

“no
politics
just
action”

action plan

**John Gilliland's
Action Plan
for Europe**

John Gilliland Explains

I want Northern Ireland to be proud in the world.

The European Union gives us wonderful opportunities to grow as a self-confident, outward-looking region. But we haven't taken full advantage of them.

We can all see how well the Republic of Ireland has done out of Europe: it is estimated that in the five years leading up to 2000, compared to the Republic, Northern Ireland lost out on £0.75 billion of EU funding.

Clearly, Northern Ireland has been punching below its weight.

The future of Northern Ireland is at stake in this election. Not the future of the border. Not the future of the Agreement. But the future of Northern Ireland in Europe.

Europe is not a place to engage in green and orange politics and I'm not interested in them. My one and only priority is to get the best deal for Northern Ireland.

That's why I am running on the platform of "no politics, just action".

I want Northern Ireland to punch above its weight.

With the departure of Ian Paisley and John Hume, the challenge of representing you in Europe passes to a new generation. I want to present the face of a progressive, confident and forward-thinking Northern Ireland.

We are now seeing the emergence of a Europe of the Regions. More and more regions are becoming major players in Europe, in their own right.

I want to focus on developing Northern Ireland as a region within Europe and build on what I achieved in farming politics. Through marketing ourselves as a distinct region, we are well-placed to attract investment and other support, especially in the enlarged European Union, where we will need to punch even harder to make an impact.

Over 70% of the legislation that impacts upon you now comes from the European Union, covering areas such as our economy, our environment, our infrastructure and our children and families.

I want the people of Northern Ireland to have as much say as possible over how European directives are going to be implemented here. This is something that I have already achieved in the negotiations about the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. Not London, not Dublin telling us what to do, but local people.

We must be positive about engaging with Europe. We must be prepared to lift our horizons, and avoid becoming an isolated backwater on the edge of Europe.

I am far from uncritical of the European Union. It needs much more democracy and accountability. But if you are not in you can't win, and our interests will be best served by engaging at the centre of Europe rather than sniping from the edges.

Europe has much to contribute to Northern Ireland. It has helped us consolidate peace and democracy. It is helping us to achieve greater economic growth and a fairer society. It is helping to protect the environment.

Europe must be made to work for us. I have the total commitment and I have the Action Plan to do so.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Gilliland', written in a cursive style.

**John Gilliland
Independent Candidate for the European Parliament**

Action on Regional Status

Northern Ireland has needs that are different from those of Great Britain. All parties recognise this in their support for some form of functioning devolution. John Gilliland too supports this, and has already achieved, in the form of the Luxembourg Accord, the precedent of establishing Northern Ireland as a separate region with discretion as to how European law is implemented.

John Gilliland will:

- > **Lobby hard for the extension of the Luxembourg Accord principle to other areas of European legislation that affect Northern Ireland.**
- > **Build strategic alliances with other regions in Europe with similar economic, social or geographic profiles, to learn and lobby for tailored legislative support.**

Action on our Economy

The European Union is of enormous importance to the economy of Northern Ireland. The vast majority – over 60% – of our trade is now with our European partners. Further development of the internal market should be balanced with a commitment to social justice. The European Union can help provide the right conditions for promoting economic growth, and sharing prosperity. It is clear that Northern Ireland can no longer – and should not – compete as a low-cost economy, but must focus on the knowledge of its people and the quality of its products.

John Gilliland will:

- > **Make it easier for businesses to compete in Europe, by ensuring that our infrastructure is good enough to get our people and products to market.**
- > **Promote training and education, to allow our workforce to compete in a knowledge-based global economy.**
- > **Ensure that rights of employees – especially pension entitlements – are properly protected.**
- > **Keep regulation to a minimum, through properly testing directives before implementation, creating sunset clauses to remove outdated laws, and pushing for an appeals system to challenge inappropriate legislation.**
- > **Argue for the creation of a European Green Economy Task Force that can identify opportunities to develop new markets for environmentally sustainable products.**
- > **Push for the creation of an EU-wide intellectual property regime.**

- > Lobby for the sensible introduction of a Single European Company Statute.
- > Ensure that Northern Ireland's interests are promoted in the European energy market, through diversification and security of supply, and action on renewables and conservation – resulting in lower prices for consumers.

Action on our Infrastructure

The necessary infrastructure is vital for us to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by Europe, especially to combat our isolation. The infrastructure in the Republic of Ireland is now substantially better than ours, as admitted by out-going MEP of 25 years, Ian Paisley. John Hume has also highlighted the absence of a Belfast–Derry motorway. Peripherality need not lead to provincialism. But to avoid this we must improve our ease of access to the world, and the world's access to us. In order to improve our infrastructure, we need both greater investment and more competition.

John Gilliland will:

- > Use his experience of Brussels to build the best lobby for regional aid investment in our transport infrastructure, to combat geographic isolation.
- > Encourage greater choice in all forms of transport, including our air-links.
- > Promote more investment in local services, through a new definition of European 'subsidiarity' – a principle that demands that policy decisions are taken at the lowest most appropriate level.

