



Republic gets it right on Lisbon

Traditional Unionist MEP Jim Allister and long-time opponent of the EU Constitution and Lisbon Treaty, has greatly welcomed the outcome of the Lisbon Treaty referendum in the Republic of Ireland.

“This is good news for democracy and accountability right across Europe. The carefully crafted conspiracy among European leaders to by-pass their people and deny referenda, which was deliverable everywhere except the Republic, has exploded spectacularly in their faces.

Now the EU must live by its own rules and bin the treaty. It is clear that to survive it required ratification in every member state. It has failed this test and it will now be a test of the honesty and integrity of EU leaders as to whether or not they accept this democratic outcome. I suspect, as with the rejected Constitution, we will see furious machinations to change the rules and try and keep the treaty alive.”

Mr Allister continued, “Already, however, the undemocratic strategy of the Europhile leaders of the EU is clear. They



will forge ahead with ratification in the other 26 countries and then try and bounce the Irish in a second referendum.

Shamefully, Gordon Brown, instead of suspending the UK’s ratification pushed it through the House of Lords, where, equally shamefully, not all those supposedly opposed to Lisbon were present to vote.”

Where were the Ulster peers?

Jim Allister said, "I am greatly disappointed by the turn-out of Ulster Peers in the House of Lords in the votes on ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. This Treaty, whose imposition without a referendum is a scandal, will do immense damage to our constitutional integrity as a nation and subject us to further undemocratic dictatorship from Brussels. Why, therefore, were Baroness Paisley, Lord Morrow and Lord Trimble not present to vote against the Government's disgraceful railroading through of ratification? This is a great let down for all in Ulster who care about British sovereignty and liberties."

More triple-jobbing = Less work at Westminster

Commenting on the DUP reshuffle of Executive Ministers, Traditional Unionist Leader, Jim Allister MEP said:-

"While the DUP needs a reshuffle of policy more than a change of personnel, there are aspects of this reshuffle which require comment.

The increase in triple mandates is bad news for the quality and constancy of the representation of Unionism at Westminster. In a year we have moved from 3 double-jobbing MPs serving also as Ministers, to 5. We've recently seen DUP MPs

absent from key votes in the House of Commons on the Lisbon Treaty and the Embryology Bill. No one can adequately do 2, never mind 3 jobs - MP, MLA and Minister.

I fear in consequence of the appointment of even more MPs as ministers - itself a reflection on the value placed on "mere" MLAs - Northern Ireland will be even more short-changed in the coming months in parliamentary representation.

As for the sacking of Mr Poots, my only surprise is how he came to be appointed in the first place!"

MEP welcomes SEUPB probe into Chicago junket

"Traditional Unionist MEP, Jim Allister, has welcomed correspondence from the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) Chief Executive, Pat Colgan, in which he commits SEUPB to a review of funding by Belfast LSP in which the Belfast City Council project file will be specifically examined.

Mr Allister had raised concerns with SEUPB about the squandering of PEACE money on a recent City Council visit by 11 councillors to Chicago, particularly at a time when so many voluntary and worthy community groups are facing fund starvation. Now, Mr Colgan has responded to say a routine review of Belfast LSP's funding processes, which was not due to the autumn, is being brought forward and the Belfast City Council project file will be especially scrutinised. It was Belfast LSP (on which 7 Belfast councillors sit) which granted the City Council the funding. This was under Measure 3.1, which was supposed to be for local initiatives for the social economy.

Commenting the Ulster Euro MP said, "I welcome

this swift response by SEUPB and trust their promised auditing will be thorough, not least since the Commission representative at the recent PEACE Monitoring Committee reminded all of the need for due diligence in funding approvals, arising from interest by the EU Court of Auditors in such expenditure. This extravagant visit to Chicago shocked many, particularly among the hard-pressed voluntary and community sector who are facing lay-offs and a funding drought by the end of this month, as PEACE II Extension money dries up. Wasting £28,000 on sending 11 councillors to Chicago in these circumstances, is beyond comprehension."



Allister slams Executive over water rates for Orange Halls and Churches

Jim Allister has slammed the Stormont Executive for failing to grant churches and Orange Halls exemption from water rates. The MEP said:

"It has been officially confirmed to me by the Permanent Secretary of DRD that "the Executive ...accepted the Independent Water Review Panel's recommendation (Strand 1 report) that proposed payment arrangements for the non-domestic sector should proceed as planned".

