



Cost of EU spiralling out of control

The net annual cost to the UK of EU membership is set to rocket by 20% over last year's figure, to a staggering **£4,699,000,000.00** in 2007, according to government published figures. In 2007 the UK will contribute £12.6B to Europe, receive back £4.4B in grants and £3.5B in rebate, leaving a net



cost to the British taxpayer of £4.7B, almost £100 million per week! All of which makes us a top paymaster of Europe, second only to Germany in net contributions.

When added to this is the £6B cost to business, which HMG recently confirmed arises from complying with EU regulation, then the price of belonging to the EU is crippling.

Commenting Jim Allister said, "As the EU expands, the burden of paymaster of Europe on the UK is becoming unbearable. The drain on our national resources is phenomenal, particularly when you realise that we have been a huge net contributor every year since we joined 34 years ago. How much longer are we going to go on pouring billions into the black hole that is Brussels, before it is realised we'd be better off out. The question should not be whether we can afford to leave but how can we afford to stay in."

DUP's anti-EU stance softening

Like its stance on other key issues, is the DUP's attitude to the EU softening?

Consider these comments from Ian Paisley (News Letter 2/5/07), addressing Barroso at Stormont:

"We need the help of the European Union. There are two areas where we need help. We need financial help but also the aid of the experts. You have the finances and the experts. We have called in the right doctor not just to diagnose our sickness but to prescribe the right tablets."

What sort of opponent of the EU bizarrely thinks Brussels is the answer?



North-South Ministerial Council Meeting - another piece of the jigsaw

Once the Twelfth was passed, the DUP formalised its final endorsement of the political structures of the Belfast Agreement by attending its first meeting of the North-South Ministerial Council. This all-Ireland Council of Ministers is the key manifestation of the all-Ireland architecture of the Belfast Agreement, heading up a raft of cross-border harmonisation bodies. Following the Good Friday Agreement it was the butt of sustained DUP denunciation, now, it is

enthusiastically operated, with the omnipresent seal of grinning approval.

As for the much trumpeted "accountability", which apparently made this transformation possible, strangely, the meeting happened with the Assembly in recess! Of course, the "accountability" obtained by St Andrews does not permit the Assembly a role after a Council meeting, only partially before.

Thanks, but no thanks, Mr Barroso

Gordon Brown, desperate to avoid a referendum on the recast Constitution, pretends it amounts to mere tidying-up of the existing Treaties. Such is a fraud and deceit. It delivers all the substance of the rejected Constitution, in particular:

- a further tranche of 50 areas of power where the national veto will be surrendered;
- new competences of exclusive control by Brussels;
- a permanent EU President for Europe;
- an EU Foreign Minister, now called a High Representative, with obligations on all member states to adhere to the EU's foreign policy;
- it bestows legal personality on the EU so that it can make treaties and binding international agreements in its own right - it is this which provides the basis for its own Foreign Minister and common foreign and defence policy;
- a seat for the EU at the United Nations;
- a self-amending provision whereby further constitutional change can be perfected by Heads of Government, without recourse to the people (already the European Parliament has demanded that once these constitutional changes are made, it will be seeking more removal of power to Brussels);
- new powers to control our criminal law.

Any doubt about what the new Treaty changes mean is easily dispelled by the proud boasts of those who pioneered it. Angela Merkel has boasted it retains "the substance" of the Constitution. The Commission and Parliament agree. Across Europe governments have quantified it variously as 90 -99 % the same as the Constitution. Only the British Government pretends otherwise. Why? because, they want to welch on their manifesto pledge of a referendum.

Now, EU Commission President, Barroso, has really let the cat out of the bag. Speaking in his imperial headquarters in Brussels, he described the EU as an "Empire".

He said, "*We should not have doubts about the EU's future - it is what it has always been. It is the world's first non-imperial Empire, with 27 countries that have agreed to pool their sovereignty.*"

asked our consent to a radical enhancement of the powers of this Empire of which we are to be a mere colony! He's running scared of the promised referendum, because he knows the British people, still wanting national sovereignty, would reject this remodelled Constitution.

