

David Clark

Chair

The European Movement in Scotland

7th March 2023

Dear David,

Many thanks for your letter regarding my position on Scotland's place in Europe. I would like to make my commitment very clear. Scotland's place *is* at the heart of Europe, and, as First Minister I would never stop until we are back in Europe.

The damage Brexit has done to our economy and our society is deeply distressing. There have, quite simply, been no evident benefits of leaving and it has left us with a shattered economy, a restriction of our freedom of movement, and an ever-increasing attack on our rights.

I take on board your question regarding a dedicated cabinet-level post focusing on Scotland's relationship in Europe. If elected as First Minister I would seek to rebuild closer relationships with the EU as a matter of priority, bringing Scotland back to Europe, where we belong.

I would envision having someone in place to lead this strategy. The strategy itself would involve a few practical and deeply significant steps.

We want to re-join Europe because we want to re-join the scientific research community as well as build transparent trading standards and regulations that sit within the EU. It is also, vitally, about working on issues of climate change and biodiversity on land and sea at a European level to ensure best practice and shared responsibilities.

There is huge importance on us preparing our return to the EU, and this would include setting up infrastructure to ensure our laws and regulations are aligned with the EU to ease our return. Investment in monitoring divergence and retaining alignment with Europe would be essential then.

As part of this, then, it would be my intention to create a permanent SNP presence in Brussels. This would be an SNP role, establishing our presence as a small European nation at the heart of Europe, and ensuring Scotland's case for returning to Europe be heard by our European Neighbours.

I am confident we will return to Europe. We must. I must be very clear regarding my unwavering commitment to Europe, however. If elected as First Minister, I would work firmly with the belief that the only way Scotland can return to Europe is as an independent country. I will re-affirm the case to the people of Scotland, then, that our place in Europe is as a small independent country.

With that in mind I would also intend to host a European summit in Scotland. We would intend to engage in honest dialogue with not only our fellow EU partners the Greens/ European Free Alliance, but other EU groups that are open to democracy and furthering social justice across Europe.

I would expect the person who leads this strategy to lead the rebuilding of the infrastructure to help us transition back into Europe as an independent country. What formal capacity this role will take is, as yet, to be decided, but we would not rule out a cabinet-level role given its importance.

With regards to the new manifestations of the Erasmus programme. If elected, I would seek to look at how we can find paths for our young people to have the freedom to study and live abroad.

Yours

Humza Yousaf.