

## Onchan Constituency Debate

### Transcript

#### **Andy Wint**

Good evening, we're live tonight in Onchan! Onchan was first formed as a constituency in its own right in 1986, having previously been part of Middle. It is sandwiched between Douglas to the south and Garff to the north, and is bordered to the west by the parish of Braddan in the constituency of Middle. Onchan village is the Isle of Man's second largest centre of population, after Douglas. The MHKs before the House of Keys was dissolved on 12 August were: Rob Callister and Julie Edge. Tonight joining me we have, Rob Callister, James Cherry, Julie Edge, Michael Leathe and Peter Willers. First of all, Rob Callister, why do you want to be in MHK for Onchan?

#### **Rob Callister**

Thank you Andy over the last nine years it's been enormous privilege and honour to serve and to represent the people of Onchan. First as a commissioner for four years before being elected to the House of Keys in September 2016. I'd like to think the people of Onchan have found me fully engaged with all aspects of our community, approachable hard working along with bringing a new level of political openness honesty and integrity to such important roles. I also have successfully challenged and influenced many policies decisions and directions taken in five government department since 2016, along with being the chairman of the environment infrastructure policy review committee, along with being the island's children's champion over the last year.

#### **James Cherry**

Thank you ladies and gentlemen for attending tonight and for listening and watching around the world. I'm Onchan born and bred, and bred. I'm passionate about our village and our island as a whole. I pledge to you my commitment for our constituency first and foremost I focused my energy where if elected on improving all aspects of island government but never for getting where I have come from and those who elected me if successful. I'll be promoting the application of more common sense approaches and in some cases braver decisions to take to make government not more not only more effective or wipe-out archaic unhelpful and outdated legislation. We have massive issues at the moment was returning youth and our ageing population and affordable housing, these are matters that really need to be thought of and brought to the fore in the next administration straight away.

#### **Julie Edge**

I'm seeking re election from you the voters of Onchan to be your voice in the House of Keys in the 23rd of September. Since being elected I've been fully committed to scrutinising challenging and all the decisions of government holding them to account and striving for greater transparency and accountability. I've proved I can drive change and have backbone

to make the tough decisions. I am certainly not afraid of making the right decisions if it's in the best interests of the people of the Isle of Man.

**Michael Leather**

Good evening ladies and gentleman, first of all would like to say that my hearing is not very good but I was still through. I want to be an MHK for the simple reason that tourism I would like to promote and being back. I have degrees in building surveying and property development, which from the promenade I believe can be improved.

**Peter Willers**

My feeling is that the government is very bad in these changing completely from top to bottom. I've not had one good word from anybody I think this all too to say that the government should stay as it is. It needs completely revamping, we need to get rid of a large number of the civil servants because they're not functioning properly, they seem to be controlling the government the MHKs don't do their job they need proper control. It need to have a business environment which will ensure that the Isle of Man can grow, and my grandchildren and your grandchildren can prosper in the future. They won't unless these changes have been made.

**Andy Wint**

First subject tonight is going to be anti social behaviour in Onchan, Julie Edge how does it come to this and what can be done about it?

**Julie Edge**

Certainly from my experience I've organised two public meetings for the people to come along. The police band and very helpful this certainly did some targeted approaches following the public meetings and the concerns from the residents. Certainly I think it has quietened. We have spells of that all over the island it's not just on can I still feel that Onchan very safe place to live and work and the police have done a good job along with the commissioners have now organised police space in Onchan.

**Michael Leather**

Anti social behaviour is generally based on people going round without anything to do. Unfortunately island at the moment does not have facilities for them to do things. I believe that building on the promenade, making attractions down there would put all these people together. Then they would have things to do, at the moment and the going round in little groups aimlessly creating problems.

**Peter Willers**

It doesn't seem to be a collision between Onchan commissioners and the police with regard to school holidays. They should bring in, the police should bring in roaming patrols to ensure

that people don't gather and cause problems. One of the main problems is Onchan doesn't have sufficient youth workers and he doesn't have sufficient places for them to go during the day, and have someone try and help them, occupy themselves during the long time as a lot of the holiday. There should be more police in Onchan going around because that will stop the anti social behaviour at source.

### **Rob Callister**

I think over the last couple of years I think the teamwork has been successful and that includes the Isle of Man police that includes the commissioners that includes the local MHKs. In 2019 we successfully set up neighbourhood policing again. I think people can actually see the police in and around our village, I think things have improved I underline exactly what Julie said Onchan is an incredibly safe place to live. Unfortunately we had a very sad incident, I think the whole community pulled together around that. I think it's also fair to say that a lot against social behaviour is happening on can it is not necessary happening with children from Onchan, and I think it's a very clear statement to make that.

### **James Cherry**

I think anti-social media is not something that has been hitting headlines a lot and uncle but it's not just something that happens in Onchan it's I speak to people who live in Port Erin, all around the island and it's something that is happening anywhere and everywhere. Essentially yes, it seems to be more rife and uncle and it has been in the past - do we have enough police on shift at times, no we don't. So do we need to look at more beat bobbies yes I think we do we need to look at those but we do need to look at cheap or free things for young kids to do that cause trouble.

