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Small earthquake in Strasbourg

EFA press release by MEP Alyn Smith (SNP)

SNP Member of the European Parliament Mr **Alyn Smith** has today (Wednesday) welcomed a vote in Strasbourg which, for the first time ever, reduces the time the Parliament will have to spend on the ruinous monthly commute to Strasbourg.

Smith is a longstanding advocate of basing the Parliament full time in Brussels, saving millions a year for the European taxpayer, cutting millions of CO2 emissions, and even reducing wear and tear on MEPs themselves.

The Parliament today adopted its calendars for 2012 and 2013, including a merger of two of the proposed sessions into one 'double session' in October, cutting the amount of times the EP has to decamp to Strasbourg, albeit by only one session. Under primary EU Treaty Law decided by the member states the European Parliament is unique in having only limited power over its own sittings, and is compelled to meet 12 times a year in Strasbourg. This secret ballot, by 357 votes to 255 against with 41 abstentions, was close but proves that MEPs will use every limited flexibility they have to undermine the commute. The amendment was drafted by English Conservative MEP Ashley Fox, and co-signed by Smith alongside over 200 other MEPs.

Smith said:

"This was a close vote today but we made it! It seems a small achievement, and indeed it is, but there already is four fewer flights I'll make next year, and it was hard won. Hats off to Ashley and his team for all the time and energy this took.

"By reducing the amount of times the entire European Parliament has to decamp from Brussels to Strasbourg, this decision will save taxpayers' money and reduce the environmental impact of shifting thousands of people and resources to-and-fro. It will also make our working lives more efficient and productive.

"So as far as I am concerned, it is one down, eleven more to go! The whole travelling circus damages public perception of the Parliament, and is quite indefensible. It is scandalous that the chairs of the two biggest political groups continue to prevent the European Parliament debating the outdated arrangement

as regards the EP seats. While MEPs cannot decide, it is their role as public representatives to ensure the issue remains on the EU agenda and that member states do the right thing. Today's decision keeps the issue on the radar."

NOTE TO EDITORS

1 The campaign to site the Parliament full time in Brussels can be found at www.oneseat.eu

2 For background on just how wasteful the commute actually is, see the study commissioned by the Greens/EFA group (to which the SNP belongs) on the environmental impact of the multi-seat operation, which leads to an excess 20,000 tonnes of CO2 per year being emitted.

http://www.greens-efa.org/cms/pressreleases/dok/180/180461.climate_change_and_the_european_parliament@en.htm

The European Free Alliance (EFA) Group in the European Parliament includes MEPs from Scotland, Wales, Catalonia, Flanders, Corsica and Latvia, who advance the cause of Europe's stateless nations, regions and disadvantaged minorities. Greens/EFA is an alliance of different parties from different Member States. Press statements on this website do not necessarily bind all parties. The Group respects the rights of minorities within it to take a separate line from the majority.

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