"One would hardly expect a Sinn Fein/IRA Minister to be concerned about the important role that churches and Orange Halls play in our society but I

am appalled that the entire Executive backed a plan which will see such premises paying tap tax. Now the Department of Regional Development has refused to re-consider this decision.

"Sinn Fein's Assembly election manifesto promised that there would be "no water charges" while other parties used the threat of the tap tax as part of their campaign to blackmail the unionist electorate into supporting devolution. We now know that no one around the cabinet table - Unionist or Nationalist - objected to Orange Halls and churches having this additional burden".

Allister comments on Coleraine protest against McAleese

Statement by Traditional Unionist MEP, Jim Allister:-

"Considering the flagrant way she troops all over Northern Ireland, treating it as if it were her own, it will do no harm that today President McAleese met a grassroots protest in Coleraine.

She pours out periodic vitriol against the majority community,



even has the audacity to come to Northern Ireland the day the Queen visits and pontificate about when and how Her Majesty will be permitted to visit the Republic. I'm not surprised, therefore, that today ordinary Unionists took the opportunity to speak their mind. It's a pity we don't have a government capable or willing to put Mrs McAleese in her place, then street protests would be unnecessary."

MEP calls for maximum EU aid for Causeway project

In welcoming the National Trust's proposal for a public project at the Giant's Causeway, Traditional Unionist MEP, Jim Allister, has called on DETI to row in with maximum support from the EU. Commenting, Mr Allister said, "At the height of the controversy over a public versus private venture at the Causeway I established that a public project could avail of double the EU funding of a private project (<http://www.jimallister.eu/default.asp?blogID=781>). Now that the National Trust has come up with a definitive public proposal it is incumbent on DETI to maximise the draw-down of available EU funds.

"This public project could attract EU support of up to 75% of total project costs, if it was to proceed under the Territorial Co-operation Programme. Alternatively, and perhaps more likely, it could qualify for EU support under the Competitiveness Programme which attracts a maximum of 50% EU funding. Any EU funding would need to be found from within the total EU funding allocated to NI for the period 2007-13, but since it is still early days in this financial perspective there is time to prioritise spending on

the Causeway."

"Given that the Causeway is our greatest national asset, I believe it deserves such priority. There would also be the possibility of using some of the windfall money coming to Northern Ireland under the legislation distributing money from UK dormant bank accounts. That funding, according to a commitment from DFP (<http://www.jimallister.eu/default.asp?blogID=886>), will be spent on signature projects which meet "social or environmental purposes". The National Trust proposal should easily fit the bill."



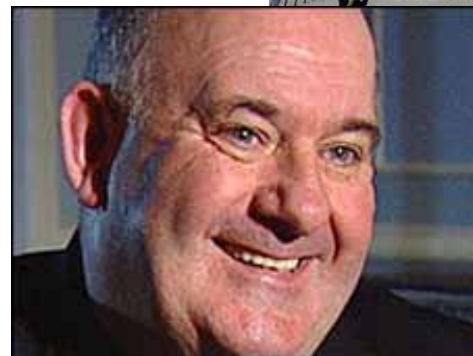
MEP disappointed with wimpish response from Speaker on Union flag

Following the publication of the "Governance of Britain" White Paper, which reinstates the policy of year-round flying of the Union flag on government buildings in GB, Traditional Unionist Leader, Jim Allister MEP, wrote to the Speaker of the NI Assembly, William Hay MLA, urging him to establish parity throughout the Kingdom by flying the Union Flag every day at Stormont.

Parliament Buildings is exempt from the Flags (NI) Order 2000 which restricts flag-flying on government buildings to specified days. At the time establishing parity with GB was used as the excuse for this legislation. Now that parity favours year-round flying, Mr Allister called on the Speaker to assert the autonomous right of Parliament Buildings to follow the GB example.

Speaker Hay has replied negatively, saying he has no plans to review the present position. Commenting, Jim Allister said, "The Governance of Britain White Paper gave Stormont the perfect opportunity to re-establish the practice of flying the Union Flag every day. I am disappointed, but not surprised, that Speaker Hay has run away from the issue. I have no doubt this is part of the

"don't upset the Shinners" strategy. William Hay's reply is a patent nonsense. He says *"the Assembly operates to existing government policy in relation to the flying of flags"*. Well, government policy has changed, so why is he not following it? Alas, placating Sinn Fein comes before due respect for our national flag."