So the constitutional change proposed involves fundamental realignment of power away from national parliaments to Brussels and sets the foundation for ever-increasing centralisation.

The opposing views on this de facto Constitution are rooted in fundamentally divergent views on how we see Europe.

If, like me, the Europe in which you believe is one which offers free trade and economic advantage through the cooperation for mutual benefit of sovereign nation states, then you will oppose these changes.

If, on the other hand, your vision for Europe is for total political and economic integration, where the nation state is an irritant and obstacle, then you will embrace this Constitution, for it is undoubtedly a vehicle headed in the direction you wish to go, which will steamroller out of existence all vestiges of national sovereignty and statehood.

I unapologetically believe in the sovereignty and supremacy of the nation state, because I believe in national electors being able to effectively control the actions and policies of those who govern them. You can either be governed nationally or internationally through an unaccountable edifice like the European Union.



Yet, Gordon Brown doesn't think we should be



Breakthrough on waste oil classification

"I greatly welcome a ruling by the English Court of Appeal that the EU's Waste Framework Directive does not apply to waste oil being recycled as fuel.

This has been a major bone of contention with the quarrying and asphalt industry and others, which had been availing of waste oil as a cheap fuel source, but were being hounded by governmental agencies, claiming such use breached the Waste Framework Directive. Having made various representations on behalf of the industry, I am pleased that the Court of Appeal has ruled in favour of the industry and against the government.

This ruling greatly aids the collection of waste lubricating and fuel oil from garages and workshops, and its conversion into marketable fuel oil. The issue was when the material ceased to be waste for the purposes of the Waste

Framework Directive. Was it at the completion of the process of preparing it for use as fuel, as argued by the industry, or when it was actually burnt, as argued by the government?

The Court of Appeal agreed with the industry. The ruling is of considerable economic significance, because the cost of complying with the higher standards required for waste processes, particularly since 2005 when the Waste Incineration Directive (OJ December 28, 2000 L332/91) was applied to existing waste operations.

I am now calling upon our Department of the Environment to accept and follow this ruling in Northern Ireland and permit quarries and others to put used oil to good economic use, rather than frustrating its sensible disposal and subjecting processors and others to merciless red tape and expense."

CFP is bad enough

During a debate in the European Parliament in Strasbourg on a proposed maritime policy for the EU, Jim Allister MEP attacked a further handover of powers to Brussels. Citing Brussels control of fishing, through the Common Fisheries Policy, as an unmitigated disaster for the UK, Mr Allister cautioned against EU control of the totality of maritime policy.

In the course of his remarks Mr Allister said:-

"Much can sound plausible about a maritime package, but what I fear about a maritime policy for the EU is that it will be used by the Commission to grab powers to control every facet of life, events and activity at sea.

Considering the unmitigated disaster which the existing competence of the EU in fisheries policy has been for the UK, under the iniquitous Common Fisheries Policy, I have little confidence that anything better will result from delivering the totality of maritime affairs to the EU.

Excessive regulation, stifling controls and witless directives will, I fear, result.

Indeed, even on fisheries what I read in this report is a blueprint for driving more fishermen out of employment, under the guise of further restricting effort through a so called precautionary approach."

EU fraud costs £1,000,000 a day!

European Union fraud is costing taxpayers more than £1million for every working day, a Brussels report revealed recently. Figures from the European Commission showed 12,000 'irregular' transactions in 2006, with 2,050 resulting from fraud.

The Open Europe think-tank's spokesman Neil O'Brien said: 'The EU continues to lose vast sums of money to fraud. If the people in charge of the EU budget were running a business they would have been sacked years ago. The EU needs radical reform, not even more powers'.

Reminder:

Applications for The Arts Council's Musical Instruments for Bands fund closes

4pm Thursday 30th August 2007

Yet another competitive barrier for European farmers!

