



DRAFT

Scotland's Place in Europe – Protecting the Interests of Highlands & Islands

Convention of the Highlands & Islands

Monday 30th October 2017

The Corran Halls, Oban



Michael Russell

Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in
Europe

Update on the latest position



Malcolm Burr

Chief Executive, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Member of the Standing Council on Europe

Protecting the interests of Highlands and Islands



Context

- Social, economic and cultural benefits for individuals, businesses and communities across Scotland from EU membership
- Scottish Government position is clear, but set within context of UK led negotiations
- Uncertainty following Referendum and status of future relationship has business and social impact
- Particular issues for Highlands and Islands





Demography

- All Highlands and Islands areas are projected to see decreases in their working age populations
- The role of migrants in sustaining numbers of working age population and in supporting ageing populations is critical in Highlands and Islands
- European markets for some products & projects funded through European funding programmes have allowed local people to remain in the area and find employment



Labour Market

- Scotland's remote and rural communities depend on workers from the EU in a range of sectors, for example tourism & the food and drink industry
- Highland and Shetland have a higher proportion of EEA workers than the national average
- The dependency of migrant workers is more marked in the remoter areas





Trade

- Access to the single market is important to many of the Highlands and Islands' key sectors for geographical reasons
- These EU markets cannot be replaced by more distant markets
- A 'Hard Brexit' would heavily impact sections of Scottish agriculture e.g. cattle and sheep
- At risk is also the future protection of Scottish protected food names (like Scotch beef or Stornoway black pudding)





EU Funding

- Supports jobs, delivers infrastructure & sustains rural communities
- £5 billion over the life of the current EU budget round (2014-2020)
- Scottish agriculture is more heavily reliant than the rest of the UK on CAP funds and there are fewer alternatives for farmers
- Brexit has created uncertainty for communities across Scotland who are unable to plan beyond the UK's departure of the EU





Health

- The free movement of people and the mutual recognition of qualifications allow skilled and experienced health professionals from the EU/EEA to work in our NHS
- Our ability to continue to provide high-quality health and social care services for the people of Scotland will suffer particularly in Scotland's remote and rural communities





The Rt Hon Sir George Reid

Member of the Standing Council on Europe

Reflections & forward look



Key Discussion Prompts

- What are the key priorities for the Highlands and Islands area?
- In this uncertain environment, what are the key risks and opportunities for Highlands and Islands?
- How can we mitigate the impact of Brexit on the Highlands and Islands area?