

Greening Europe

News from Molly Scott Cato,
the first Green MEP for the South West of England and Gibraltar

Winter 2014/2015

Greens TTIPing the balance on trade deal

Molly joined Greens and representatives of civil society to present EU Commission President Jean Claude Juncker with a very large 60th birthday present – a million strong petition against the controversial Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) treaty.

Greens have been at the forefront of a campaign against the proposed US–EU trade deal, believing it threatens environmental and social standards and would potentially allow corporations to sue governments over laws and regulations that affect their profits. Such concerns have prompted a massive Europe-wide campaign with thousands of citizens signing petitions, organising street demonstrations, and attending public meetings. Molly herself joined a panel discussion in Bristol in November attended by around 500 people. She said:

“I am deeply concerned about the increasingly unaccountable power of multinational corporations in European societies as well as within the EU institutions themselves. A million citizens from Europe are demanding that their voices be heard; we urge the Commission to listen.”

In the South West, TTIP could have a devastating effect on the region’s many small scale farmers. ‘Harmonisation’ could allow chemically washed poultry, livestock treated with growth hormones and genetically modified crops – all allowed in the US – to be sold in the UK. This would severely undermine farmers in the South West who adhere to the higher European standards on animal welfare and on a GM crops ban.

Green Ribbon awards

Molly was one of three MEPs nominated for a ‘Green Ribbon’ European Parliamentarian of the Year award. She was nominated for her ‘impressive performance as a newly elected MEP’. While she did not ultimately win the award, she felt humbled to have been nominated. Green MP Caroline Lucas won in a different category: Parliamentarian of the Year (MP).



Molly’s corner

It has been wonderful to welcome some visitors from the South West to Brussels. This helped remind me of the people I am connected with and represent. It is really heartening to make these connections between the South West and Brussels, something it is easy to lose sight of when swamped on a daily basis by acronyms – TTIP, VATMOSS, ERDF – and technical details on the latest piece of proposed legislation.

Yet the acronyms are important because the policies behind them have a real impact in the South West. Whether it be the potentially disastrous effects of the TTIP trade deal on South West farmers or the impacts of new EU VAT legislation on the many micro-businesses in the region trying to develop their digital enterprises by selling across the EU.

However, many of the impacts are positive, such as European funding for Cornwall – which is where the ERDF acronym comes in!

And legislation is crucial too. For example new EU rules to reduce plastic bag use – pushed for by the Greens – will potentially benefit our beautiful and precious coastline and marine life.



The corridors of Brussels often feel like a long way away from the landscapes and people of the South West but my regular visits to different events across the region are a constant reminder of where I feel truly rooted.



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Standing up for the South West's environment

In the bag: EU action on plastic waste



New EU rules to reduce plastic bag use have been agreed, thanks to leadership by the Greens. The new legislation – through pricing or setting reduction targets – will cut the number of bags Europeans use each year by more than three quarters in just over a decade. It is the first time binding measures to reduce waste at EU level have been agreed. The new legislation received unanimous European Council backing, despite attempts by the UK government to scupper the deal. Molly says:

“While the UK government and UKIP seem determined to out-compete each other on opposition to any EU initiative, Greens are getting on with the task of working to build a Europe for the common good. By working constructively and building consensus Greens have managed, yet again, to push through another important piece of environmental legislation. This is particularly good news for the South West. The terrible damage plastic inflicts on marine animals and birds is well documented. Being surrounded by sea, this is particularly positive news for the region’s valuable marine habitats.”

Keeping up with Molly

There are lots of ways to follow the work of Molly Scott Cato MEP:

- Molly’s website contains further details on all the stories featured in this newsletter, plus lots more! www.mollymep.org.uk
- You can follow her parliamentary activities: http://bit.ly/MSC_EP
- Sign up to fortnightly e-news from the website or: <http://eepurl.com/5PaSX>
- Follow Molly on Twitter: [@MollyMEP](https://twitter.com/MollyMEP)
- Or on Facebook: [Molly Scott Cato MEP](https://www.facebook.com/MollyScottCatoMEP)

Flooding



Following an increase in the number of flooding incidents across Europe, Molly had an opportunity to use experiences learned from last winter’s floods in the South West to give a Green perspective on tackling floods. She spoke to the European Parliament identifying three elements of a responsible flood policy:

- The need for adequate investment in the infrastructure that prevents flooding
- A whole-catchment approach with a focus on land management that involves maintaining hedges and trees and using organic methods that reduce soil run-off
- Making explicit the link between flooding and climate change and the need to agree meaningful CO2 reductions at the COP 21 negotiations in Paris in 2015.