The SCoFAH committee in the European Commission, which deals with food and animal health, put European farmers at a further disadvantage compared to farmers outside Europe by refusing to authorise the use of a maize variety Herculex in the European Union due to it being genetically modified. Jim Allister, member of the European Parliament agricultural committee, believes that this could cause another hike in feed prices within Northern Ireland.

Jim Allister commented, “The decision this week not to approve the Herculex maize variety for use in the EU will undoubtedly result in grain prices continuing to rise. This will cause real pain to our intensive, beef and dairy sectors. Prices for grains increased significantly over the last 12 months which resulted in many farmers not being able to make a profit. This decision may force many, particularly within the intensive sector, out of business over the incoming winter.”

Jim Allister is angered by the fact that yet again European farmers are expected to meet standards for food which they produce but compete with imported food that is produced under less stringent standards.

“Recently EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson was willing to sacrifice European agriculture in order to get a deal in the WTO talks. If a deal was reached it would have resulted in Europe relying on South American countries such as Brazil and Argentina being the food basket for Europe. Not only are these countries responsible for growing the GM wheat that is banned from the EU, a recent investigation from the Irish Farmers Association clearly show that a large percentage of the beef herd has Foot and Mouth, has a very poor traceability system and is produced under a system with little regard to the environment.”

MEP welcomes curb on trade in elvers

Having long campaigned against the trade in elvers to Asia, because of the havoc which it is wreaking in the natural restocking cycle of the European eel, manifested in Northern Ireland by falling eel stocks in Lough Neagh, Jim Allister has welcomed a recent decision to list the European eel as an endangered species. This has the capacity to significantly curb the massive sales to Asia.

“Recently at its meeting in the Hague the Conference of Parties to the Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) agreed to list the European eel. This is designed to ensure that the international trade in elvers is done on a sustainable basis, by requiring exporters to obtain licences to export. Moreover, licences can only be issued if the trade will not be detrimental to the species. This, if enforced, is good news for

the Lough Neagh eel industry because to date the natural replenishment of stocks has been devastated by this trade to Asia, pushing elver prices sky-high and robbing Europe of its essential young eel stock.”



Feel free to contact my offices regarding any European issue:

139 Hollywood Road,
Belfast,
BT4 3BE

Tel: (028) 90 655011
Fax: (028) 90 654314

European Parliament
Rue Wiertz
BD4 5M 073
B-1047 Brussels

Tel: +0032 2284 5275
Fax: +0032 2284 9275



11th night speech

Speaking at the large Ladyhill Bonfire event in South Antrim, Jim Allister MEP did not spare the blushes of his ex DUP colleagues when he lambasted their admission of Sinn Fein into government.

Traditionally, the Ladyhill Bonfire has been lit and the crowd addressed by a DUP personality, but this year the organisers, as a mark of disapproval of recent political events, invited the Independent Unionist MEP.

In the course of his hard-hitting remarks, Jim Allister said:-

"What a year it has been! Last year Ian Paisley was for laying his dead body in Sinn Fein's path into government. Today, joined at the hip, he's Marty's buddy. The glee says it all; giggling constantly with IRA leader McGuinness. Shame on him!

Certainly, Marty has every reason to be ecstatic. He's laughing at us all, but particularly at how easily he ensnared the supposed strongman of unionism. What a dream for him.

His IRA can still threaten a court witness, like Mrs Zaitschek, gather intelligence, keep its Army Council and yet, courtesy of the Chuckle a Day DUP, he can rule over us as equal First Minister.

Some, carried away by power, think it's wonderful. I think it's awful. Some say it makes them sick, but still stick to the diet of "a Marty a day". Then, they wonder why they can't stomach it. Or, can they? Please spare us the hypocrisy - of which there'll be plenty tomorrow when those who elevated IRA/Sinn Fein into government will beat their chests and tell us how strong and unchanged they are.

I wish!"