Ruane's Irish language waste slammed

Commenting on the revelation that Caitriona Ruane defied the advice of her own advisers to overturn the decision of her direct rule predecessor and approve a new Irish-language school in Londonderry, Traditional Unionist MEP Jim Allister said:



“This revelation is yet further evidence of Sinn Fein/IRA’s desire to promote a Republican agenda even when it flies in the face of common sense. Of course, opening another Irish-medium school plays well to the Republican gallery but it defies logic when the Minister knew that there were already empty

desks in Londonderry’s existing Irish language school.

“Even Ruane’s head of development and infrastructure stated that the existing Irish-medium primary school was “in sharp decline” yet the Minister pressed ahead and awarded funding.

“That a Republican Minister could overturn the decision of her direct rule predecessor to reject the school’s application because there was “significant surplus capacity at the nearest Irish-medium primary school” and ignore the advice of senior civil servants does not say much for the supposed accountability of Ministers!”

DUP minister suppressing democracy- Allister

Traditional Unionist Leader Jim Allister MEP has launched a blistering attack on the declaration by the new DUP Minister at DOE, Sammy Wilson, that he intends to bring forward legislation to ban council by-elections. Minister Wilson told Stormont Live that he hoped to put through legislation which would lead to mandatory co-option.



Seeing the move as a direct DUP response to its humiliation in the Dromore by-election, Jim Allister challenged both the legality and politics of such a move.

“Being itself a perversion of democracy, built on mandatory coalition - whereby the electorate are denied the right to ever vote a party out of office - it should perhaps be no surprise that the Executive is lurching towards further suppression of democracy. Hence the monstrous and undemocratic proposal of DOE Minister Wilson to outlaw Council by-elections.

In Zimbabwe they rig elections; here, the Minister wants to ban them!

The suggestion that mandatory coalition should be matched by mandatory co-option in local government is a further frontal attack on basic democratic rights. It is motivated, of course, by the self-serving interest of never again having to face a Dromore humiliation. I have no doubt its

target is the TUV, lest we again expose the DUP’s dwindling electoral support. Moreover, I would not be surprised, when the DUP legislation appears, if it attempts to bestow the co-option power on the party to which the retiring councillor belonged at the date of his/her election - this, patently, would be an overt political attempt to stymie TUV

and something which I believe would be unlawful under Section 76 of the NI Act 1998 and infringe equality rights of equal opportunity in respect of a particular political opinion.

I believe this proposal for mandatory co-option conflicts fundamentally with basic political and human rights. Article 25 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states: “Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity.....to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives.”

Thus, I will be inviting the Human Rights Commission to take an interest in any such proposal, pursuant to its powers under Article 69 (4) of the NI Act, 1998 and challenging the right of the Assembly to remove a right to election, given that “elections” are an “excepted matter”, reserved to Westminster under the NI Act 1998 - of course, the Secretary of State might well co-operate with the Assembly in abrogating democratic rights.

MEP congratulates Alan McCulla OBE

Jim Allister has congratulated Mr Alan McCulla on his elevation to the Order of the British Empire (OBE). Mr McCulla, who is Chief Executive of Anglo-North Irish Fish Producers' Organisation, is to receive an OBE for services to the fishing industry and to the community in Northern Ireland.

"I warmly congratulate Mr McCulla on his inclusion in Her Majesty's Birthday Honours list. Mr McCulla has worked tirelessly on behalf of the interests of local fishermen, often through what

have been very difficult circumstances facing the industry. This honour reflects the energy and determination which Mr McCulla has demonstrated on behalf of the fishing sector. It is an honour to Mr McCulla personally, and indeed for the Northern Ireland fishing sector."



Allister challenges Gildernew to implement new fisheries package

Speaking during a debate in Strasbourg on the fuel-induced crisis in the fishing industry, Traditional Unionist MEP, Jim Allister, welcomed much of Commissioner Borg's proposals, which await approval from the Council of Ministers, but warned that without a willingness by DARD to engage in the co-financing required, then the package would only gather dust as far as Northern Ireland was concerned.

