the retention of the principle of relative stability - the principle whereby fishing quotas are allocated to countries on the basis of their historical shares.

The Shetland Box and relative stability are programmed for review during 2003. It is well known that countries such as Spain want to gain full access to Scottish fishing opportunities. Ian Hudghton commented:

"The long-term retention of Scotland's fishing rights is essential for our fishing industry - an industry which is already facing a great deal of uncertainty. Fishermen who are suffering under the current whitefish restrictions

must be assured that they will benefit from any future recovery in stocks. They must not take the blows just now only for skippers from Spain to reap the benefits in the future.

"I have written to the leaders of all Scotland's parliamentary parties seeking their support for the retention of the principle of relative stability. The principle is due to be reviewed before the end of the year and is likely to come under renewed attack from countries eager for access to Scottish fishing grounds.

"If we can show that politicians from every political persuasion in Scotland - one of Europe's most important fishing nations - are committed to the retention of Scotland's historical rights, Westminster and the European Commission may sit up and take notice. A show of political unity will give our coastal communities some hope in these desperate times."

MEP FLAGS UP ISLAND FLIGHT COSTS

SNP Member of the European Parliament Ian Hudghton says the recent news of a probe by MPs into the exorbitant cost of flights to Scotland's highland and island airports has been a long time coming.

The MEP, who raised the issue with the European Commission in December 2000, says current flight charges are a rip-off and that he will back moves to have them cut.

"Residents of the northern and western isles, by necessity, travel regularly to the mainland, paying hundreds of pounds a trip. When first I looked into this issue, I had just flown from Aberdeen to Lerwick

at a cost of £290 return. By way of comparison, Air France quoted £96 to islanders for the cost of a return flight from Corsica to the mainland city of Nice.

"My enquiries to the Commission provided me with information that the French Government grants 'aid to individual consumers' to offset the increased travel costs their island inhabitants would otherwise have to bear when travelling to the mainland. This facility is utilised also in both Spain and Greece. I am liaising with my Westminster colleagues over how this model of providing 'social aid' might be adopted to help Scottish island residents.

SNP DEMANDS FISHERIES REMOVAL FROM EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION

The SNP in the European Parliament has reacted with dismay at the inclusion of fisheries matters as an area of exclusive EU competence in the proposed European Constitution, published recently.

SNP Euro-MP Neil MacCormick, member of the Convention on the Future of Europe, and Ian Hudghton MEP have vowed to fight for the removal of the clause relating to "the conservation of marine biological resources under the CFP" from the list of exclusive EU powers. The only other exclusive powers relate to monetary policy, commercial policy and customs union. Mr Hudghton stated:

"The EU's management of fish stocks over the last twenty years has been an unmitigated disaster. To suggest that Brussels should now have exclusive control enshrined in a constitution is madness - particularly at a time when the number of land-locked nations in the EU is set to rise.

"It has been universally accepted that the way forward for fisheries management is for there to be more localised and regional control. This draft Constitution is therefore a step in the wrong direction.

"The SNP intend to fight this proposal tooth and nail and I will be raising the matter in the European Parliament. Scotland's fisheries management should be under the control of the Scottish Parliament - not under the remote control of land-locked Brussels."

ENVIRONMENTAL LIABILITY MUST NOT PENALIZE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

"Public Authorities, especially Local Authorities, currently face significant burdens arising from environmental damage, from a wide range of sources major and minor. This Directive gives an opportunity to better identify and assign responsibility and should follow the "polluter pays" principle." said Ian Hudghton MEP prior to the Strasbourg first reading vote on a directive on Environmental Liability.

"Particularly in the UK, Governments have been guilty of seeking to leave Local Authorities to pick up the cost of EU legislation - such as disposal of refrigeration equipment - and blaming "Brussels".

"The costs of implementing this Directive must not be inflicted unfairly upon hard-pressed Local Authority budgets, either through approving a faulty Directive or as a result of ultimately flawed implementation by Government."

Ian Hudghton, pictured below with Irish MEP Dana Scallan, recently took part in a Fisheries Committee delegation to Killybegs, in the west of Ireland, and to Dublin where Ireland's Fisheries Minister, Dermot Aherne, gave MEPs a useful insight into the continuing inter-Government negotiations on EU Fisheries policy.



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IAN HUDGHTON'S DIARY

21 - 23 MAY

EP Fisheries Committee delegation, Ireland

26 MAY

Q&A session with P6 at Langlands School, Forfar

27-30 MAY

Group meetings, Brussels

31 MAY

Moray Constituency - Winnie's Highland Fling, Buckie

2-5 JUNE

EP Plenary Session, Strasbourg

7 JUNE

SNP National Council, Perth

9-12 JUNE

Committee meetings, Brussels

11 JUNE

Highlands & Islands Fisheries Seminar, Brussels

14 JUNE

Scots Independent Annual Award Lunch, Stirling

16-17 JUNE

Committee meetings, Brussels

18-20 JUNE

Group meetings and Plenary Session, Brussels

24-25 JUNE

Group meetings, Brussels

25 JUNE

SNP London Branch meeting, Westminster

26-27 JUNE

Group meetings, Brussels

28 JUNE

Angus Show, Brechin

30 JUNE - 3 JULY

EP Plenary Session, Strasbourg



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