

HOUSE OF KEYS GENERAL ELECTION

GARFF



VOTE

ANDREW

SMITH





A N D R E W S M I T H



Dear fellow constituent

Background

I am 67 and married with a family. A resident of Laxey since my arrival on the Island from Yorkshire in 1986. I served on the Board of Laxey Village Commissioners from 1992 to 2001, holding the office of Chairman 1996/97, 1998/99 and 2000/01. At the time of devolution of funding to schools I was the first Community Governor of Laxey School. My support of Culture, Heritage and the wider local community is well documented. I have had the principal role in organising Laxey Fair since 1999 and regularly support Laxey and Lonan Heritage Trust and the various churches throughout Garff. During my accountancy profession I have worked within the Agricultural, Banking, Construction, Fund, Insurance, Oil and Gas, Shipping, and Yacht and Aircraft industries. I was also employed by IOM Government Treasury Financial Services Division from 1997 to 2008. Since 2006 I have had a business interest in Fairy Cottage Filling Station, Laxey and recently formed a Strategic Business Alliance with Island Fuels. I have previously contested General Elections in Garff in the By-Election in 1995 and in the General Election 2016 when I was narrowly beaten by 23 votes.

Following the serious flooding in Laxey in 2019 I formed the Garff Flood Action Association. From the 'Major Incident' being declared on 01 October 2019 this Association became active and continually monitors flooding incidents throughout Garff, collating and disseminating relevant information both to Central and Local Government and also to the wider community.



Overview

This General Election is exceptionally important for the future prosperity and wellbeing of our Island. We have experienced a time of extreme financial instability which has left a legacy of inherent debt and disillusionment amongst the electorate previously unknown.

The next five years will be critical, set against a backdrop of lowest recorded bank interest rates and debt ridden Pensions and Utilities. Add to this the turmoil caused by the consequences following BREXIT and the immediate onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. No one could have envisaged the uncertainty and heartache that has been inflicted upon our Island and its people. Our focus now needs to be on restoring the economic and social fabric of our Island community. The next Programme for Government will need clear strategies, priority budgeting, contingency forecasting and political leaders with extensive vision, passion and experience.

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The Islands future economic security is totally dependent upon our freedom to control domestic legislation and taxation. Over the next five years the Isle of Man Government must have the resolve to overcome the recent economic challenges both to protect critical services and employment but also to create a viable and diversified economy whilst safeguarding the Islands unique independent position. In the words of John W Gelling "Let the nations boast of countries vaster, mightier far than Thee, but to us thou hast no equal Ellan Vannin, Ben my Chree."

Economy

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It is important that we continue to strive for a strong, sustainable and diverse economy. The Covid-19 pandemic has introduced an unprecedented amount of uncertainty into the Islands economy and we have had to battle growing infections, implement a wide range of social distancing strategies and put in place financial support packages to stabilise the economy. Recently Isle of Man Treasury confirmed £246m as a latest cost for the pandemic being £109m on financial support to businesses and individuals and £111m in reduced government income. Other spending, including personal protection equipment (PPE), cost £26m. Liverpool Sea Terminal costs have gone off the scale, £38m plus a further request for £13.8m and we are still only at site preparation. The legend of Douglas Promenade will live on in everyone's memory, delay upon delay with devastating consequences to the sustainability of business and epic disruption to commuters yet still no accountability or sign of any good governance.



Economy

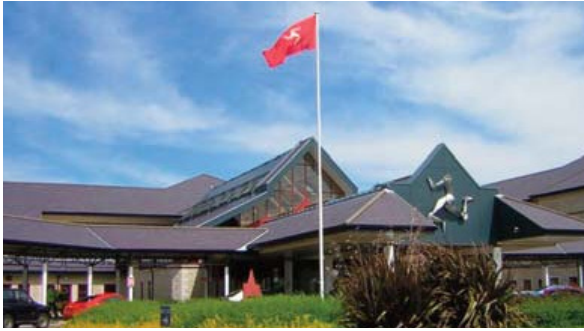
The Island has drawn on its reserves this year and also plans a further withdrawal in the year 2021/2022. A majority of Government reserves are tied up in funds such as the National Insurance Fund and investments. Available reserves are diminishing fast. This situation is not sustainable and a future Government must carefully manage and deliver strong economic and fiscal policies both to fuel the economy and replenish Government reserves.