Commissioner Borg has made a number of key proposals:

- emergency aid for temporary cessation of activities for a period of 3 months where there is a commitment to be included within a restructuring plan (which could be the installation of more energy efficient engines);
- member states can set up Fleet Adjustment Schemes (FAS), whereby derogations of EFF rules can be obtained to enhance permanent cessation premiums, plus additional temporary cessation aid for vessels involved in a FAS;
- the present requirement for 80% private funding for engine replacement could be reduced to 40%, likewise the present 60% private requirement on gear replacement can reduce to 40%, meaning significant government funding can now be provided - three times more on engine replacement than previously possible;
- the de minimum aid limits are altered so that up to 30,000€ over 3 years can be paid per vessel, rather than per enterprise;
- concessions whereby social security contributions by employed fishermen can be

waived (requires clarification for the self-employed).

Responding in the Parliament to Commissioner Borg's proposals, Mr Allister said:

"For me the key issue is delivery. How do you get common standards of delivery across the EU amongst the Member States, with some, like mine, the United Kingdom, ever-reluctant to take any financial assistance steps, even when they are permitted?"

Could I ask the Commissioner today not to be neutral on that, but to expressly call upon all Member States to do what they are now permitted to do under his package and no longer to sit on their hands in this regard?"

Otherwise we will continue to have an even less common fisheries policy, compounding inequality and delivering more disaster for the sector."

Commenting further the TUV MEP said, "The challenge now passes to Gildernew. Brussels has made significant help now possible. The question is will she take up these opportunities, or continue to dither and do nothing. Our fishing industry is bleeding to death and to date all the Stormont Executive has offered is £276 per boat to help with harbour fees! This is a scandalous dereliction of duty. I am therefore calling on DARD to commit to funding the implementation of this package. Cash not sympathy is required."

MEP visits Norwegian fishing industry

Speaking at the end of a 3 day fact-finding trip to Norway, Traditional Unionist MEP, Jim Allister, said, “If ever an industry vindicated Norway’s persistent refusal to join the EU, it is its fishing industry. Under their own management it has thrived remarkably, while within the EU, the Common Fisheries Policy has both thwarted growth and presided over decline.”

Mr Allister was part of a 5 man delegation of MEPs from the Parliament’s Fisheries Committee which visited both the sea-fishing industry, where cod predominates, and the aquaculture sector where salmon is king.

Speaking of the visit, the Ulster Euro MP said, “Coming from within the EU, where our fishing is under tremendous pressure, it was such a contrast to see fishing flourishing. Such is the abundance of cod that in Norway the key cod fishing season is during the spawning, whereas in the Irish Sea we have our infamous closed period at that time. Doubtless, if the EU was managing the Norwegian fishery, it would not be so. Yet the stock is in a wholly sustainable state, with, according to the scientists, the catching of many of the 6 and 7 year old stock reducing the number of young cod eaten by these older fish.

Another radical difference of approach arises over “discards”. In the EU, because we compel our fishermen to discard any over-quota or undersized catch we have the scandal of tons of dead fish being thrown back into our seas every year. In Norway the opposite approach is taken, with the law requiring everything to be landed. Anything that is over quota or undersize is then sold but the fisherman only gets 20% of the sale price (the balance going to the marketing organisation), so as to discourage over-fishing and the taking of undersized fish. The further advantage of this no discard policy is that accurate records can be kept of what is actually being caught and, thereby, the scientists have a far more accurate picture of stock levels than we ever obtain.

I have long been convinced that the EU’s discard policy was both amoral and self-defeating. I strongly believe we should learn from the Norwegian experience and introduce the banning of discards.”

Turning to the organisation of the market Mr

Allister explained how the Norwegian market works and the successes which it has seen. “In the 7 fishing areas of Norway there is a Government appointed Agency, which in large measure is a co-operative of the fishermen. All fish must be sold to this Agency. It negotiates the price with the buyers and sets a minimum price. This price reflects such exigencies as fuel costs, thus the edge is taken off the type of crisis situation which we are presently enduring. The Agency is funded by a mandatory levy from the fishermen - about 0.8% of catch value - and definitely works in the fishermen’s interests. With control of the entire catch it can extract from the buyers a viable price and avoid fishermen becoming the perpetual loser in the supply chain.

Of course, the scale in Norway is way beyond anything we have, but even in organisational terms I believe we could learn much from their practices and expertise.

