

Roger Helmer MEP - Biography

Roger was first elected to the European parliament in 1999, and has been kept very busy ever since representing the interests of his 4.1 million constituents from in the East Midlands.

In June 2004 he was re-elected for a second term, and currently sits on three committees: Unemployment, Petitions and Constitutional Affairs. During the 1999/04 parliament, Roger was also a very active member of the "interparliamentary delegation" to ASEAN (the nations of South East Asia), plus Korea. In the new parliament these two areas have been split and Roger now sits as a full member on the Korea delegation. During the course of his long business career before 1999, he spent a total of twelve years running businesses in East and South East Asia as a resident, so he brings a wealth of detailed knowledge of the region to his work on these interparliamentary delegations.

Born in 1944, Roger attended King Edward VI Grammar School in Southampton (1955 - 62), and then won a State Scholarship to Churchill College, Cambridge, where he read mathematics, graduating in 1965 with a B.A. and subsequently an M.A.

He started his business career in 1965 with Procter & Gamble in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, going on to hold senior marketing and general management appointments in a range of companies, including well-known multinationals like Readers Digest, National Semiconductor, Coats Viyella and the whisky firm United Distillers, now part of the drinks conglomerate Diageo. During the course of his business career he lived and worked in Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Korea, and ran businesses in the Philippines, Vietnam, Guam and Saipan.

In September 1998, following his selection as the #1 candidate for the Conservative Party in the East Midlands, Roger left his job as Managing Director of a Leicester textile company, Donisthorpe Ltd (the UK subsidiary of a French textile multinational), to campaign full time ahead of the 1999 euro-elections, and took up his new role as an MEP immediately afterwards. He has found his decades of business experience invaluable in the European parliament, not least in helping him to fight the battle against the tide of intrusive and prescriptive EU regulation and red tape which is causing such damage to economic competitiveness across Europe.

With like minded-colleagues, Roger has developed close relationships with conservative political groups in the USA, and has been a regular speaker at American conferences. He was recently appointed "Adam Smith Scholar" by ALEC, the American Legislative Exchange Council.

He has earned a reputation - and even the grudging respect of political opponents - for his clear, consistent and forthright approach to the question of Britain's relationship with the EU. He believes that most of his constituents would be happy with the sort of relationship the British people thought they had voted for in the 1975 referendum - a relationship based on free trade and voluntary cooperation. He is adamantly opposed to further EU integration, and is a powerful advocate of the Conservative policy of renegotiating the EU treaties so as to return powers to member states. He believes the British people have the right, the ability, the will, and the manifest destiny to govern themselves.

Whenever Roger has a spare Sunday at home in the East Midlands, he enjoys rural life and walking the dog. He and his wife Sara share their home in rural Leicestershire with two horses, two cats and a greyhound!

Roger has published two books on European issues, "Straight Talking on Europe" in 2000, followed by "A Declaration of Independence" in 2002.