### **Andy Wint**

The question of affordable housing comes up on in everybody's manifesto, Peter Willers, what do you think the strategy should be on affordable housing?

### **Peter Willers**

The strategy should be that the planning conditions need to be changed radically the planning situation. Planning law really isn't fit for purpose, it's quite obvious that it isn't because otherwise we wouldn't be in this position. We're in this position because our planning control rather than that needs changing to ensure that it doesn't continue, it needs to be changed in a way in which more affordable housing, more shared ownership with the government, government mortgages - a whole series of things which are very simple to do but can I can take place. But no one wants to do it because it's not something which is their priority, because most of those who are in power have houses and really not in the position of having to try and find accommodation.

### **Michael Leather**

The current situation is that in the island 25% for affordable housing which is very small compared to the UK. The UK is 30% if it's a brownfield site which is a site that's already been built on and then demolished and ready for new housing, or on a greenfield site it's 40%. So I believe there's on this, that the Isle of Man should change towards this way. The housing the cost of housing over here is very high compared to the UK, and in the UK they have a thing called 'sill' which is community infrastructure levy also which can be 100 pounds a metre or more than this which the owner doesn't have. Yet the houses are cheaper than their only island.

### **Rob Callister**

I think overall the first bit of information we need is the 2021 census. We need to actually look at that data to see exactly where the problem is. I think we also got to look at the actual number of housing units we have occupied on the island, that hasn't moved from around 35,000 for the last 15 years so clearly indicates that we need to actually build some more housing. I think Michael is absolutely right and what I've actually put in my manifesto, is that policy five of the strategic plan needs to be adapted from 25% up to 40% specially for greenfield sites. At the same time we need to push with the banks corporate development and actually getting a lot of our brownfield sites developed as soon as possible.

### **Andy Wint**

Is there any space and come for more development more building?

### **Rob Callister**

I think there is I mean at the top of Birch hill, it's already been earmarked in the future to be built but that is under the under the actual condition that would be honest population is go to reach 89,000 first. I think there's a few pockets in Onchan that need to be built but it isn't just about Douglas along can we need to be building across our islands. We need to be putting businesses in there as well we need to build communities build areas around on completely.

### **James Cherry**

Affordable housing is a massive issue I speak to friends on a regular basis not being able to afford houses we have a first time buyers scheme that isn't fit for purpose the maximum cap if you're a single person 165 thousand. As I said last week I'd like to know what you could buy for that part from a field somewhere you know it's absolutely ridiculous. Last week I had the opportunity to actually go in see unique eco-friendly passive house, which costs less than a couple £100 a year to heat, and it costs 150,155 thousand pounds to build. Why don't you come and gone schemes like this, you can use them for rent to buy schemes you can use more first time buyer schemes we need to get creative and inventive not to just bring young people back but economically active through.

### **Julie Edge**

In the last five years we had 31 affordable homes that nobody came forward to purchase, so 20 went to local authority in Peel five went to the local authority in Ramsey and five in Colby I created into a mid rent scheme. I think that policy needs to be pushed across the island the 66 affordable homes coming on stream in the next 18 months, there's 225 people waiting for those properties, 44 in the South but there's only 29 waiting for properties in the South. So there is opportunity there 66 properties in the next months is good. I think government needs to be working with developers or certainly government itself and we need to be doing sit build properties a factory built properties. We need to be doing rent by an and also serviced plots. Surface plot you could get sit build affordable home similar to what James has taught about sustainable properties for that for a good price. The 165K cap is for first time developer properties, but you can buy on the open market and you know. There is opportunity there but we need to be doing more and look at the policy and make sure that residents have the option to purchase a home on the island before anyone else.

**Andy Wint**

What about older people downsizing how difficult is that ?

**Julie Edge**

Well certainly in Onchan I've seen a lot of that lately. I think we need to be and do a mixed tenure. We need to be doing flats, I'd like to see the commissioners come forward with the new sheltered housing facility in Onchan - you know with possibly two bedrooms the majority they've got at the moment a one bedroom. But that could then become general housing and available to everybody.

**Andy Wint**

OK everything has to be paid for so rebuilding the Manx economy after Covid...

**Peter Willers**

The thing about rebuilding the economy is essential because we know a rising tide lifts all boats. That is the only way in which the money can be generated to enable the island to prosper, and therefore we have to make the island business friendly not government friendly. There is no business friendly friendship in the Isle of Man you only got to read the Chamber of Commerce results is to watch the inhibiting all of the businesses on the island. Time after time after time, over government restriction, lack of people to work, those things so it is impossible to grow the island with all of this government restrictions.

**Andy Wint**

Do you think the islands become risk averse?

**Peter Willers**

It has is very risk averse.

**James Cherry**

I mean we've got a massively try and recoup the losses I think every nation has to do in this in the world I think we need to diversify our economy we've been too reliant for too long and finance sector he gaming engineering not as much as the other two. You look at the job centre website the biggest list for job vacancies in the finance sector. They're screaming out for workers but you know not everyone wants to go into finance or has financial sector qualifications. So we do need to diversify the economy with diversification you'll get new people coming over and again if you target that economic active population I think we could flourish there.