During the trip Mr Allister met with the Norwegian Fisheries Minister, Helga Pedersen. With an obvious adverse reference to local Fisheries Minister, Gildernew, Mr Allister said, “How refreshing it was to meet a Minister who was up to the job, expert in her subject and determined to deliver for her fisheries sector. Her “can do” attitude and working with, rather than against the fishermen, contributes greatly to the flourishing Norwegian fishing industry.”



Above: Jim Allister MEP meets Norwegian Fisheries Minister, Helga Pedersen in Tromsø

DETI's all-Island agenda attacked

"The recently published Regional Innovation Strategy for Northern Ireland, endorsed by Minister Dodds, shows alarming tendency to think excessively in all-island terms.

In pursuit of the imperative of establishing Northern Ireland as an outward-focused and competitive region in the global knowledge economy, the first strategic objective is to "ensure NI is playing its full role in the UK, all-island, European and global innovation arenas". In Annex A the actions intended to deliver same are articulated.

My fundamental concern is the disproportionate emphasis within these "actions" on all-island proposals, in sharp contrast to the dearth of all-UK or other proposals. The only vision caught in this Action Plan seems to be the all-Ireland vision. Why is this?

In 9 of the 12 actions outlined there is an all-island dimension. As part of the UK and of its

larger economy, why are we not focused on collaboration with GB, where the global knowledge economy flourishes? Why this pre-occupation with the much smaller and less stable economy of the Republic of Ireland?

I suspect that the document "Comprehensive Study of the All-Island Economy", embraced by DETI in 2006, is still very much at work under devolution. I have, therefore, called on the Minister to indicate if he has reviewed, altered, withdrawn or otherwise taken any action since coming to office to re-craft economic development policy away from the all-island bias ensconced in that document? What exactly is the status of that document today and is he happy with it.

I raise these concerns from the conviction that economic fusion is the handmaiden of political fusion and that the more our economic prospects and actions are aligned with the Republic of Ireland, the more our UK nexus is diminished."

Allister speaks out in Waste Directive debate

During the second reading debate in the European Parliament on the new Waste Framework Directive, Traditional Unionist MEP Jim Allister has spoken up strongly in favour of turning waste to energy. This debate, made more pertinent by the hike in world-wide energy price, has its own resonance in Northern Ireland, with the Rose Energy application to generate electricity from agricultural waste.

In the course of his remarks, Mr Allister said:-

"Across Europe, every Member State is struggling with runaway energy prices. Therefore seeing waste as potentially important fuel is, I believe, both sensible and necessary. It is surely a win-win situation - both dealing with our massive stockpiles of waste and providing an alternative energy supply source, particularly as we face an energy crisis and increasing dependence upon insecure foreign supplies of oil.

I therefore do not understand the reticence of some in facing up to the obvious advantage of promoting energy from waste. I fear some colleagues feel so

precious about their recycling and anti-incineration dogmas that they would sacrifice the opportunity of heat and power from waste. In that, I have to say, I believe they are profoundly mistaken.

On a related note, could I say that I very strongly favour maximising the definition of 'recovery' under the Directive, making it indisputably clear that energy from waste represents recovery, not disposal, of waste. We should particularly apply that to our agricultural sector, where there is much opportunity in that regard."

Speaking from Strasbourg Mr Allister also expressed concern about moves to enhance recycling targets to unrealistic levels and setting waste prevention targets which would impose impossible financial demands on local government and, thus, local ratepayers. "More Europe, always means more taxation. It is up to national governments, not expenditure-happy Brussels to set our waste and recycling targets", said the TUV MEP.



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.

Funding inequality against Protestants exposed

Monitoring data published at a recent Peace II Monitoring Committee revealed that Protestants were significantly underrepresented as beneficiaries of EU funding. Of a total funding package worth 854.8 million Euros, Protestants represented just 36% of total beneficiaries, while Catholic beneficiaries accounted for 57% of the total. These figures were released as part of the winding up exercise of the 2000-2006 Peace II Programme, in preparation for Peace III.

Jim Allister MEP said,
"I am appalled at the gross under-allocation of EU funds to Protestant beneficiaries. These figures confirm what many in the Protestant community suspected all along, that Peace II

failed, by design and execution, to appeal to both sections of the community equally."

"Furthermore, figures reveal that 26% of allocated Peace II funds identified 'ex-prisoners and their families' as key target groups for funding. Here we have a situation where those who perpetrated their terror on society for more than 30 years are being rewarded, ironically by 'Peace' funds. Law abiding citizens will feel sick to the stomach when they discover the disgraceful manner in which large chunks of Peace funds have been allocated."