Allister answers McGuinness

"I note Martin McGuinness is incensed by my call to delist the Maze buildings, because, of course, such would debunk Sinn Fein's scheme to venerate their terrorist suicides.

It is the pretence that an "interpretative centre" at the Maze would not glorify terrorism which is ludicrous. Any such venture inevitably entails saluting the memory of those terrorists who made the Maze infamous. Just as the Somme Heritage Centre at Conlig properly salutes and enhances the memory of the brave soldiers who fought at the Somme, so any so-called interpretative centre

at the Maze will pander to iconic status for terrorists such as Bobby Sands. It will in truth become a shrine to terrorists and place of pilgrimage for those wishing to wallow in militant republican folklore. Such is utterly repulsive and must not be allowed to happen.

The surest way to guarantee it can never happen is to proceed now to delist the buildings and then swiftly demolish them. The mechanism for doing so exists within the Planning Order and the Department of the Environment should get on with it."

Election in Poland may postpone finalised deal on EU Constitution to December

Following the collapse of the Polish government, President Lech Kaczynski and the leader of the liberal opposition, Donald Tusk, have agreed that the Polish Parliament should be dissolved in September with elections following in the autumn. The elections are predicted to be held either in September or October, which would then make it less likely that the new Constitutional Treaty will be finalised at the summit on 18 and 19 October as most EU governments are hoping.

UK Government tries to wriggle out of EU renewables targets

A leaked briefing paper from the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform has revealed that Britain has little hope of getting remotely near the new EU renewable energy target that Tony Blair signed up to in the spring - and suggests that they find ways of wriggling out of it.

Paisley ducking and diving

On two significant issues, the Sexual Orientation Regulations and Guidance on employing terrorist convicts, the First Minister, after weeks of stalling on replies, has tried to duck and dive his way out of giving straight answers.

On 8th May Jim Allister wrote to him seeking an assurance that now he was in charge of the relevant department, he would set about repealing the obnoxious Sexual Orientation Regulations. After almost 3 months a joint letter on behalf of himself and his deputy - because he can't sign letters without McGuinness - tried to dodge the question by claiming he couldn't comment because of a Judicial Review. This is nonsense, so Jim Allister replied to the First Minister as follows:-

"I am in receipt of your belated and pitiful reply of 30 July 2007 to my letter of 8 May 2007 in respect of the above regulations.

I did not ask you to comment in any way upon the current Judicial Review. Thus, hiding behind it as a means of avoiding dealing with my correspondence is transparently pathetic and a mere device to avoid the issues raised with you. I really did expect better.

I note that the same Judicial Review did not impede your deputy from lauding the said regulations at a gay pride event in Londonderry, as reflected on the website of your office. How can this Judicial Review impede you from answering my letter, but not hinder your deputy in promoting this obnoxious legislation? Patently, the stance taken in your letter of 30 July is untenable. I, therefore, reiterate my request for a substantive answer to my letter."

Then, on the guidance issued, just before devolution, on employment of terrorists Jim Allister wrote to the First Minister enquiring as to where he stood. Again he failed to answer, hiding behind the fact that the guidance was issued under Direct Rule. That may be so, but it falls to be implemented on his watch, so, surely he has a view on its suitability?

Commenting Jim Allister said: "In consequence of being tied inextricably to McGuinness, as his equal, and, thus, unable to express an opinion as First Minister with which Sinn Fein does not concur, Ian Paisley is hopelessly trapped and

unable to deliver on any of his promises. There was no one, apparently, more opposed to the Sexual Orientation Regulations when they were introduced, yet now that he is in government he is strangely silent, while McGuinness can launch a gay pride festival in Londonderry and declare support for these regulations and OFMDFM's commitment to the principles therein.

The First Minister's response was a venomous attack on Mr Allister to which the MEP replied:

"I am astonished that in his vitriolic attack upon me the First Minister has chosen to peddle the falsehood that I write letters to Martin McGuinness. I have never written at any time to the Deputy First Minister. All my letters are addressed to the First Minister.