**Rob Callister**

Yeah we need an economic framework to drive forward the island's economy. We need to continue to look at diversity economy into maybe possibly fintech, digital and green technologies, along with rebuilding our tourist sector. We must also address our declining working population is a key priority we also need a workforce that's highly skilled for business to grow into thrive, along with those well-paid jobs that are foundation of our economy in the future. For that reason I fully support the living wage as well as an opportunity to get our economy active again post Covid.

**Michael Leather**

Diversity in the economy is essential as it is not realistic to simply rely on finance. It has been recently shown by the organisation for Economic Cooperation and development that countries are now requiring minimum tax rate of 15% America under Joe Biden is calling for 25%. While the island enjoys the income from the offshore tax this could become detrimental where companies could leave the island. What we need is a tourism well I used to enjoy it as a young boy and there is a way which this can be brought back. This has been put in my manifesto and I can show more with that.

**Julie Edge**

Certainly we need to look at new emergent technology insert and that's one of the things we need to be focused on for the climate change but climate change that no expense or numbered that. We need to look at our taxation policies obviously we've got ours or Siri 10 policy we need to look at that. I'd like to see a flat rate of tax throughout rather than zero ten, we're going to have to look at it because of the common corporate tax base. I think key to that and to attracting people to the island is a good taxation system that will attract people and businesses to the island, which will then create jobs.

**Andy Wint**

So, the green agenda James Cherry the government has a green agenda do you know what it is and is yours any different?

**James Cherry**

Yeah I mean we've got to drive change I mean the government won 75% of our electricity by 2035 to come from renewable sources. It's all well in goods and it's good idea but how we going to get around it? We have and two diesel backup power stations that go offline in 2028, they provide power when Pulrose isn't pumping out electricity. Yes we import power from the UK from quite a bit that I'm on the interconnect, but then if we just get rid of these two backup power stations and put another interconnecting or increase the power we have over the interconnect at the moment, aren't we just transferring responsibility for climate change reduction to another jurisdiction? I think that's a bit passing the book so we need to look at innovative ways of going round things. As I say passive homes building these getting climate products into people's homes if they want, it's totally up to them not forcing it on people. We need to do stuff like that get people want to put eco-friendly heating systems in the homes but the current green living ground that's going to come out in October is already not being fit for purpose that's coming from a number of technologies services.

**Julie Edge**

Certainly I don't I don't UN for climate change and I actually voted for the 2035 target but I feel as an island nation we need to do what's right for the island not have things forced on us. We need to invest wisely we need to be offering grants to the people of the island rather than to businesses to get income from the climate change strategy and certainly obviously we've got an energy strategy coming forward, its billions of pounds. The people of the Isle of Man haven't got billions of pounds and grandchildren as Mr Willers talks about will be paying for that for the future so we need to be looking at it wisely and doing the right thing for the Isle of Man.

**Andy Wint**

Do you agree we should exploit the gas build off Maughold?

**Julie Edge**

Certainly that's there and obviously Kroger haven't progressed that as far as they could there's a lot of people on the doorstep so that we should exploit that, because we will need gas for the period of time up to 2035. Certainly I would want to look at how that was going to happen and how it would benefit the Isle of Man before would make a decision.

**Michael Leather**

Energy in the UK, it's up to 64% of fossil fuel 18% renewable and 18% nuclear download man is 80% gas 8% from the waste plans 1% renewable and 11 is from the UK. In relation to this, the Isle of man's carbon footprint is one thousandth of the UK. The Isle of Man has to look sensibly in realistically at the at the amount that has to spend in relation to this, and I believe that we need to look and wait without rushing into spending everything on unbold we're doing and it's based on a similar saying, it's the second mouse that gets the cheese.

**Peter Willers**

The Isle of Man as he's currently quantitative will never ever achieve renewable energy in any shape or form, it's failed consistently on intentions. We were supposed to have 15% of renewable end and renewable energy for electricity supply by 2015 and as I understand it from what Mr Leather said we've got 1%. How can they possibly stand up and say they're going to do anything? The answer is they won't do anything. We need to do is that if we had to have gas exploitable gas we should use it show the fullest extent to create a pot to enable us to go into proper green energy. So we should save money and used use the proceeds of that solely for green energy investment, and that's the way to go forward - but it won't happen because the Isle of Man has got a history of never ever achieving anything. The 2010 report by Exeter University about renewable energy still sits on the shelf so very valuable report it shows that the Isle of Man are can only produce electricity for 8000 electric vehicles. We have 65,000 registered vehicles on the island – it's just a joke because nobody really deals with the real problems, they just don't do it because they don't know how to do it.