"We need answers regarding the persistent inequality in the distribution of European funding under so called 'Peace' Programmes."

Allister opposes EU corps of fishing inspectors

In a debate in the European Parliament in Brussels, Traditional Unionist MEP, Jim Allister, strongly attacked a proposal before the Parliament for a new Regulation to deal with illegal fishing, which proposes that Brussels could set the criminal sanctions to be applied in member states and would have its own corps of inspectors. Seeing such as a further assault on the powers and rights of member states, Mr Allister had a clear "hands off" message for Brussels.

In the course of his remarks Mr Allister said:-
"Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is indeed something to be stamped out.

There is much in this report with which I

agree, but I do reject its attack on subsidiarity by demanding EU setting of criminal sanctions and the establishment of an EU corps of inspectors.

Likewise, I oppose the unnecessary additional bureaucracy of applying the regulation to EU flagged vessels, because these are already subject to the stiff provisions of the CFP. We don't need more regulation on our own fishermen to deal with third countries which continue with their rogue activities. Having seen punitive fines on local fishermen in the UK, I for one reject the suggestion that we need more and stiffer regulations and penalties on our own fleets."

Allister challenges Robinson over McGuinness' past

On the afternoon Peter Robinson MP took office with Martin McGuinness as Joint First Minister, Jim Allister MEP, pointedly reminded him of what he had previously alleged against McGuinness in the NI Assembly on 8 May 2001, when opposing him as Education Minister. Then Mr Robinson catalogued crimes of which he accused McGuinness as an IRA Commander and referred to his involvement in government as "immoral".

Among the first letters on Mr Robinson's desk as First Minister was this salvo from the TUV Leader:-

"Dear First Minister,

As you take up office as Joint First Minister, it seems appropriate to remind you of what you famously said in the Assembly on 8 May 2001 about

your infamous partner. Were you wrong in what you said about McGuinness? Has he been made amenable for any of the multiple offences you alleged against him? Has he - whom it is now claimed supports the police and rule of law - co-operated in solving the horrendous crimes which you mentioned? Or is he still the same unrepentant terrorist you then painted him to be? If so, what are you doing being politically joined at the hip with him? As you so cogently put it yourself on 8 May 2001, when objecting to such a person being Minister of Education, "Are we going to continue with this unseemly and immoral sham?"

Are you?

*Yours sincerely,
JAMES H ALLISTER QC MEP"*

Farming News

Allister debates new EU Animal Health Strategy

During the European Parliament debate on a new EU Animal Health Strategy, Ulster MEP Jim Allister made a robust contribution:

“Firstly, I raise my concerns at the creation of a single legal framework for cost-sharing, without any reference by the Commission to funding requirements. Without an enhanced provision to pay for the new Animal Health Strategy, it seems likely that a heavier cost-sharing burden will be put on farmers. By utilising the traditional under-spend in the agriculture budget, this situation could have been avoided.”

“Secondly, I welcome reference to providing assistance to farmers for purchasing new electronic ID equipment. I look forward to DARD utilising Rural Development funds to assist Northern Ireland farmers in this practical way in due course. Finally, I welcome the draft Strategy’s focus on the need to ensure higher EU standards on animal health and welfare are not put in jeopardy by imports from third countries. A holistic approach to animal health would surely recognise the recklessness of Commissioner Mandelson in pushing to secure a WTO deal at seemingly any cost, with scant regard to the future of our indigenous agri-food industry.”

As German farmers strike, milk quota debate heats up

On the day that German dairy farmers staged a strike over falling milk prices, TUV MEP Jim Allister, told the Agriculture Committee in Brussels that the CAP Health Check proposal to phase in higher quotas was "flawed".

Speaking in a debate on the Health Check proposals, Mr Allister questioned if the Commission’s plans were sufficiently robust to meet the key needs of European agriculture.

Mr Allister suggested the litmus test to be applied was whether the proposals adequately served two founding principles of the CAP - a fair return for producers and a secure food supply for EU consumers. The Ulster MEP thinks the proposals fail to pass these tests.

He urged the Commission to accept that a real safety net must be available, particularly in the intensive sector. He then challenged the appropriateness of increasing milk quota at a time of falling milk prices. Such, he said, can only aggravate the downward pressure on farmgate prices. Northern Ireland stands to face

the competition of considerable milk production output from the Republic of Ireland, once quotas are abolished. This has long concerned Mr Allister, in circumstances where our dependence on the volatile powder market is disproportionate.