Action on Regional Aid

There are vast differences in the wealth of the regions of the European Union. Certain regions are further disadvantaged through their geographical isolation. In addition, some are scarred through deep divisions and a legacy of violence. Northern Ireland qualifies for regional aid under all three of these yardsticks.

John Gilliland will:

- > Work to secure gap funding for extending PEACE II funding until 2006, and agree a PEACE III programme for Northern Ireland.
- > Deliver more coherent Structural Funds and ensure a better deal for Northern Ireland.
- > Ensure that the application process for those seeking funding is simplified and bureaucracy cut, so that funding can go to where it is really necessary.

Action for our Families and Children

Europe now touches more and more on family life and the rights of children. The social aspects to the European Union should be used to protect the cohesion of the family unit and ensure the appropriate balance between rights and responsibilities.

John Gilliland will:

- > Provide help for families to find the right balance between work and home, for example through guaranteeing rights to paternity leave.
- > Combat child pornography on the Internet, through a Europe-wide attack on such abusers.
- > Argue for stronger laws and action on child trafficking, especially in the era of an enlarged Europe, cheap travel and reduced border controls.
- > Work to combat the spread of junk food, leading to startling levels of child obesity.

Action on our Environment

A quality local and global environment is vital to a good quality of life. There is a need for local, national, and international efforts to protect the environment. Many environmental problems – such as climate change – cut across borders and cannot be effectively tackled by nations acting alone. Protecting and enhancing our environment is a key area where Europe can make a real difference. Almost all of Northern Ireland's environmental legislation is now driven by Europe.

John Gilliland has led from the front in developing innovative environmental solutions in his own agri-energy business. He has reduced his own business's usage of fossil fuels by 70% in the last ten years by replacing them with renewable energy sources such as willow. He is also a pioneer of 'waste to energy' technology.

John Gilliland will:

- > Promote better air and water quality standards, through tailoring implementation to local needs.
- > Argue for a shift in taxation away from income and jobs to consumption and pollution so that the least well-off don't get a disproportionate burden.
- > Place sustainable development at the heart of Europe.
- > Ensure that the European Union lives up to its Kyoto commitments, and continues to take the lead in combating global warming.
- > Encourage greater waste reduction and recycling.
- > Support stronger protection of the built environment and of our irreplaceable heritage.

Action on Agriculture and Rural Development

Our rural communities are the backbone of our society. In addition to providing foodstuffs for both local and international consumption, they protect and preserve the countryside for the enjoyment of all. But there is much hidden poverty in our rural communities. There are issues relating to job creation, infrastructure and transport, and affordable housing.

John Gilliland's championing of farm families is well documented. He will continue to work for the European model of agriculture that will secure the future of farm families within the rural economy.

John Gilliland will:

- > Secure medium-term support for the environment, animal welfare and food quality.**
- > Build a fisheries policy that protects regional fisheries.**
- > Secure further LEADER and INTERREG programmes for rural development and improvement of community infrastructure.**

Euro

The euro is a reality within our principal trading area, both for our exporters and for our own border economy. Exchange rate stability is a good thing for business and hence for society. John Gilliland's position is:

- > The UK Chancellor's Five Tests must be met.**
- > Then the entry exchange rate must be set at the correct level so as not to disadvantage Northern Ireland's competitiveness in Europe and the wider world.**
- > If the above tests are successfully passed, then John Gilliland will argue for a Yes vote in the Euro referendum.**

European Constitution

A European Constitution is good only if it streamlines the business of managing a trading block of 25 states. Discussions on the European Constitution are continuing. It is still unclear what will be proposed, but it is clear that the institutions need to become more simple, more democratic and more transparent. A referendum will be an opportunity for local people to have their say, and to build support for Europe.

John Gilliland will work to:

- > Strengthen the powers of the European Parliament in terms of co-decision.**
- > Strengthen the Committee of the Regions.**
- > Promote better co-operation in defence and foreign policy.**

- > Incorporate the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights into any treaty text.
- > Use the provisions of a new Constitution to make a 'People's Europe' a reality.

Action on European Enlargement

European enlargement is crucial for spreading security, prosperity and opportunities. It is both an opportunity and a challenge to Northern Ireland. It brings new possibilities for all our people, especially young people and businesses, to exchange ideas. But there is also the task to get Northern Ireland's voice heard in an even bigger Europe.

John Gilliland will:

- > Campaign for continued, but targeted, regional aid for Northern Ireland.
- > Promote exchange programmes, especially for young people and businesses, with the accession countries.
- > Lobby for better access for Northern Ireland businesses to new markets – we can sell our services and goods if we get the right openings and support.

