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Welcome back to my enewsletter which took a break over the summer.

During August and September I have been busy in the constituency visiting projects and events across Wales including RSPB Futurescapes Carmarthen (below), Cwmbran Centre for Young People and Ysgol Bryn Eliau in Colwyn Bay. I have also met with various other community groups in Abergavenny, Colwyn Bay, Merthyr, Rhondda, Treharris and Ystalyfera amongst others.



After the summer break the European Parliament always holds two Strasbourg sessions in September to make up for the lack of a session in August. So here is a round-up of some of the issues MEPs discussed and voted on in these two sessions. As always, please contact me if you would like to know more about any of these issues or other European matters.

State of the European Union

In Strasbourg last week MEPs welcomed Jose Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, where he delivered his "State of the Union" address. President Barroso's address covered pressing social issues facing the EU and highlighted youth unemployment as one of the areas where we as a Community must do more. The speech was, however, dominated by the ongoing crisis in the Eurozone. €4.6 trillion in assistance has been given to the financial sector by EU taxpayers and the President made it clear that it is now time for banks to make their contribution through a financial transaction tax, or a Robin Hood tax, a long-standing demand of Labour MEPs. The minute tax, levied on all financial transactions completed where one party is based in the EU, is



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expected to generate £47 billion a year. If the majority of money raised in the UK was retained by the UK, this could amount to billions to be spent on public services and invested in jobs and growth at home. You can sign up to support the campaign to introduce a FTT here.

Foreign Affairs

Following the Arab Spring, MEPs have developed a renewed focus on the issues that remain unresolved. In the first September session MEPs voted on a resolution in support of the National Transitional Council in Libya. The resolution called on the new Libyan authorities to build a unified and democratic state where human rights and justice are guaranteed for all. MEPs also called for Libyan assets to be released so that the NTC can ensure that it delivers on Libyans' needs, including taking urgent action to address issues such as food and water shortages. This presents a huge opportunity for a truly democratic state to take the place of an oppressive regime, however there must be a full national reconciliation process to ensure success and having an EU diplomatic office in Tripoli can help in making this a reality.

At the latest Strasbourg session MEPs supported calls for a two state solution, and I believe this is the only way of achieving a sustainable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The EU must speak with one voice on this issue and we should support the Palestinians in their attempt to be recognised at the UN, whilst ensuring the safety of everyone living in the region. We must ensure that all EU governments play an active role and continue to resolutely support all efforts to re-launch the peace process and reach a sustainable conclusion to this conflict, and I will continue to do everything I can to ensure this happens.

Economic Governance

Unfortunately the Parliament doesn't always get it right, and this month's vote to continue with an austerity-only approach to the financial crisis approved by the Parliament last week is not the answer. Short term cuts are not what we need. If we want to deal with debts and deficits we need to boost growth and employment. The austerity measures supported by the Tories will fail to protect investment, will kill growth, will provide no new jobs and will seriously compromise the road to economic recovery. Those countries, including the UK, that are already implementing right wing austerity plans have shown that this approach is simply not working.

Women and the labour market

Measures making it easier for women to become involved in business and offering support to over 50s returning to work were given overwhelming support by MEPs in September. Only one in ten women in the EU is an entrepreneur, compared to one in four men. I think it is vitally important that women are provided with financial

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and educational support to set up and run small and medium-sized enterprises. At this economically difficult time women must be given every possible encouragement to fulfil their ambitions of establishing entrepreneurial careers.

Supporting measures to increase training courses for women, including more vocational training opportunities, and making it easier for women to take advantage of the European Progress Microfinance Facility, which provides micro-loans of up to €25,000 to people who don't have access to traditional banking services, are crucial steps in achieving this.

I also voted in favour of measures to combat age and gender discrimination in the work place by ensuring that women over the age of 50 continue working or move back into employment. The measures include encouraging participation in lifelong learning schemes and increasing in the amount of flexible retraining programmes available to older women.

Supporting Fair Trade

This September in Strasbourg I was delighted to support the European Parliament resolution on Trade Policy in Europe. This important resolution was drafted in response to the European Commission proposal and calls for coordinated policies to be adopted in support of Fair Trade. Many EU citizens consider social and ethical criteria to be a decisive factor when choosing a product or service and it is high time that European Union policies reflected these Fair Trade principles.



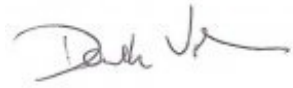
Looking ahead

In recent weeks, I have had the pleasure of hosting "What does the EU do for us?" policy discussion evenings in Cardiff and Caernarfon. The final event of this year will be taking place on Friday, 14 October 2011 at 7pm the Metropole Arts Centre, Mitre St, Abertillery with Alun Davies AM and Nick Smith MP as my fellow speakers. Tickets are free and can be booked by contacting my

Cardiff office.

If I can be of any help or assistance with any EU related matters then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Best Wishes



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