Continuing to analyse the Health check proposals Mr Allister said, "Just as the market won't care for the landscape, making environmental-linked support essential, especially in LFAs, so the market alone won't keep farmers farming in the EU and feeding Europe. Pragmatism, not dogma must shape the future."



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Allister presses for support for potato sector

Jim Allister MEP has said the potato sector must receive its fair share of support under the new Rural Development Programme for Northern Ireland 2007-2013.

“Concerns over the lack of cold storage provision for potatoes have been felt for some time, and is an increasingly important factor for the competitiveness of the Northern Ireland potato sector. That is why I have written to the DARD Permanent Secretary, asking how new potato storage facilities may be supported under the



incoming Rural Development Programme.”

“While there is no direct financial assistance to erect cold stores within the new Programme, financial assistance will be available for capital investment projects under the Processing and Marketing Grant Scheme (PMG), and Farm Modernisation. The PMG Scheme will be aimed at those involved in the processing and marketing of a primary agricultural product. Farm Modernisation will support farmers in purchasing equipment, plant and machinery at a maximum rate of £5000 per farm business.”

“Undoubtedly, the share of funds allocated to Axis 1 of the new Rural Development Programme to boost industry competitiveness is extremely limited, and compared with the allocation to other ‘softer’ priorities, totally inadequate. That is why funds will have to be allocated wisely, according to the priorities identified by our key sectors.”

DARD must take responsibility for wind turbine fiasco

Jim Allister MEP has said DARD must accept responsibility for funds it committed to a scheme, under which dangerous and defective wind turbines have been erected.

Of 26 turbines grant aided under DARD’s Wind Energy for Rural Businesses scheme (WERB) - an EU funded scheme under the Programme for Building Sustainable Prosperity (BSP) - 11 turbines have proven defective and extremely dangerous.

Traditional Unionist MEP, Jim Allister said, “Firstly, I am appalled that of the 26 turbines erected under WERB, 11 turbines of one variety have posed a serious health and safety risk from day one. I have met with some of the farmers who have installed this Chinese Powerbreeze variety, and I have been shown pictures of propellers which have dislodged from these turbines, and the significant damage this has created on more than one occasion.”

“DARD contracted with WREAN to administer these funds, despite the fact that an FOI request I commissioned has revealed WREAN did not have a feasibility study, a business plan or an economic appraisal in place. This in itself illustrates a worrying lack of due diligence on the part of the

Department in the administration of public funds.”

“The notion that DARD can somehow distribute EU funds but wash their hands of the consequences, shows a lack of credibility, and incompetence on its part. To date, DARD has at the very least abdicated the moral responsibility it has to compensate those farmers who invested heavily in the Powerbreeze turbines, which have proven so grossly defective. Furthermore, the Assembly Agriculture committee has had over 12 months to assist the farmers and small businessmen concerned, yet nothing has happened.”

“Quite frankly, I am amazed that such defective and dangerous turbines have been installed under a Government funded scheme. I trust that by bringing these matters into the public domain via the BBC Nolan Show, DARD will have no option but to work towards a resolution for those farmers affected.”



Allister slams Executive in Crossnacreevy blunder

Jim Allister MEP has said the tax-paying public will demand answers, in response to revelations that an Executive blunder over the proposed sale of DARD owned land could cost the public purse up to £200 million.

Jim Allister said,

“The land in question lies within the greenbelt area, which was indeed the case when Michelle Gildernew made her announcement to dispose of the Crossnacreevy site on 12th June last year, thus making the contention that it was ever worth 200M. a non-starter. While there was a powerful case for an extra £90 million to be secured to fund the Farm Nutrient Management Scheme, the basis on which funds were given by way of an advance by DFP to DARD, in expectation of realising full development prices quoted at £200 million has been confirmed as seriously flawed. DARD should never have got into such a trade-off. Its case for FNMS funds was unanswerable, without the need for selling the family silver, with or without inflating the price.”

“Many questions remain unanswered as a result of this major blunder: firstly, will the world class research facility at Crossnacreevy continue to be sold, albeit at a much reduced £6 million guide

price? Such would be utter folly and now without any financial justification. Will projects now fall by the wayside as a result of a much reduced Government pot? Will DFP seek to claw back the additional £90 million funds through some other means, if the disposal of Crossnacreevy is now deemed to be insufficient, inflicting further damage on the agricultural budget and sector?”