"The real reason for the First Minister's rant is that he has no answer to the legitimate points which I have been raising. His only defence is anger.

"I need no lessons in performing my duties as an MEP. I am very happy for my record in Europe to be scrutinised. It will bear very favourable comparison with that of my predecessor.

"I can assure the First Minister I will continue to pursue the range of issues upon which he is so eager to avoid challenge, including the Sexual Orientation regulations.

"As for who is soft on Sinn Fein, I think the photographs of the last few months of joyous laughter between Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness, tell us all we need to know."



A blasphemous banner carried on the recent gay pride march in Belfast by organisations funded by DCAL and OFMDFM.



IRA still issuing death threats

Jim Allister MEP has claimed that the IRA is still in the business of issuing death threats. His comments come following correspondence with the Chief Constable's office concerning the Zaitschek case, arising from the Castlereagh break-in.

"On 19 June I wrote to Sir Hugh Orde in the following terms:-

'The Sunday Business Post recently reported you had written to Larry Zaitschek advising that his estranged partner is still under threat from the IRA. Is this correct, that is, did you so advise Mr Zaitschek and is this lady still under threat from the IRA?'

I have now received a reply from D/Chief Superintendent Wright, Head of Branch C1, which confirms that Mrs Zaitschek's life is indeed at risk. In the course of his reply D/Supt Wright says:-

'Mrs Zaitschek remains within the Witness Protection Scheme. Given the nature of this investigation and those involved, my belief has remained the same, which is that should Mrs

Zaitschek's whereabouts become known, that her life and that of her family would be at risk.'

Given the precise focus of my question I can only interpret this response as confirming that it is the Provisional IRA which threatens this lady's life. This is appalling, but to me not surprising. Though supposedly stood down it is clear that when it serves their purposes the IRA is still very much in the business of threatening life and, as here, would take life if given the opportunity.

I do not waste my time calling on the double-speak McGuinness to condemn this outrageous situation, but I do challenge the First Minister to declare what action he proposes to take now that it is confirmed that the IRA of his partner party is threatening the life of a court witness. How does this fit with the full support of the rule of law which Dr Paisley promised us Sinn Fein/IRA had delivered? He promised action, if Sinn Fein defaulted. I suspect we will wait in vain.

I am also drawing this matter and my correspondence to the attention of the IMC."

MEP again challenges Poots to abandon Irish Language Act

Documentation received under a Freedom of Information Act request reveals that even before the consultation process was over DCAL had instructed parliamentary draftsmen to begin work on an Irish Language Bill. Jim Allister MEP has again called on Edwin Poots MLA to abandon the proposal for legislation:

"Documentation received by me, under a Freedom of Information Act request, reveals that long before DCAL's supposedly open-minded consultation on possible Irish Language legislation closed, DCAL had instructed the parliamentary draftsmen to start work on the clauses for an Irish Language Bill.

The first consultation was due to run till 2nd March 2007, yet it now emerges that on 7th February 2007 legislative counsel were instructed by DCAL to start work on the draft clauses for a Bill. Thus, as I long suspected, the consultation process was a farce and DCAL instead of being genuinely interested in obtaining public opinion was working to a

pre-determined political agenda to speed Irish Language legislation onto the statute book.

It was because the consultation process was so irredeemably flawed that I have constantly urged Minister Poots to scrap the farcical consultation which he inherited. Sadly, he seems in awe of his civil servants and incapable of taking a justified ministerial decision to abandon what is now a wholly discredited process. Nonetheless, on foot of this new revelation I am again calling on the Minister to waken up and disentangle himself from the web of deceit that has hallmarked the Irish Language process."



100 days of devolution



The serious business of a 'battle a day' with Sinn Fein

We've now had our first 100 days of DUP/Sinn Fein-led government. It's been most notable for what it hasn't brought us, rather than what it has done. It certainly hasn't brought us an end to the Army Council: the obscenity of clinging to an illegal Army Council and to government office at one and the same time continues. Nor, has it brought us a scintilla of further delivery by Sinn Fein.

