



intouch with the South East

Dear Member

The Conservatives have had a fantastic 2015. I thoroughly enjoyed campaigning with you in the General election last May, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your overwhelming support throughout this year. I am acutely aware of the frustrations felt by many of you with the institutions in Brussels. As your MEP I will continue to work hard to deliver the best possible deal for the South East and will be supporting the Prime Minister's plans for reform in Europe.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Ashworth MEP



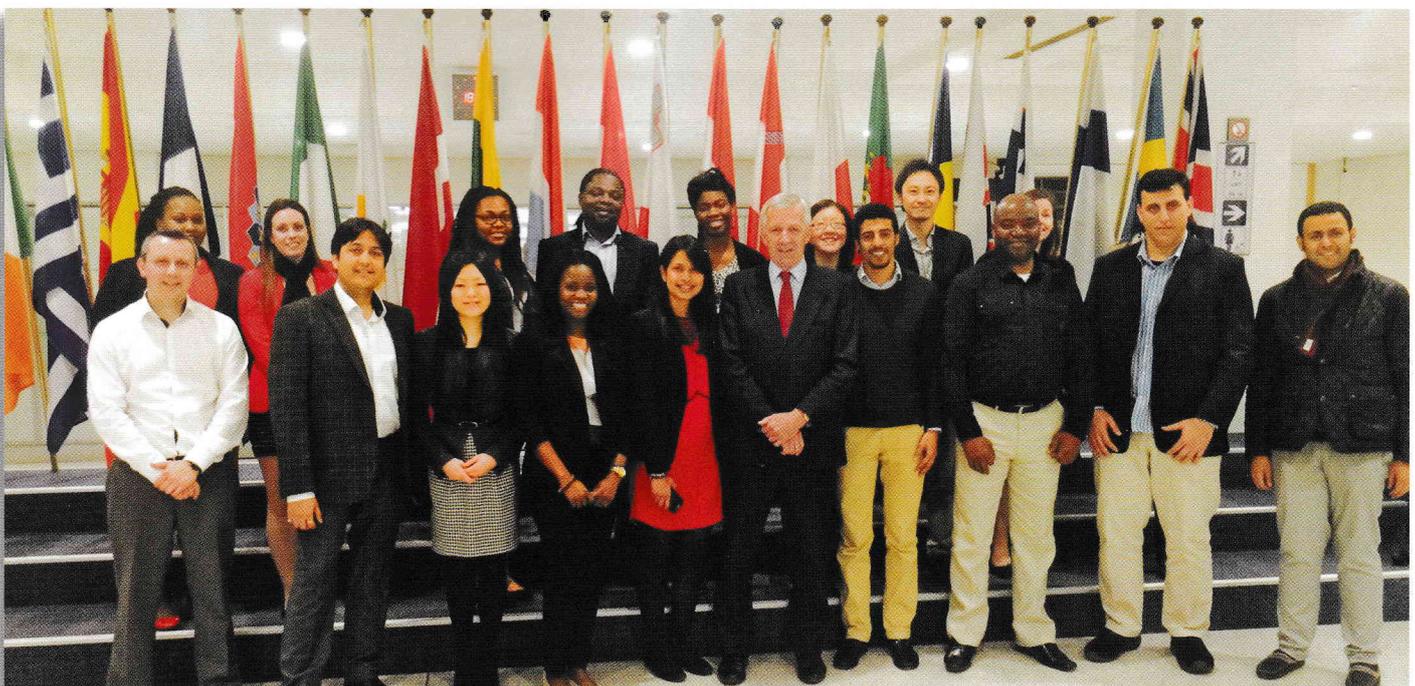
Working closely with the Foreign Secretary, The Rt Hon. Phillip Hammond MP, to represent the UK's interests abroad

It is clear the EU has simply been tackling the symptoms of migration and not dealing with the root causes. We need all 28 Member States to coordinate and solve this cross-border problem and I am leading a group of MEPs from affected Member States to drive more effective coordination.

This summer I visited refugee processing centres and spoke with both migrants seeking a better life and local authorities dealing with such inflows. We must always offer compassionate and charitable refuge to those fleeing persecution and wars; however it is important to distinguish between genuine refugees and economic migrants. To control and manage the refugee situation we must establish safe havens on the borders of war zones and work closely with countries such as Jordan or Turkey that are on the 'front line'. ■

Refugees – no quick fix but hard work required

Immigration has been one of my top priorities throughout my three terms as an MEP. The situation in Calais has been unsustainable this summer; I am aware of the great distress that it has caused many South-East residents and I have written to the Commission to represent your concerns.



