

There are three general themes to the vast majority of policy related correspondence I receive. The first relates to animal welfare, the second on welfare reform, and the third is our relationship with Europe.

In 2011 I defied my Leader and a three line whip to vote in favour of having a referendum on our future relationship with Europe. When you don't rebel very often it is not an easy thing to do but on that occasion it was definitely the right thing to do as demonstrated by the massive amount of subsequent and incredibly supportive correspondence.

However, there was a lot more to that vote than just simply being about Europe. It was also in part an opportunity for politicians to try and restore some trust among the electorate. If we say we will or will not do something, then we should do it. For too long the public has felt that politicians use rhetoric to get elected and then do the exact opposite in Government. I remember Labour promising not to introduce tuition fees, a promise they broke and introduced them. I'm not for one moment suggesting that this was the exclusive behaviour of the last Government but the Prime Minister has now promised an In/Out referendum based on the outcome of renegotiation with our European partners and this is what must happen.

Those who are genuinely concerned about creeping European powers are not "crazy" and it is wrong to use such language. However, in my view a major benefit of a referendum is that it will encourage an informed debate about the advantages and disadvantages of membership of the EU. But the most important thing is that it will give people the chance to have their much desired say in our country's future in Europe.