They can still cherry pick over policing: refusing to back other than "civic policing", condemning lawful arrests in terrorist-related crimes, lambasting the attempt to extradite McAliskey to Germany, parade the streets of Belfast with replica rifles and the IRA can still threaten the life of a Crown witness, Mrs Zaitschek. Some progress! On the score sheet of what the DUP promised Sinn Fein would have to do and what Sinn Fein has actually done, it has been a clear win for recalcitrant republicanism.

Nor, have we seen sight of the generous financial package, which at one point was said even to be a pre-requisite to devolution. For all its bluster, the Executive has spectacularly failed to wring a meaningful package from the Treasury. Hence, recourse to the short-termism of selling off the family silver. Though begun by Gildernew at Crossnacreevy, we will see much more of this profligate expediency as the parties struggle to

make good on persuasive promises on water rates and good times.

And what of the saving of academic selection? As the clock ticks down, do we seem any closer to undoing the educational terrorism of McGuinness' term as Education Minister?

But what of the quality of government? Could the most inept of direct rule ministers have made a greater mess of the Maze debacle? Personally, I find ministerial responses no better than under Direct Rule. Generally, the pattern continues of evasive replies drafted by civil servants and merely rubber-stamped by the Minister. The fact the minister is local hasn't improved the quality of response. Evidence of hands on ministerial control of the civil service is hard to come by.

In one Department, namely OFMDFM, the situation has deteriorated rapidly. Under Direct Rule, because of the protection of the Whitehall Ministerial Code, an MP or MEP was assured of a timely response when an OFMDFM or other departmental issue was raised. Now, with the local ministerial code having removed those guarantees, you can wait months, even for an acknowledgement. Is this what accountable, responsive, transparent devolution is supposed to look like? If so, it's not worth the candle!

The structure and nature of government is such that a basic democratic deficit lies at its heart, namely the absence of an opposition. Opposition plays a vital role in securing accountable government, but under the absurdity of D'hondt, with every significant party guaranteed a perpetual place in government, we are devoid of that vital check and balance. Even Assembly Question Time is a limp experience, with few daring, or permitted, to rock the boat. Complacency, poor government and arrogance will increasingly result and hallmark our devolved institutions.

Who said it?

"I think it is a measure of the journey we have all travelled that I can speak not just for myself but Ian Paisley when we condemn sectarianism and racism and he can speak for me. We are both singing from the same hymn sheet"

Martin McGuinness

Farming News

Foot and Mouth: Serious trade disruption

Confirmation of Foot and Mouth Disease in Surrey on 3rd August brought with it considerable anxiety for the UK farming population. Although Northern Ireland was declared a foot and mouth-free region, significant trade difficulties have arisen since the confirmation of the disease.

Michelle Gildernew was keen to take the credit for unilaterally exempting Northern Ireland from the EU ban on GB livestock and meat products by acting quickly to ban such product from coming into Northern Ireland. However, everything was not as rosy in the garden as Gildernew made out. Why else have local agri-food companies been beset with difficulty in exporting product both within and outside the European Union?

The UK Government's efforts to contain the recent Foot and Mouth outbreaks was endorsed at the EU Standing Committee on Food Chain and Animal Health (SCoFCAH). However, a lack of clarity prevailed on Northern Ireland's foot and mouth-free status, resulting in the dairy and pig sectors facing major difficulties in trading food products within the EU, and farther afield. This was a less than satisfactory outcome for Northern Ireland's agri-food industry.

Blame for the failure to ensure adequate certification was put in place from the outset, to assure foreign buyers about Northern Ireland's foot and mouth-free status, must fall in part on the Northern Ireland Executive. While it took about a week to resolve problems associated with the export of dairy products, it took even longer

to resolve pigmeat exports to the United States.