Action on International Development

The EU is increasingly an important actor on the international stage. For example, it now speaks with one voice in international trade talks. The EU plays a positive role in promoting democracy and good governance in other parts of Europe and the rest of the world. Europe has the potential to play a greater role in providing peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance to crisis zones.

John Gilliland has a track record of negotiating on the international stage. He was Northern Ireland's sole representative at the World Trade Talks in Cancun in September 2003. He has successfully lobbied for the manageable removal of EU export subsidies on exports to the world's poorest nations.

John Gilliland will:

- > Press for fairer trade access for the developing world, building on the EU's previous actions for the least developed countries.
- > Promote human rights and democratic values at home and around the world.
- > Lobby for greater development aid and investment in humanitarian assistance.

Action on Accountability

Although the European Union brings many benefits to Northern Ireland, many people are naturally sceptical about the cloak of secrecy that surrounds what goes on in Brussels. For eight years running the Court of Auditors has failed to give the EU budget a positive audit. But things are slowly changing for the better. For example, the European Parliament now has the power to sack the Commission as a whole. However, there is much room for improvement.

John Gilliland will:

- > Argue for greater openness in meetings of the European Council and Council of Ministers.
- > Push for the local implementation of EU directives, to avoid silly outcomes – Northern Ireland's voice must be heard as a distinct region.
- > Lobby for greater public access to EU documents.
- > Use control over the budget to campaign for greater measures to combat fraud.
- > Publish on his website his attendance, voting record and expense claims so that constituents can have easy access to this information.
- > Campaign for much greater transparency on the similar information for all of the members of the European Parliament.
- > Co-ordinate all of Northern Ireland's representatives in European bodies (ECOSOC, Committee of Regions, NGOs, trade unions etc.) – together we can punch above our weight.

Action for the European Citizen

Europe is first and foremost a collection of individual citizens, with rights and concerns for a good quality of life for themselves and for their families. More and more people now wish to move around Europe freely, as tourists, students, workers and businesspeople.

John Gilliland will:

- > Encourage Northern Ireland society to be an outward-looking region of the European Union.
- > Stand up for freedom, human rights, and equality of opportunity.
- > Make it easier for our citizens to live, work and learn abroad, and actively monitor regulations that manage the phasing in of free movement of citizens of the new member states.
- > Work for the delivery of a stronger, wider-ranging European Ombudsman – for individual complaints of maladministration, and for businesses and consumers facing unfair implementation of the single market.

Action on Equality and Human Rights

The European Union, alongside the Council of Europe, plays an important role in combating discrimination, providing equality of opportunity, and protecting individual and minority rights.

John Gilliland will:

- > Extend EU anti-discrimination legislation to goods and services, not just employment.**
- > Accelerate gender mainstreaming within the European Union.**
- > Promote a common EU policy on people seeking asylum, in line with international human rights standards.**

Action on Crime

Criminals do not respect national borders, so why must our law enforcement agencies be restricted by them? If the people of Europe are to live freely and securely, it is important that nations co-operate in security and justice matters. The European Union is still underdeveloped in these areas.

John Gilliland will:

- > Lobby for the creation of a European Criminal Assets Agency, so that no part of the EU can be used to harbour the proceeds of crime.**
- > Ensure stronger action against the trafficking of drugs, women and children.**
- > Guarantee that civil liberties are not compromised.**

Action on Consumer Protection

Europe can be the champion of the consumer. The single market has delivered more competition and greater choice and lower prices for the consumer. The Euro has the potential, through creating greater transparency, to level prices across the EU. But much more needs to be done. The consumer has the right to proper information over the goods that they are consuming.

John Gilliland will:

- > Work to ensure fair competition and fair prices for goods and services.**
- > Promote and advance Northern Ireland products.**
- > Improve food safety, environmental, and GM labelling.**

Action on Social Issues

There can be no ‘one size fits all’ social model for Europe. This is something unique to every member state, and indeed to every region. Nevertheless, the European Union has an important role to play in promoting community co-operation and social inclusion.

John Gilliland will:

- > Work for serious job creation – especially in run-down areas and industries – by promoting an outward-looking, entrepreneurial infrastructure.**
- > Improve provision for social solidarity and inclusion.**
- > Argue for greater priority for, and enforceability of, domestic violence and child protection legislation.**
- > Put in place a strategic public health strategy across Europe.**

Action on a Shared Society

Europe has helped – and will continue to help – consolidate peace and democracy in Northern Ireland. It can help us promote human rights, and develop and sustain a diverse and pluralist society. Europe is itself a model of diverse peoples, emerging from conflict, working together to achieve common goals.

John Gilliland will:

- > Celebrate European diversity and oppose sectarianism, racism and all other forms of prejudice.**
- > Use every opportunity provided by Europe to help further the goals of peace, reconciliation and the development of a shared future in Northern Ireland.**
- > In return, use Northern Ireland’s experiences in Peace and Reconciliation to give back some of our expertise to areas of continuing conflict.**

John Gilliland for Europe

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