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We need an attitude in Government that is encouraging to potential investors both on and off Island. A clear demonstration of confidence and assurance that their aspirations are understood and a system where they receive the maximum support with a minimum of red tape.

Within our Island community there is extensive intellectual property and we need to engage all those key skills to assist us to regenerate and grow the economy. We must continue to seek new opportunities, but equally as important, continue to support existing businesses through investment initiatives, training and further developing the skills of our work force. I would support any sensible fiscal policy to redress the balance regarding Government finances.

Air links are critical to many of our businesses and I believe a strong association with Guernsey Airline Aurigny should be actively encouraged.



Health and Social Care

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It is important to note that healthcare across all areas will always require significant funding if it is to fully provide for the needs of the Island's diverse population. The recent establishment of Manx Care certainly appears to have the ethos to deliver holistic high quality health care. The Covid-19 pandemic has created additional challenges resulting in an excessive number of patient waiting lists for normal day to day procedures. It is now critical that these long suffering patients receive their anticipated treatments. If necessary we should reassess priorities and ensure that the right treatments are available and not be constrained by financial objectives.

We must recognise and be aware of the expertise already offered by our health and social care professionals and to ensure a cohesive approach to care Island wide. The Western Wellbeing Partnership is an admirable project and I would actively support emulation of this in other parts of the Island. However, we must also look to the future and plan both recruitment and training to ensure holistic needs are met, giving particular attention and encouragement for all within our health and social care workforce.

We have excellent facilities run as third sector charities, Hospice, Breast Unit and Hyperbaric Chamber, to name but a few. It is crucial for us to work in conjunction with all these facilities which provide immeasurable support to complement our health and social care services, but we must not rely upon these as primary care services. I support the prescribing of medical cannabis on the health service for relevant multiple sclerosis, cancer and other life threatening illnesses.



Education and Youth Services

Covid-19 has had a major impact on our young people. The additional stress of disrupted tuition and remote learning has placed unenviable pressure especially on students studying for examinations. Previous planning and foresight in building both St Ninian's Lower School and Henry Bloom Noble Primary School provides a positive outlook for the future education of our young people.

In addition the accreditation of Isle of Man College of Further and Higher Education to University College Isle of Man status is a great accolade for the Island.

Consequently, the UCM now gives the opportunity to those wishing to undertake certain higher education courses to be able to complete their studies on Island. Although recognising that course work and examinations are a key part of any educational system, I believe more emphasis should be focussed preparing students for the work place and developing life-skills.

It is important to embrace all levels of learning, to ensure those who are not in education, employment or training (NEETS) receive equal opportunities in relation to employment. Education and Youth Services should be endeavouring to create accomplished individuals prepared and conversant with an integrated working and social life. Education on the dangers and consequences of illegal substances should become a recognised priority within schools and youth services. I would support any policy that determines and provides safeguarding for the needs of our young people.

Police and Border Security

The demands upon the constabulary have become much more varied and complex. I welcome the introduction of the Border Force and hopefully this will be the catalyst in combating the fight against illegal drugs. We must not become complacent about any aspects of policing and ensure that the Islands police and border force is fit for purpose. We must continue to consider both on and off Island recruitment in order to pool resources and have an effective skills set. I fully support a community policing approach which engenders respect and a reassuring sense of security.

I believe it is also important to have some record of who visits our shores and would support the introduction and inspection of photographic identification at the sea terminals both on and off Island. This could then assist the police in crime prevention. I support controlled immigration providing that there is a clear definition which safeguards the Manx population. I would certainly support a points system that would attract migrants with specific skills identified by, and pertaining to, the Islands economy.

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Housing Crisis

The housing situation especially for first time buyers is ludicrous. The sharp practice of development companies is contemptible. We need immediate Government action to formulate a new first time buyer's scheme and also consider the possibilities of establishing Housing Associations which provide good quality properties at reasonable rents.