“The decision to sell off public assets at Crossnacreevy was wrong and foolhardy from the outset. Undoubtedly this ham-fisted debacle exposes the lack of care taken by both DARD and DFP. I have written to both Departments raising my utmost concerns at what appears to be nothing less than negligence on the part of Government discharging its functions.”



Decision time on TB and badgers

Traditional Unionist MEP Jim Allister has called on DARD to reveal if Badgers will feature in a future TB action plan.

The MEP said,

“For years, DARD has employed a TB control strategy which has ignored an important source of the infection which exists in the Badger population. Indeed, last October, the UK Government’s Chief Scientific adviser warned that cattle movements alone cannot explain the persistence of TB in certain areas or its spread over the last decade, and recommended badger culling to be used in appropriate circumstances.”

“In recent correspondence I have had with DARD on this issue, it would appear the Department is still undecided on whether a control strategy will include active management of the disease within the wildlife population, in particular badgers. While DARD makes much acclaim of the fact that TB incidence has been falling since 2002,

Northern Ireland remains a poor performer in comparison with other EU Member States, particularly in those countries where eradication has been achieved.”

“I note the Welsh Minister has recently announced a pilot badger cull, as part of a plan to eradicate tuberculosis in cattle in that part of the UK. Local farmers, particularly those whose livelihoods have been affected by TB outbreaks, will be anxious to see some urgent action on this issue.”



DUP trapped in negotiations - Allister

Statement by Traditional Unionist Leader, Jim Allister MEP:-

"The reality of the outcome of republican threats to veto Peter Robinson as First Minister is that Sinn Fein has manoeuvred the DUP into fresh negotiations over issues the unionist people were assured were under unionist veto. The inevitable outcome of more negotiations will be concessions by the DUP, just as it was with Trimble before them, especially, since Sinn Fein has the option of forcing an election at any point by resigning McGuinness as joint First Minister.

So I warn the Unionist people that, despite loud

assurances that the Irish Language Act was dead, that policing and justice was subject to unionist timing and indications that the Maze would not proceed, we should prepare for further concessions to republicanism. Such is the nature of a process which can only survive if mutual vetoes are not exercised. There will be much bluster from Mr Robinson, but he, too, will end up feeding the insatiable Sinn Fein tiger if he wants to keep his job as joint First Minister.

It's time the DUP recognised the unworkability and folly of Belfast Agreement devolution and delivered themselves and the Province from its clutches."

SUPREME IRONY

Comment by Traditional Unionist MEP Jim Allister

"What a farcical irony in the DUP MPs voting for 42 day detention of *suspected terrorists*, when every day the DUP sustains in government *convicted terrorists*, some of whom deserve 42 years!"



Where is the DUP veto now?

Earlier this month I warned the Unionist people that one of the ideas being floated was to "allow Westminster to take some language decisions, at which the DUP would publicly protest but tolerate. Such would be a travesty and a mockery of supposedly having devolved powers". Time has proven this to be correct.

In January the then DUP Culture Minister Edwin Poots ruled out further funding for the Irish Language Broadcast Fund. Now we learn that the Irish Language Broadcast Fund is to receive over £6 million following negotiations with the Government surrounding Sinn Fein's threat to veto the DUP's leadership change.

Where is the Unionist veto if - behind DCAL's back (or was it ?) - the government can squander millions of pounds on the Irish language? And why did the DUP not block it, if as they claim they control Stormont? Instead, we have the DUP Minister, Gregory Campbell **actually welcoming**

this further extravagant hand out to the Irish language, with its overtly republican agenda. Is this what delivering for unionism now looks like?

It is time for the DUP to come clean on what else they conceded to Republicans in order to avoid facing the electorate.

The crisis at Stormont over Peter Robinson's nomination illustrates very graphically the nature of the relationship between the DUP and Sinn Fein/IRA. The DUP cannot even change their leader without the agreement of the IRA's political front men. As Mr Robinson assumes office alongside a convicted terrorist who gloats in his evil deeds the imagery will be different from that of the Chuckle Brothers era. However, Peter will still be sharing a joint office with the man he once stated was "the IRA commander in Londonderry when hundreds of killings were ordered".