

***Jim Allister MEP explains how Traditional Unionist Voice policies will make life better for small businesses in Northern Ireland***

The impact of the global economic downturn in Northern Ireland is undeniably severe.

Profligate banks and governmental mismanagement, inducing a reckless monetary culture, has wreaked havoc across Europe. The foolish response of some in demanding greater subjugation to Brussels is the counsel of folly. The Working Time Directive is a timely reminder of how EU diktat would curb our essential economic freedoms. Families are struggling to make ends meet, many can't cope, and what does the EU want to do? Insist that British workers should be banned from working overtime, by prohibiting more than 48 hours work per week! It is such madness which I have constantly opposed in the European Parliament. Indeed I was the only Northern Ireland MEP to bother to speak in the Working Time Directive debate.

In Brussels I have sought to be a friend of business. Hence I have constantly opposed the unnecessary bureaucracy that Brussels loves to impose.

The EU is notorious for its imposition of bureaucratic obligations on business.

Currently, there are 344 different reporting obligations for European companies. The cost for all EU companies to provide this information is a staggering €20 billion and the Enterprise Commissioner has admitted that EU legislation now costs European business €600 billion a year. Particularly in straightened economic times, this is an intolerable burden.

It equates to 5.5% of the total EU GDP. Put another way, it is the equivalent of the EU losing the entire output of a medium sized country like Holland every year.

In truth the benefits of the Single Market are being outweighed by the cost of the extra regulation resulting from it.