Richard with Kent MBA students at the European Parliament – Richard always enjoys hosting school, college and university students from the South East

The EU Budget should deliver value for money

This year the European Parliament proposed to increase the size of the EU's Budget. As the Budget Spokesman for the Conservatives in the European Parliament, I tabled an alternative Budget, which set out a series of ideas for a smaller, targeted EU budget, focused on three priorities: jobs, growth and competitiveness.

The EU Budget is an important source of investment for the South East and the rest of the UK. Our universities benefit from research and development funding, our communities benefit from infrastructure funding; and our farmers and consumers benefit from agricultural funding. Nevertheless, the Budget needs to deliver real value for money without constantly adding to the financial burden of taxpayers.

I am working tirelessly to ensure the highest possible value for taxpayer's money by campaigning for expenditure to be based on performance outcomes and for a greater scrutiny role for the European Parliament. ■

EU Budget – Did you know?

- Every member country contributes 1% of gross national income to the EU. For 2014, the UK contributed in net terms £8 billion.
- Over 80% of the budget is invested directly in European countries for projects such as: infrastructure, transport, agriculture, supporting food security, research and Erasmus.
- Just 5% of the budget is spent on central administrative costs of the institutions. ■



EnAlgae is an innovative project looking into alternative energies. UK higher education and research institutions receive one of the highest shares of EU research and investment funds

Claiming that the EU has never signed off its accounts is just wrong...

Contrary to popular belief, the independent auditors have never "refused to sign off the EU accounts." This year, as in previous years, the auditors reported that the Commission's accounts were "accurate, legal, regular and reliable." According to the auditors 0.2% of transactions were fraudulent and 4.4% of transactions were "materially affected by error." ■



Richard, as Chairman of the British Beer Club in the European Parliament, launched Brew with your MEP designed to promote British beer with Johnathan Neame at the Shepherd Neame Brewery in Kent.

EU Referendum and Renegotiation

The Prime Minister is seeking to improve the functioning of the European Union and ensure a better deal for the British people. David Cameron's reforms are focused on delivering a strong single market that will contribute more to the economic growth of the United Kingdom; making sure that the rights of non-Eurozone member states are protected; ensuring a greater role for national parliaments; and finally, ending the abuse of the principle of free movement.

These are sensible proposals and I support the Prime Minister's efforts. I am confident he will achieve a satisfactory outcome and on that basis I will back the PM. ■

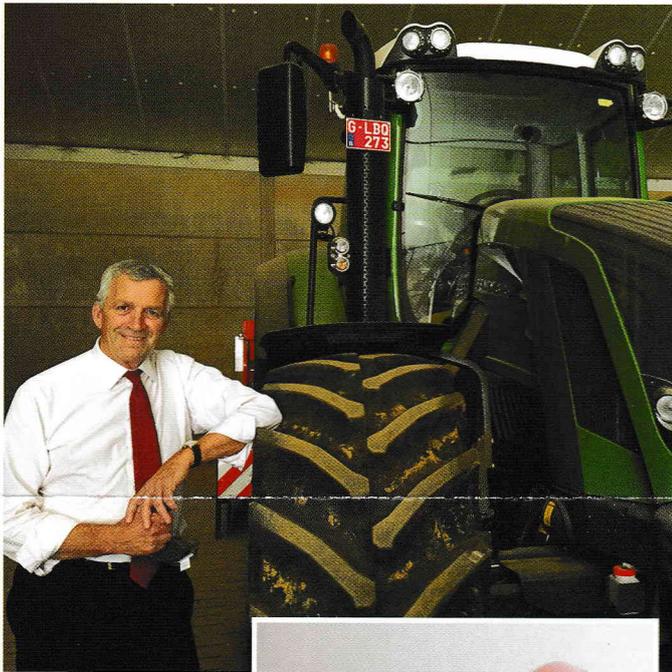


Supporting the Prime Minister's renegotiation of the UK's relationship with the EU

Agriculture

I am determined to ensure that the 2017 mid-term review of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) addresses the weaknesses of the current system. Even in the first year of the new CAP, it is clear that aspects of the new measures will burden British farmers with unnecessary expense and red tape. I have raised concerns about the greening requirements to the Commissioner for agriculture, Phil Hogan, because we need to ensure that the burden of cost to the industry is proportionate to the benefit to the environment.