**Rob Callister**

Yeah I think we all agree that we have to start this green agenda and the green journey and how we transfer over from fossil fuels to more renewable fuels. My concern is how we pay for it because I think most people we speak to absolute support some sort of green change of how we heat our homes how we insulate our homes you know so that there is major change that we need with respective planning, how we heat our homes. But my concern and that's why I did not support the 2035, is because of this moment in time I honestly cannot actually tell the people of Onchan of how we pay for it. Because I think most of my constituents and most people across the island want to know is how we actually pay for it and it is time when government already lost £240 million and businesses are already pushed and constituents budgets are already strained, I think government is going to have to lead the way so it's going to you know the green living grant I do support that I think that's a good initiative - we can get houses insulated that's a very quick easy win but when they go gets more difficult about replacing gas fire boilers or oil boilers - governments going to have to step in with grants and that's going to cost many millions of pounds if we take the high scenario which is one of the recommendations that's £52 million per year for ten years. It's going to private and private and government sort of investment. If we take the lower route it's still going to be £26 million per annum for 10 years, it's a major investment everybody's got to buy in it but government is going to have to lead the way.

**Andy Wint**

OK let's come to tourism then a strategy for the future, is the Isle of Man ever going to back get to get back anywhere near it was?

**Julie Edge**

It would be great if we could wouldn't it Andy. I think we've got a totally different market than we had previously I think we need to be looking at doing our marketing more

professionally rather than in house within government. We need to get professionals marketing the island likely do in other jurisdictions. I think this an untapped market certainly in the cities, people that want to go on walking holidays they travel six hours to go to the Lake District the island needs to be tapping into that but we need to have great connectivity with the UK through our ports and our airport.

**Andy Wint**

OK where does the Isle of Man shape I mean, just imagine that in the same market place we have Snowdonia we have the Lake District perhaps North Yorkshire places like that - is the Isle of Man prim and proper and polished enough to compete with places like that?

**Julie Edge**

I think we need to polish up some of our areas on the island to make sure that we are competitive. We have a unique fantastic beauty on the island that you can see all those places on one place I think that's important.

**Michael Leather**

The island needs more purpose built hotels new ones it also needs facilities. More importantly it requires the boat fares to be reduced as the government now owns about the fares could be half price return, when the tourists come to the island they have to stay somewhere, they spend money it so therefore the government will get VAT and the income tax back on that. It will produce a lot more people. The government has to show that it is serious and make a commitment serious commitment. In Blackpool they were given 300,000,000 pounds by the EU, they spent it wisely they've from there they've had private enterprise pouring in and in 2019 they had 18 million tourists. A lot of them were maybe day trippers all weekenders, but there is a lot of stayed there as well. It's all down to the cost to get there and back.

**Peter Willers**

What has to happen is that the island needs to improve its offering in every way. It needs to make the points of entry tidy, clean them up, make them places where people are pleased to go through rather than avoid like the plague. It needs to ensure that there is free transport on the island for everybody who's got a booking for a hotel or boarding house or whatever it is when they come and stay, so they can get round the island and look at places and they can bring their children. Children should go free as well on the boat and there shouldn't be, you've got to get people here and you can't get people here because of the cost of getting here and the cost of saying it so therefore you do you take one of those costs out of the equation and then people will come across to the Isle of Man they won't until that happens.

**Andy Wint**

What do you think will be the impression of the first time visitor Ronaldsway and at the sea terminal?

**Peter Willers**

Appalling

**Rob Callister**

I've been the political member for tourism for the last five years. We saw year on year growth you know we were reaching 308 thousand visitors to our islands before Covid-19 and that then we published an ambitious plan to increase that to 340, which would have given economic spend of around £159 million and created thousands of jobs. All of that disappeared very quickly with Covid-19, we do have to rebuild from the bottom up. An independent report clearly showed what we have to do and that is to create more routes in and out of the Isle of Man because the evidence shows that most people visit our island actually come from very small area from where the airport is. So we need to create those roots, we've got to rebuild confidence we've got to revive our tourist sector is one of the key priorities that the government must do, because everything we do with tourism also benefits locals so you know if our locals. If local people want to leave the island they use the same routes as people come into the island. We need to connect everything up but it has to be a key priority.

**Andy Wint**

If we have more tourists visitors coming to the other men they have to use infrastructure and that infrastructure is here for Manx people as well so restaurants hotels cinemas heritage everything...

**Rob Callister**

And just to answer Michael's question. I mean we've seen three new hotels built in the last five years and they've come online but I think there's a fourth one that's just about to open. So we have seen clear investments what we need now is the next government is to get behind tourism and to start it again because it's key to everything around the island.

**James Cherry**

I mean if you think we're going to get back to the days of the 50s and 60s I think sadly you in a bit of cloud cuckoo land. We have lots of niche markets on this island we don't exploit them to America to the max. Walking groups we have some great coastal footpath routes, or the footpath routes they're not well maintained by DOI another group so they and they should be. Target the niche markets yes we need the roots absolutely cost is prohibitive. You know you can book a holiday to Portugal for 300 quid yet that's probably what you're going to pay to get here let alone as a holiday for...

**Andy Wint**

Everybody's talked about this for years during cherries so I mean the steam packet is now in public ownership, are you saying that the government should mandate should enter into them which should vary the marketplace for visitors?

