

## **Bill Shimmins – Middle**

### **Political Questions (2016)**

**Why do you want to be a member of the House of Keys?**

I can help the Island with the local, national and international challenges we face. I believe that I can bring my professionalism and expertise gained from a 34-year career in international finance to benefit the Isle of Man over the next five years. I have spent the last five years as the Managing Director of Isle of Man Bank. This has put me in a position where I have an in-depth knowledge of the Island economy. I appreciate the challenges that we currently face and how they impact on the day-to-day lives of residents. I have lived in the constituency of Middle for the last 13 years and care deeply about the community. I will work to ensure that the quality of life we enjoy is sustained and that local services and amenities are improved.

**If you were elected, what would your priorities be on a national level?**

1. The growth of the economy is a key priority as this is critical to ensuring the necessary levels of funding to sustain and improve our key public services such as Health and Education.
2. It is also imperative that the public sector pensions deficit is addressed. Further procrastination

**If you were elected, what would your priorities be on a constituency level?**

risks destabilising our finances.

3. Reduce the scope and size of government. It needs to become more affordable and focused on the key priorities i.e. Health and Education.
4. Maintain the quality of life for residents. We are fortunate to live in a safe and beautiful place. We must not take this for granted. We must ensure the security and environment we enjoy remain for ourselves and for future generations.

Middle has expanded since the last election to fully incorporate Marown, Braddan and Santon. There is a diverse range of local needs within these parishes. However, there are also many shared priorities amongst Middle constituents. I would encourage a more joined up approach across the local authorities to improve services and reduce costs to local residents.

Traffic speed and the condition of roads in the constituency remain priorities for many residents.

There is also a lack of children's play areas in some villages. The lack of a convenience shop in Santon, Crosby and Glen Vine is frequently raised.

I will proactively pursue these objectives

**How well do you think the present administration has handled the major challenges of the past five years?**

with the local authorities.

The present administration has struggled with a number of the challenges faced. Unfortunately, important decisions have been stalled and delayed without good reason. It seems that many of our politicians are sometimes unwilling to take necessary but unpopular decisions for the benefit of the Island. There has been a lack of cohesion and, on occasion, a lack of professionalism, which reflects poorly on our Island.

**What are the main political and social issues facing the Isle of Man in the next five years?**

The ageing population creates challenges, as it does in many European countries. Whilst it is difficult, the delivery of high quality health and social care provision in a caring and efficient manner must be one of the main issues. Success criteria need to be defined and measurable so we can drive to meet this key goal for the community. Unlike some neighbouring countries, it appears the population of the Island is declining, with young people the most likely to leave. This exacerbates the scale of the demographic and economic issues we face. Brexit creates further uncertainty. Whilst the outcomes are unknown, it is widely predicted that our largest trading partner (the UK) will experience a

**How would you deal with the challenges referred to in the previous answer?**

recession in the near future. This is likely to create issues for the Island.

In my career as a Director with very large organisations in the private sector I have had to be decisive on a daily basis. Some decisions have been tough but necessary. I assess the options presented, and the impact on the people involved and on other stakeholders. I challenge where appropriate but I always take action. I then monitor progress with leaders and teams to ensure effective implementation. If elected, I will take a similarly responsible approach.

**How would you deal with the issue of public sector pension reform and the public sector pension deficit?**

There is now consensus that the existing arrangements are unsustainable.

I would close the existing public sector scheme to new entrants. This would apply a brake on the ever increasing deficit. Simultaneously, I would introduce a new money purchase scheme for new employees. Like many private sector pension schemes, there should be a cash alternative. This provides a more flexible approach for employees and reduces the risks to the nation's financial position. Crucially, it should be sustainable.

The longer this issue remains outstanding, the greater the perception is that the

**What has changed in the past five years for Isle of Man residents for the better?  
(Please give examples)**

government is acting for its own benefit rather than for the benefit of the population as a whole.

The economy has diversified into new areas such as e-commerce and the biomedical sector. This has helped encourage new economically active residents and businesses to come to the island. The contribution they make in terms of employment and tax paid has helped offset the government income loss following the change to the UK VAT sharing agreement and the decline in the finance sector. There have also been improvements in telecoms services. The town centre regeneration schemes have created better paving and street furniture

(although the uniformity and time taken is disappointing). Restaurants and outdoor leisure options have been improved for residents and visitors.

**What has changed in the past five years for Isle of Man residents for the worse?  
(Please give examples)**

Transport links. Regular air routes to London and elsewhere have been cut. The cost of ferry links remains high in comparison to other sea routes.

Additional charges and fees have been raised by government departments in an uncoordinated and arbitrary fashion. Often, it has been the middle income

**Is the Isle of Man too reliant on any one sector of its economy?**

earners who have borne the brunt. Hospital waiting lists and other concerns about the Health Service have increased.

Hotel accommodation has declined and indoor leisure activities are restricted.

**If you feel it is, how would you further diversify the Manx economy?**

Yes, but this is almost inevitable with a population of circa 85,000. Arguably, all economies have an over reliance in some areas. The Isle of Man is the most economically diverse of all the Crown Dependencies and other offshore finance centres.

Effective implementation of an inward investment incentive programme with outcomes measured by job creation and tax revenue generation. It remains to be seen whether or not the Enterprise Development Fund will succeed.

Existing sectors, for example IT, biomed, aerospace, and others, all offer growth opportunities.

We can support the growth of the economy by addressing some of the key barriers, including the lack of skilled labour and the high cost of telecoms and energy. We can also more effectively promote the attractive quality of life and security the Island offers.

**Are you in favour of increased independence from the United Kingdom?**

No. Whilst at times this may appear emotionally attractive, it is doubtful that we are a viable stand-alone nation. We simply do not have the scale or resources to prosper as a fully independent country.

**If you are, in which areas?**

N/A

**Are you in favour of parliamentary reform in the Isle of Man?**

Yes, I broadly support the findings of the Lisvane report. I would suggest that this report should be adopted over the next 5 years. However, I am unconvinced this is a Year 1 priority. There are other more pressing issues but we should move to an improved system in the next term.

**If you are, which aspects of the parliamentary system would you change?**

As stated above, I broadly support the Lisvane recommendations, which should be implemented over the next term. No system will ever be perfect and Tynwald should avoid endless debate about this matter. In many ways, it is the quality of the people elected which will determine success or failure, rather than tinkering with the system.

**Who should have the responsibility of electing the Chief Minister?**

After giving this some thought, I feel MHKs should elect the Chief Minister,

rather than adopting a presidential style public vote. More consideration is required on checks and balances if we were to go down the latter route. Whilst a presidential vote is democratic, I am concerned that it may concentrate too much power in one individual. I do support the recent change to make the voting for the selection of the Chief Minister by Tynwald transparent.

**Are you in favour of the nationalisation of air and/or sea services to and from the Isle of Man?**

No. We need to slim down government rather than increase its scope to include planes and ferries. Effective regulation and constructive negotiations with private sector providers are more effective solutions.

**Are you in favour of renewable energy projects in Manx territorial waters?**

Yes, especially tidal energy projects.

**Are you in favour of an increase in means testing for financial support and/or services provided by Government?**

No, the present situation is disjointed and complicated. The cost of administrating various complex schemes for a small population is considerable. I would rather see this bureaucracy removed and a return to a more universal, simpler system. There are so many factors which need to be considered to assess people fairly e.g. are assets included alongside income, joint/married relationships,



divorce and other family situations?  
No system of means testing will ever be fair, and it can create a poverty trap limiting social mobility.

**If you are, in which areas?**

See previous answer.