The current pressures faced across agriculture in the UK are a significant concern and I welcomed the EU's €500m farm support package of which the UK receives the third largest portion. As shadow draftsman on the unfair trading practices report in the European Parliament, I am acutely aware of the vulnerability of farmers in the food supply chain and will work with my MEP colleagues to raise the profile of the UK Groceries Code as best practice for Member States. ■



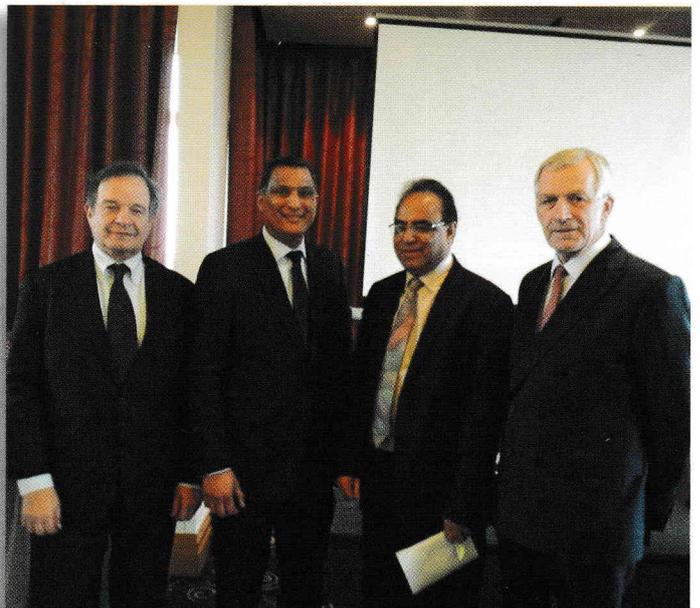
Before entering politics, Richard was a farmer for over thirty years



Richard meeting Commissioner Hogan to discuss agriculture

The End of Mobile Roaming Charges

I recently voted in the European Parliament to significantly reduce the cost of mobile phone roaming charges by next summer, and abolish them completely by July 2017. British holiday makers will soon be able to use their phones abroad the same as at home, no longer having to worry about unexpected charges and leading to significant savings. Not only is this a fair deal for consumers and mobile phone operators, but also a success for the Single Market. This is a real change in the EU that can directly benefit everyone across the UK and Europe. ■

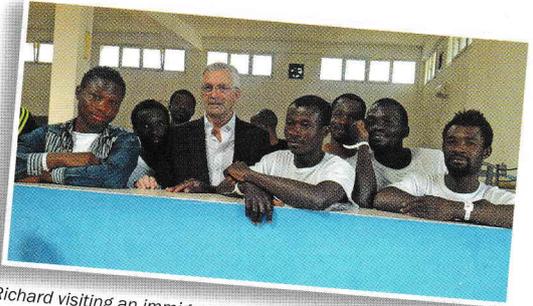


Richard with Syed Kamall (Chairman of the ECR Group), James Elles (former MEP for the South East) launching the South East Conservative European Network.

Out and About in the South East

School Groups

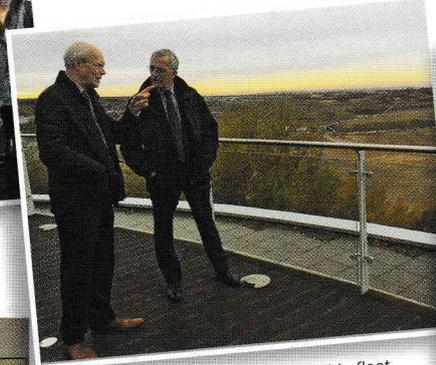
I have received many visits this year by schools, colleges and universities at the European Parliament in Brussels. I am happy to sponsor groups as well as speak to visitors without my sponsorship. If you are interested in visiting the European Parliament please feel free get in touch with me via email. ■



Richard visiting an immigrant processing centre in Pozallo, Sicily - often the first point migrants reach in the voyage to Europe across the Mediterranean



Richard welcoming Christ Church Canterbury University students to the European Parliament



Richard with Robin Cooper CEO of Ebbsfleet Development Corporation surveying sites for redevelopment. Richard supports the regeneration of the Ebbsfleet area to boost jobs and investment in the region



Supporting local business, such as Brighton Gin, is a key priority for Richard



Richard speaking to students at Magdalen College Oxford

A life-long fan of rugby, Richard standing with the Webb Ellis Cup. He was particularly pleased that the South East hosted many visiting teams throughout the tournament



Richard with Maria Caulfield MP at a Mid Sussex Conservative Association European referendum debate



Richard meeting with Ruth Davidson MSP, Leader of the Scottish Conservatives

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Or follow him on twitter: @RichardAshMEP

Conservative MEPs for the South East are
Richard Ashworth, Nirj Deva, and Daniel Hannan

The views expressed in this publication are the personal views of Richard Ashworth MEP and are not necessarily the views of the ECR Group or Conservatives in the European Parliament.