**James Cherry**

Yes I mean you've got I think you need to I mean you look at Stenna Line is look at now they come past the island quite everyday near enough of their vessels to Ireland and stuff like that so it's a bit of a different business model. But you look at how cheap those fares are there's a reason why they're going to all the places because it's so cheap you know. It's 280 pound return for a car and two people on the steam packet - I can probably get to the South of France if I wanted.

**Andy Wint**

Ok, time for questions from the audience.

**Brian Stall**

The recent attempt to introduce a bill that would impose restrictions on the public sector and punish them for failing to perform have set the bar as far as I'm concerned. Given that the islands recent history is lettered with projects that have gone grossly over budget I have been totally ill conceived, will you support, if you are elected a system whereby the people who are responsible for these faux pars giving it a reasonable term are actually named shamed and punished within government?

**Peter Willers**

Yes

**Michael Leather**

As far as I'm concerned chief executive means nothing what people only government people who are acting responsible should in responsible positions should have whatever qualifications they have after the name. They should also be responsible as being explained but also a lot of these enjoy committees, and I believe that they should have the minutes written down as to who voted for what, and who proposed what. That way we can hold him responsible.

**Julie Edge**

In July sitting in Tynwald I had emotion that vertically got through pup from members not voting to continue with the sit and that CEOs should be on performance related pay on a lower pay and they have to get their bonuses by performing and being accountable to the people the taxpayers of the Isle of Man. You'd have to set a bar but then obviously they've got to work to get them targets but certainly with the landlord legislation which I know is

what you're referring to, that was a difficult piece of legislation but at the end of the day I think you would probably agree that we do need some standards but they need to be applied across the rental sector.

**James Cherry**

I mean high level civil servants decision makers at the higher level of destiny to come under scrutiny simple as. You've got your Public Accounts Committee and other committees that do all the work and yes summer brought forward but you know we've had massive problems you know DOI is the massively lettered with them what the hell is going on and we need well - sometimes even the politicians don't know what's going on so - that we need to get down and go what the hell is going on down there.

**Rob Callister**

Simple answer is yes Brian I think you're absolutely right and I know you're referring to landlord bill that particular piece of legislation told me in part, because when I went into the department exactly right when I read the legislation it was not fit for purpose. I think I described as a bag of spanners, it should never have gone out for consultation absolutely it had 120 changes what we need now is to make sure the guide was right. Do I support the landlord registration bill? Yes I absolutely do I did I actually support the legislation did I support the legislation of went out for consultation absolutely not. That bill has changed significantly but it needs more changes, it needs working with the landlord execration...

**Robin Turton**

The Isle of Man is a very rich nation add ask each of our candidates what are going to try and do to do away with child and family poverty on the island? We have food banks and we have over 1000 children who the government sponsor and feed for 200 days a year, yet the 165 days a year at least that number they forget them.

**Michael Leather**

I totally agree that if the per family and they required to school meals they should get them. It's an automatic thing to look at. There is poverty on the Isle of Man I've gone through various places and I found these things. This is why in my manifesto that I've suggested that the laptops whatever from school from the government there's been discarded should be available for these people. There should be somewhere when I suggested as the hub where they should be allowed to go down and use these laptops.

**Peter Willers**

I'm not quite sure where the child poverty is but it shouldn't exist it's absolutely appalling that in 2021 we have any child poverty anywhere in the Isle of Man, we shouldn't have food banks. Shame on the government for letting us get into a situation where that happens I'm absolutely appalled by it and it needs stopping immediately these dealing with immediately.

Everybody on the Isle of Man should be able to get food without having to beg borrow or steal it where are we are we in 1200 or are we in 2020?

**Julie Edge**

I think we need to support families we need to look at the benefits system to make sure that it's supporting the families that are most in need. I think some of our gas prices for instance social housing in the previous administrations they put gas in everywhere, families can't afford it so therefore the choosing between food heat and putting clothes on the backs of their children. Totally needs benefits review, school meals and vouchers should continue throughout the year.

**Rob Callister**

Yeah I agree with most of the comments that have already been said you're absolutely right this is disgraceful problem that has to be resolved quickly in the next administration. I think the benefit system is absolutely one that needs to be reviewed. We also need to introduce a living wage as a priority in the next house to actually help support people. I think we've also got to look at some of the methods of how people are paid. I personally have always championed that rent should be paid directly to the landlord wherever possible. I think we've also got to look at some of the systems to actually make sure they capture people when they're facing cliff edge decisions. Because when I've had a recent meeting with food bank, a lot of those people who went to food bank actually faced a cliff decision and we've got to stop those decisions keep happening. We've got to find solutions. The poverty committee in its report and its findings have to be implemented as a priority.

**James Cherry**

Poverty shouldn't exist. You know is awful some of the stuff some people go through and decisions they have to make. The mind boggles that we are in this situation that we were in. And it's horrific you know but it's not something that people see on the doorstep because it's not like a homeless person is out in the street like you'd see in Liverpool and the likes of Manchester, you can't see it. It's like mental health but that's another matter. It is something that dramatically, it needs doing it needs looking into and it does need sorting out and there's a number of ways we could go about it.

**Anthony Allen**

For the last five years government has not been the solution to many issues like health, education, housing, jobs but in this time poor government have been the problem and the expected progress has not happened. If you are elected, what is your number one priority to be part of the solution and not add to another five years of decline?