Happily, a resolution was finally achieved. Jim Allister played his part in working with the sector's legal representatives and by intervening on behalf of the pigmeat exporters with Brussels, Tokyo and the USA. In this modern age of Information Technology, and in a dispensation where Government is meant to be closer to the people, it is hard to comprehend why it took so long to resolve the problems. The Northern Ireland Executive employed a reactionary approach to trading difficulties, and was slack in seeking to secure some of Northern Ireland's business interests. Even DG Trade in Brussels was prepared to act on behalf of our interests, but this assistance was not asked for by our own authorities.

Lessons must be learnt from the manner in which this semi-crisis was handled.



Jim Allister with Neil Parish, Chairman of the Agriculture Committee of the European Parliament, on the occasion of his visit to Northern Ireland.

Rural development must deliver for farmers

Jim Allister MEP has said the announcement of EU approval for the new Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme will be taken with, 'a pinch of salt'.

The MEP said, 'The context to which this Programme finds itself is one of huge frustration from farmers who struggled to cope with the bureaucratic hurdles of the outgoing Programme. I personally wait to be convinced that future delivery of funding Measures will be, 'farmer-friendly' and accessible to farmers.'

Mr Allister added, 'Farmers are right to be sceptical this time round, as a cheque to the tune of £163 million in the form of modulation deductions from Single Farm Payments between 2007-13 has effectively been written against their wishes, in order to fund the new Programme.'

Voluntary modulation is being used to get Government off the hook in its failure to provide even basic rural services. This is despite the intentions of Commissioner Fischer Boel to abolish voluntary modulation in the forthcoming CAP Health Check to make way for a higher rate of compulsory modulation of 10%.'

'I hold my own reservations at the relatively small proportion of money being spent on Measures which will actually assist the Agricultural industry to become more competitive, particularly when compared with the situation in other EU Member States. France is spending a massive 34% of total funds on this

vital area under Axis 1, while in Northern Ireland the figure is approximately 11% of EU funds. Meanwhile, approximately one third of EU funds have been diverted into axis 3 'social' measures here, compared with only 6% in the French Scheme and 14% in Holland.'

'It is not satisfactory that the farming industry is losing the opportunity to increase its competitive standing, simply because our Government refuses to mainstream investment in rural areas. Indeed, this approach has been reinforced by the new Agriculture Minister under devolution, in her decision to apply voluntary modulation at an unacceptable rate, which will actually make our industry less competitive versus other EU countries. This is in contradiction to the aims of Rural Development.'

'A large proportion of the £500 million announced will go into maintaining the Northern Ireland countryside through Agri-Environment payments, including Countryside Management and Less Favoured Areas. The important role farmers provide maintaining the countryside should be recognised, and this is an important component of the CAP. However, farmers' primary role of feeding the Nation with safe, high quality food must be given due recognition, particularly as competition for alternative land uses becomes more apparent, increasing the cost of livestock production. I fear a major opportunity has been lost, as our industry prepares itself to meet the challenges of CAP reform, and as moves towards a WTO deal are progressed.'



Log onto www.jimallister.org to read Jim's latest press releases and statements.

Learn more about the workings of Europe, listen to Jim's speeches in Parliament and much more online.



If you would like a free copy of Jim's book, 'Leading for Ulster: Speaking for you in Europe', then please phone (028) 90 655 011



All editions of the monthly newsletter 'Brussels Briefing' are available to download at my website, www.jimallister.org

There, you can also sign up to receive each new edition, either by post or by e-mail.

Allister urges uptake of Modernisation Fund Resources

Jim Allister, has urged voluntary and community groups from within the Unionist community to avail of funding opportunities created by the latest stage of the DSD Modernisation Fund. The fund is designed help voluntary and community organisations to increase their capacity and sustainability.

This time around there will be three funding streams:

- Pilot Infrastructure Scheme [allocation £9 million] - supporting applications with a grant value of between £300,000 and £1.5 million per project.
- Community Facilities Improvement Scheme [allocation £3 million] - to improve facilities to allow better service delivery and access to services.
- Small Capital Grants Scheme [allocation £3 million] - to undertake minor works and / or purchase assets in order to improve their ability to deliver a better service to the community. Individual project value between £20,000 and £100,000.