Molly said:

“Government funding on flood defenses announced in the recent autumn statement falls way short of what’s needed to protect homes and businesses from increased flood risk due to climate change. And many of the other measures, such as a £15bn road programme and funding for fracking lock us into a fossil fuel economy, making the potential impacts of climate change even worse.”

Molly has launched a new website on the ‘Seven Deadly Sins of Banking’:

<http://bankingsins.eu/en/index.html>

The site provides details of the flaws in our banking system, the solutions proposed by Greens and an opportunity to assess the ethical performance of your own bank or building society.



Standing up for economic justice

Pushing for an Inquiry into 'LuxLeaks'



Greens have demand that EU Commission President, Jean Claude Juncker, 'Act or Go' following revelations that Luxembourg helped facilitate tax avoidance by multinational corporations. The scam, known as 'LuxLeaks', happened while Mr Juncker was prime minister of the country. Molly has taken a lead in pushing for a powerful Committee of Inquiry to carry out robust interrogation into tax avoidance, not just related to Juncker, but across the whole EU. Molly says:

"Osborne has taken limited steps on tax avoidance in the autumn statement; Labour has pledged to stand up to powerful vested interests and impose penalties on companies avoiding tax. Yet both Conservative and Labour MEPs have failed to add their signatures to the Green call. We need 188 signatures and are 40 short; there are 20 Labour and 27 Conservative MEPs. They could match their rhetoric on tax evasion with action by forcing an Inquiry, but so far haven't done so."

Bankers' bonus cap upheld

Molly has welcomed the fact that the UK government has dropped its case against the European Court of Justice over bankers' bonuses. Greens were the driving force behind a proposal to cap bankers' bonuses at a fixed rate of 100% of salary. But this was challenged by George Osborne through Europe's highest court. Molly says:

"Osborne's attempts to appease his chums in the City have failed. The cap on bankers' bonuses stands and this is an important first step to end the pernicious banking culture where excessive risk taking is rewarded while the cost of failure is borne by the taxpayer."

Hinkley update



Molly has pledged to continue the fight against a new nuclear power station at Hinkley following agreement by the out-going EU Competition Commissioner on a controversial financial deal. Molly continues to believe the deal is illegal state aid under EU rules. Aside from the nuclear waste issues, Molly says the decision is economically disastrous:

"Agreeing such a huge implicit subsidy for Hinkley will make it very difficult for those who generate electricity in a clean and sustainable way to compete. Renewables offer huge opportunities for thousands of jobs in the South West and the innovation coming from this sector is threatened by the unwarranted financial support the Commission is offering to nuclear."

New EU VAT threat to South West micro-businesses

Changes in tax regulations mean VAT on digital products sold in the EU will be chargeable in the place of purchase rather than the place of supply. This will mean micro-businesses forfeiting their VAT exemption threshold by doing digital business in Europe. The businesses will now have to collect VAT from up to 28 different EU states at 75 different rates. Molly says:

"These rules were designed to prevent footloose multinationals avoiding paying their fair share of tax, something Greens support. But in this case it appears legislation aimed at the big fish has entangled a large number of our micro-businesses in the South West and might actually threaten their viability."

Molly is pushing for all small businesses across Europe with an annual turnover of up to €100,000 to be exempted from VAT.

South West Constituency News

A small selection of events in the South West attended by Molly over the last three months

What has Europe ever done for Cornwall?



During her October 'constituency week', Molly visited a range of projects in Cornwall which have benefited from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Convergence Programme. Molly says:

"It was really encouraging to see how ERDF funding has been used to help support some truly inspirational initiatives. It's clear European investment is helping create the right environment to allow people and businesses new and innovative opportunities as well as helping to regenerate historic buildings and boost the region's cultural and artistic heritage."

The ERDF Convergence Programme has invested approximately €458 million in Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly since 2007 and aims to build a stronger economy for the region.

South West visitors to Brussels



South West visitors join demonstration against TTIP

Ricky Knight organised a group visit to Brussels, made up of both Green Party members and

non-members. He said: "It was a jam-packed sensation of serious politics and inspiring democracy in action. A memorable experience and highly recommended."

Trading without cruelty

Molly officially opened this year's popular Christmas Without Cruelty Festival in Exeter. Coordinated by Animal Aid South West, the event offers hundreds of different products from a wide range of traders or charities, all working to reduce violence to people, animals and the planet. Molly said:



"The South West has a fantastic number of charities working to improve the lives of people, animals and the environment. As a green economist I believe small businesses and enterprises play a vital role in promoting ethical standards and helping create local jobs and a resilient localised economy."

The Green MEPs in the UK produce an animal rights/welfare newsletter twice a year. *Making Tracks* can be found at: <http://mollymep.org.uk/news/making-tracks/>

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