**Julie Edge**

I think the key priority is going to be getting the economy back on track. We definitely need to do a complete review of taxation on the island, National Insurance which supports all

health service. I think that is my priority and once you look at that you get your taxation right, encourage new business town have jobs and growth for everyone.

**Rob Callister**

I think my priority is looking at ways of increasing our working population because without that we can't frontline fund frontline services. I think in respect of health we've established Manx care and I think we've got to see how that journey unfolds in the next couple of years. I think in respect to housing that is a priority because we've got to identify what is actually caused the housing issue in the last 18 months. Is that due to family breakdown I think the other priority is mental health and also our education, rebuilding those relationships as well.

**James Cherry**

There's a lot of issues that have been addressed and that they need needs to be addressed as well then urgently and again everyone said this is we need to grow our economic population. We need to do it - we've got that many jobs that available on the job centre website that can't be that can't be filled that repeat jobs going out there all the time. We've seen it down at the airport and airport security, well that's a different matter. We need to grow something and also bureaucracy.

**Peter Willers**

The answer is of course the government needs sorting out and it will stop then as I've said many times. You need more people here you need more businesses here and the only way to increase the growth on the island and overcome these problems is to increase the economy and you can only do that with people and businesses - work permit system is absolutely appalling it is never been fit for purpose it really was the keeping 'keep the Isle of Man white policy' it doesn't help you anyway. I said that it was there keep the island white - you look around this room and tell me you know where are the people of colour? Not here.

**Michael Leather**

My first priority is produce a certain income for the island because over the past 5 to 10 years the way that books have been balanced is by taking money out of the assets. So obviously it hasn't been a very good situation we can't carry on keep taking money out of the reserves to balance the books. We need a second income a second income which would again with the one that we're doing with finance, they can leave the island just as quickly and easily. Where does the island go then? We needs tourism and there is a way of doing it.

**Michael Leather**

I think the bottom line is the fact that you're not going to get people coming over here to work school people when the prices of the houses are so high, and you're letting people at their houses and block from across. Something needs to be done about that and it's up to the government to sort it out - because even highly qualified people that it's just ridiculous

to say it's an affordable house at 300 and odd thousand pound- you've got to have a 30 grand deposit so I was a young person going to get on to the housing market.

**Julie Edge**

Obviously we have first time buyers schemes which do support young people getting on the ladder. I do feel that we need to have residency qualification. We've certainly increased the land registration fees for second homes and I think there is ways of government doing it through regulation to make sure that we do have enough affordable homes available to people. I do believe that if we're trying to attract skilled people, key workers to the island we should be giving them housing for at least 6 to 12 months to attract them into the island and then they will hopefully buy and purchase a property. That was a key workers policy in the 70s and 80s that worked in many of those people stayed on the island.

**Andy Wint**

Do you think that's stopping skilled workers key workers perhaps coming to the Isle of Man?

**Julie Edge**

I think we need to be supporting them within at least that first six months to track them to the island and hopefully they will stay. We also need to be providing facilities indoor leisure entertainment.

**Michael Leather**

I believe that land over here is at a premium because there's probably a handful of construction people who own this land. As soon as land is available bought up straight away. So therefore the ones that are in control of the land are in control of the houses which again are in control of the prices because unless they build them there there's no houses so basically at the moment it's more or less the construction people are telling the government what to do, rather than the government being able to tell the construction people want to do.

**Peter Willers**

You can't take land away from people who own it. What you can do is you can change the planning system so that there is more land for housing designated specifically only for first time buyer, only for owner occupiers, not for rent and that would create the necessary land availability to enable houses to be built at a lower cost. The fact is that the people who wanted to do businesses here employ staff who are well paid, they come from England, they own houses in England or they are able to pay the rents there, they're no different here so you shouldn't stop housing as such you should actually just solve the problem by dealing with the shorter the supply of low cost housing land. That's the way to do it.

**Rob Callister**

Yeah thank you 330,000 is the average house price in 2020. I think for first time buyers we need to look at those thresholds to make them more accessible to the 21st century in 2019 I know the DfE introducing you registration fee that I actually supported local residents who actually lived in the properties. On average you could save somewhere between 8 - 900 pounds and that is definitely helped local people in last couple of years. As I said, we've got the actual number of housing units lived in on the island is around 35,000. That hasn't changed in 15 years so that's a clear sign that we need to invest in more housing. As you say we need with an ageing population we need to give our older population the choice to downsize, if they choose to. We also need new housing for people to get on and again I've just repeat that I think policy housing policy five has to be amended and to increase that from 25 to 40% for greenfield sites, and maybe reduce it even for brownfield sites to get those sites developed.

### **James Cherry**

I mean the lady picks up on bringing key workers over if it wasn't for key worker houses in the 80s nineties, I won't be here it's as simple as that. My family used that scheme to come to the island in the 80s to come here to work and it's gone. I've spoken to an assistant head teacher of a high school and they struggle to him employ people because they've got nowhere to live, because of the astronomical costs. Going back to building homes for £150,000 that are cheap to run, we need to get schemes like this, be ambitious and do it.