Jim Allister said:

“This fund as far as I can see is ideally suited to groups operating within the Unionist community. It is a fact acknowledged by all impartial observers that our community is significantly behind other communities in terms of community capacity and development. Other funding programmes have been tailored to address this problem and I feel that this programme can have a significant impact in starting to put things right.

This can only happen if Unionists apply for funding. How many times in the past have we heard the tired old excuse that the reasons Unionist groups don't get funded is because they don't apply? I would urge as many groups as possible to contact the DSD and get an application form submitted. My office will be willing to help any groups interested in applying for these funds”, said the MEP.

Gildernew playing politics with PGI Designations

“Upon Michelle Gildernew taking office as Agriculture Minister, I wrote to DARD on 11 May 2007 seeking assurance that the Minister fully supported the pending applications to register the names “Northern Ireland Beef” and “Northern Ireland Lamb” as Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) under the EU Protected Food Name Scheme. I did this because I suspected that it was precisely the sort of issue with which a Sinn Fein minister would play foolish republican politics.

My letter pointedly asked for an assurance *“that the department, especially the Minister, is fully in support of both the principle and the precise designations, “Northern Ireland Beef” and “Northern Ireland Lamb”.*”

Almost 2 months later I have finally received an answer, which, at best, is deliberately ambiguous and confirms my suspicion that this Minister is indeed trying to play politics with this issue which is so important to the promotion of Northern

Ireland produce.

In her response the Minister studiously avoids answering the question, but does raise the prospect that a PGI may be deployed under an Irish branding. I note there is no suggestion of linkage to British branding. The whole purpose of obtaining PGI designations for Northern Ireland beef and lamb is that they might be marketed and branded as precisely that, the precise geographic designation being a matter of pride and value.

To submerge them in an Irish branding might pander to the Minister's republicanism and antipathy to Northern Ireland as an entity, but it entirely defeats the purpose of obtaining the Northern Ireland designation in the first place. Thus, I deplore the fact that the Minister is prepared to play politics with what should be a straightforward commercial promotion of Northern Ireland produce in which we should all be able to take pride.”

The fallout from Sinn Fein's Belfast parade

"I have recently raised with the Parades Commission and the Chief Constable the display of replica weapons and IRA insignia at the Sinn Fein sponsored "Truth" march in Belfast.

When dealing with Orange parades the Parades Commission is robust in imposing and enforcing a plethora of conditions, so, I want to know what conditions they imposed on this coat-trailing exercise and whether the carrying of replica weapons infringed same, and what action they propose. I am asking the Chief Constable whether the carrying of replica weapons and IRA insignia is now lawful, acceptable to the police and compatible with public order obligations.

I believe most law-abiding citizens will be appalled by these overt displays of affinity with and glorification of terrorism. Moreover, since they demonstrate that little has

changed with Sinn Fein, I will write to the First Minister to enquire whether he believes the carrying of replica weapons and IRA insignia was compatible with Sinn Fein's supposed commitment to the rule of law and his expectations arising from the faith which he has placed in those commitments? The issue for the First Minister is whether such behaviour is acceptable to him from a partner Party in government?

If not, what action does he intend?

In regard to the truth about the past, it would be an excellent start if the Deputy First Minister and the Sinn Fein President began by telling the truth about their involvement in the insurrection and terrorism which inflicted so much savagery on our Province?"



Jim Allister meeting with SEUPB chiefs and TWN to discuss provision for women in the PEACE III Programme.

Constitution reborn

Compare the new Treaty agreement with the rejected EU Constitution in an excellent analysis on the "Open Europe" website at <http://www.openeurope.org.uk/research/guide.pdf>

It is clear that, despite HMG's pretence, there is no substantial difference.

Keep up-to-date with the latest news from Europe at www.jimallister.org