Pensions and Senior Citizens

We must safeguard the equilibrium of both contributors and beneficiaries within our pension arrangements. Pensions and other forms of support to our elderly population have become very emotive subjects, yet must be treated with the utmost sensitivity.

Concerns regarding a whole raft of topics surrounding pensions have been ongoing and well known over a number of years, with no realistic solutions until recently being attempted or achieved. The growth of life expectancy, especially following pensionable age, has consistently been underestimated. Pensions are and will continue to be a major challenge. Proposed increase in retirement ages and plans to further reduce benefits to existing pensioners, has only increased anxiety and exacerbated the issue.

I firmly believe in supporting the retired population and would support the continued funding of TV Licenses for the over 75's.

If elected, I will waive my rights to any pension as an MHK.



Infrastructure

The lack of ongoing maintenance on roads, rivers, drains and gullies has a continuing detrimental consequence upon the Islands population. The major flooding suffered by the Island in October 2019 was testament in part to this lack of maintenance.

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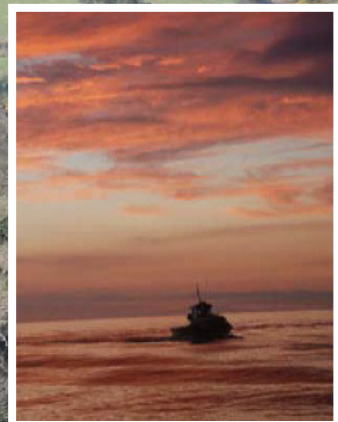
Many parts of Garff were severely affected and I have been a major proponent in addressing this issue. The serious flooding problems affecting Garff are indicative across the whole Island. Ongoing highway drainage and maintenance and broadband and mobile telephone connectivity are also still deficient throughout Garff.



Utilities and Sewerage

High energy costs, increased sewerage charges and other standing charges are having a major impact on household finances. Fuel poverty has increased dramatically in recent years. I would support an all Island rating system which would assist in bringing a much better balance and address these inequities. There is also exceptional disparity between properties regarding water usage and I would support the introduction of water meters for those on low water consumption.

Sewerage issues in Laxey and Garwick bays are a significant priority. Interim measures are urgently required until the long-term solution is formulated and put into place. I fully support the Best 4 Laxey Bay ethos and have currently also initiated my own specific action to add impetus to this important issue.



A N D R E W S M I T H

Agriculture

There have been many changes made in recent years by successive Governments which have been to the detriment of this important indigenous industry.

The agricultural industry has all the resources here on the Island and if it were to return to a productive industry again by just redirecting some of the current payments to farmers linked to production then local employment would be reinstated with contributions into Government finances without any increases in Government costs. We can live without new shoes and clothes, we can thrive without computers and move without vehicles. However, we cannot live without food. We need our farmers.

No farmers, No food, No future.

Environment and Climate Change

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Excessive rainfall and rising sea levels are an increasing problem and I can testify to these from personal experience. We need to take a realistic approach based on scientific evidence.

I fully support waste reduction, reuse, recycling, zero emission technology and favour tidal or wave power as an alternative energy source. Tidal power is a renewable energy, does not emit any climate gases and requires very little space. It is more reliable than wind power, guaranteed two tides each day, ocean currents generate relatively more energy than air currents, as ocean water is much denser than air which consequently applies greater force on the turbines. There is also much less visual impact than wind turbines.

Biodiversity and green technology is forever advancing and I would support any project that encompasses these to reduce carbon emissions and enhance our environment. We can all play our part.

The Election takes place on Thursday 23rd September 2021

Polling stations are open between 8am and 8pm

If you require transport to the Polling Station or would like to assist with my candidature please contact me.

Telephone Home: 861684

Telephone Mobile: 491391

Facebook: www.facebook.com/garffmatters

Email: andrew@andrewsmith.im

Website: www.andrewsmith.im

**Competent, Conscientious and Caring with a Dedication,
Passion and Resolve to assist our Island Nation and its resilient
people to work towards a brighter hope for the future.**

Quocunque Jeceris Stabit

"whithersoever you throw it, it will stand"

**ANDREW
SMITH  X**