### **Nigel Dobson**

Government tends to sit for five years with hopefully plans for further ahead. In 2030 the plan is that there will be no further petrol diesel or hybrid cars on sale, there will be electric. Where are the electric points going to go, who finances of government local authorities private sector and how do you recoup the lost income from fuelling fuel tax?

### **Michael Leather**

It's a very good point, at the same time it's a – nothing's in stone. In regards to electric cars - we didn't have enough electrical supply to provide for these things. But again it's within 2030 so we've been over 10 years to look into this.

### **Julie Edge**

I think the technology Would have moved on by 2030 and it won't necessarily all be electric vehicles. Certainly government local authorities and grants for people to put charging points in their own homes is an opportunity through this green living grant. We need to be keeping abreast of the technology, we know that the batteries and the struggling for the minerals that they require for the batteries. I think hydrogen will have developed well by the twenty 30s, so we need to be looking at a mix and also looking at the manufacturers to provide the same levies to the people of the Isle of Man to purchase an electric vehicle if they wish to cause. In many places around the world you can have like a lamp post with 10/12 charging

points coming off it - we don't have that on the island we seem to be looking at ones and twos there's all those opportunities in apartments with garages and things at the back so.

### **Peter Willers**

You won't be able to charge the car so there's really no point all these grandiose schemes never really work they're just pie in the sky to make people feel good. What you actually have to do is start from the basics, so far as renewable energy is concerned you've got to get enough renewable energy going and then you can plan on from there. What you do you do it in you together, you don't wait until you got it but you know he's coming on stream and therefore you can start planning for it - but you can't do anything and let you plan properly and none of these things have ever been planned properly so why would it happen now with the current way the government operated.

### **James Cherry**

Michael said it was a proposal to ban petrol and diesel cars, it is actually something that is going to happen in the UK in 2030 - they have confirmed that. It's 2035 for the EU. So, no way around it unless you want to import a car in China or somewhere like that in 2035 good luck you going to struggle. We need to sort out the infrastructure, how do you pay for it? Well it's the same as you going to petrol station if you plug in you need to pay for it so simple as that and that's how it needs to go yes it's been fine and dandy now that you get free charging point but hang on who's paying for the tax payer which your vehicle, no. You're going to have to start paying for it you pay for at home when you plug in you know you might get cheaper rate at night you know you can get you may have an incentive of a cheap rate using the plug in metre when you out and about... technology moves forward rapidly and in this sector has done I mean nine years ago when I was in an education and I was in business studies we looked at renewable energy sources cars.

### **Rob Callister**

I think we just got the new green living grant that starts in October it's disappointing that people cannot apply for a grant through the charging point because it was in there originally and treasury took it out, I think that was the wrong decision because you're absolutely right. I think everyone is already said with regard to the technology we all understand how quick the technology is moving, it is moving at such a fast pace so none of us in this room actually know where we will be in nine year's time over then significantly into the future. I mean in respect to road tax I'm almost certain that will be part of your app when you're charging it - will be integrated with that I don't think it will be separate where you actually apply for it. I think it will all be integrated into your charge when you charge your vehicle in the future. But I'm absolutely right that is a concern about the loss of fuel duty, but I don't think will completely get rid of it until at least 2035.

### **Joe Chamberlain**

We're on a small island yet we seem to have an unbelievable amount of local authorities some of whom can't even fill their seats some of them didn't even have elections and I'm wondering if any of the candidates support reform of that system?

**Rob Callister**

Yes I agree with reform I go with the original recommendation which was eleven local authorities. I don't believe in the regional structure they've got to be small enough to be accountable or big enough to carry out the services that we need.

**James Cherry**

This is in manifesto and yes it needs to happen simple as people have said you can't feel seats. So my idea is yeah nine local authorities leave Douglas it is and the rescue align with MHK constituencies.

**Peter Willers**

I think they should probably only be two or three for the most local authorities - there's no reason why they can't be amalgamated. I think the MHKs should be reduced in number as well, why do we need 24 MHKs and then however many MLCs, I mean the place is so over governed is unbelievable. It needs to change it needs to be sorted out because we're so over governed nothing really happens to make things better for everybody it needs to be governed in a sensible way with a smaller number of people in line with the number of people who live on the island.

**Michael Leather**

Local authorities are quite small, the larger the authority is the more efficient it could become because they can afford to have professional people - they can afford to have extra things that are required which at the moment they can't do.

**Julie Edge**

Yes totally agree with reform we need regional bodies that and boards that make sure we get progress, efficiencies, effectiveness throughout the local authorities and reduce costs for ratepayers.

**Andy Wint**

Now then it's come to the time in the evening ladies and gentlemen where each candidate will have one minute to sum up the thoughts aspirations and pitch to you the voters of Onchan, so in we started off with Rob Callister so will finish off with Rob Callister, first of all Peter Willers.

