

Malta takes over presidency of the EU



Malta takes over the presidency of the EU from today.

The country has fewer citizens than the Scottish capital, and on taking up the role, Malta has the chance of setting the agenda for the next six months. They have decided on jobs, growth and competitiveness while tackling poverty and social exclusion.

Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs said: “Today Malta takes on the Presidency of the European Union. It does so at a critical time with the European Union facing many challenges.

“These challenges include the need to tackle the refugee crisis, dealing with the threat of terrorism and finding solutions to tackle persistently high levels of unemployment across the EU particularly amongst the young.

“I have always believed that tackling these issues will require a collective and collaborative response from the EU and I believe firmly that the EU is up to the challenge.

“Whilst it is highly likely that Malta will also be in the Presidency chair when the UK begins the process of negotiating its exit from the EU, I want to acknowledge the many additional and important priorities that the Presidency will be taking forward over the next six months around migration, the EU single market, security, social inclusion, European neighbourhood policy and maritime policy.

“I was pleased to visit Malta in October last year and meet with Foreign Minister Dr George Vella whilst there. On behalf

of the Scottish Government, I would like to wish Malta every success with its Presidency over the next six months.”

SNP Member of the European Parliament Alyn Smith said: “I welcome Malta to their role in the Presidency of the EU Council. They’ve set an ambitious agenda for growth in Europe’s economy – using the single market and free movement of labour to the benefit of member states. What a contrast with the UK government who’ve turned their back on the role, and seem more and more intent on pursuing a damaging hard Brexit at a devastating cost to jobs and the economy.

“With a population slightly smaller than the City of Edinburgh, Malta is the perfect example of a small independent country that chooses to pool and share resources with European neighbours to make a significant difference – and in doing so, punches well above its weight in influencing decisions which have a global impact.