As well what I would like to be able to do is to start is for the island start of fresh on its system of government to ensure that it doesn't over employ people. To ensure that when it

makes promises it actually sticks to them it doesn't overspend peoples money he spends the money as if it's their money rather than their own money rather than money which they can just draw on to fill the hole which they created, because they have been incompetent in what they're doing. It needs a thorough overhaul and that's the only way to make the Isle of Man work. Until that happens it will carry on going from pillar to post, all the way through the next 20 years as it has done during the last 35 that I've been here.

**Michael Leather**

I would like to see a second income coming to the island as I have repeatedly said. If people would read my manifesto they would see what I'm talking about. I would be more than happy to answer any questions which they would have. As regards to the island, I think that the government is just bloated and it needs to be trimmed and needs more people to know what they're talking about and all these fancy titles such as chief executive and all those they need to check to these people that they actually have qualifications in that field and that they're capable to do it doing the job.

**Julie Edge**

I hope that through my newsletter in manifesto you will agree that I've met my obligations to you and being a strong voice for Onchan, stood up and challenged continuously holding government to account. I'll continue to strive for better services and a good quality of life for all in the best interests of the island. My questions, motions, research, and scrutiny has enabled me to effectively change policy legislation whilst highlighting a bloated structure that is eroded frontline service delivery to people. If re-elected as a priority I will continue my motion to make chief executive officers and senior managers accountable with performance related pay. I'll endeavour to pause capital schemes not started to make sure that that's that those projects are fit purpose redirecting that fund and health education roads and pavements, without accountability will continue on the same road with failed projects. Public interest not self-interest is my mantra I've never forgotten that you the people of Onchan pay my wages - you are the taxpayers please broke Julie Edge.

**James Cherry**

Next Thursday 23rd of September you have the opportunity to vote for two MHKs. I hope you would choose me as someone as young can bring new ideas, but not be afraid to shout from the rooftops bout problems where we need to buy there are issues that massively need addressing and hopefully bring a younger perspective to what may be available to you here tonight. We have as I say issues that need addressing: housing, economy, poverty the list goes on. These are issues that need addressing and massively need addressing in the next five years - not just for those five years but for years and years ahead. They need to be addressed quickly efficiently, I'm going with common sense approach. Hopefully that is what we get on the 23rd September if you vote Cherry.

**Rob Callister**

As a proud Manxman I want to see the economy and truly flourish and for the island to create those highly skilled well paid long term employment opportunities that we will need over the next 15 years. I also want to see a housing first policy and a health service that we all can respect and cherish, along with an education system the rebuilds trust and truly support lifelong learning opportunities. As a candidate in this very important election and fully aware of the challenges that our island will face over the next five years. There hasn't been a single day over the last nine years that I haven't made myself available to the people of Onchan and I therefore asked the people of Onchan to come out on to vote once again for Rob Callister on Thursday the 23rd of September, thank you.

**Veronica Wilson**

I've been a mental health nurse for 26 years over here - not in theory I want to practise what people are going to do I mean cause I've seen quite a change not for the professionals there's no professionals and there's a backlog which I'm a adolescent mental health services with a backlog you know the children for the future, what will you actually do?

**Julie Edge**

As chair of social affairs policy review have done many reports into mental health and the concerns, we need to have a proper triage system, we need to be focused and I'd like to see mental health nurses working in our GP practises to help support families at the earliest opportunity.

**Rob Callister**

I agree everything Julie says I think mental health is going to be one of the big big issue in the next administration or school and head teachers actually asking for that support. I think in our communities when we come out of Covid I think the full effects of mental health over the last 18 months will become apparent and it will need to be resource that correctly.

**James Cherry**

Mental health is a massive thing it with all all had issues with I think in the last 18 months I know I certainly haven't I know a lot of other people have you know. It's not something that's going to go away some people have got worse some people it's horrendous. Yes we need a proper system that works do we have one no there's a lot of jigsaw pieces that go together to pieces together, it's not just for mental health but for the islands a whole we need to work on it and a lot of other things.

**Michael Leather**

Mental health needs a lot of money and it requires very understanding people. First of all, the money must come from somewhere and the same as all the other promises of what was going to be done. Again as I've tried to say we need a second income. Mental health is

everywhere is just that it hasn't been realised in the old days, and now it's coming more true where people can appreciate it.

**Peter Willers**

I'm fully aware of mental health problems for many years my mother was a mental health nurse so as far as I'm concerned it goes without saying that mental health is vitally important to society. Currently the Isle of Man is suffering very badly. In the UK they developed a an online system that psychotherapy can be given online and is used all the time now by hospitals, prison services, government department and other people to be referred to. They will you can get immediate access to psychotherapist straight away okay.

**Andy Wint**

Well in a week's time ladies and gentlemen, it will all be over bar 40 seconds. This time next week the polling booths will be bout close and the people around you will be breathing a big sigh of relief. Thanks to Rob Callister, James Cherry, Julie Edge, Michael Leather and Peter Willers. Our next Manx Radio public out and about is at the Whistle Stop cafe at Port Erin railway station on Monday, and then at Seven Kingdoms for Douglas central on Tuesday. Monday of course his Rushen. I'm Andy Wint and thank you for being with us tonight. Tonight we've been live at the Ocean Views Bar and Grill in Onchan!