

John McBride – Douglas East

Political Questions (2016)

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

To play my part in helping the island to recover its stability and strive to make it a better place for everyone to live and work.

I know there is a better way!

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

My main priorities in a nutshell would be economic diversity and growth, health provision and delivery, elderly, disabled and vulnerable care and respect, making our island home a desirable place to visit, live and work in.

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

Working towards making East Douglas a vibrant place to visit, live and work with urgent attention to the promenade, parking and dilapidated properties. I would run regular surgeries to keep contact with the constituency

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

In my opinion they have inherited the misdeeds of several previous administrations and have tried to deal with the issues piece meal, they are putting out fires as they arise.

It has to be said that the events of the past eight years are unprecedented in our time but our government was ill

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

prepared to deal with them. They have continued to behave as if we have endless reserves whilst making cuts to services and raising stealth taxes against those who can least afford them.

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

The main challenges are the economy, health provision, de-population and public sector pensions.

The employment landscape is changing and employment is a huge social issue. The growth of zero hours contracts does not allow people to plan their financial future and distorts the true picture of island employment.

There is no 'next big thing' around the corner and we have to be realistic.

We have to diversify our economy, including a fresh look at tourism with a long and short term plan for growth of that sector. This will help to make our island an appealing place to live, visit and re-locate to, as well as contributing to the economy.

We are not alone and have similar issues to the UK NHS, made more difficult by our small population and tax base. We can't possibly have specialists in every medical discipline and will continue to rely heavily on outsourcing to the UK. This

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

doesn't mean that we have to accept long waiting lists and mediocre care. We must find innovative solutions to the challenges faced by our DHSS and its staff.

The public sector pensions issue is not unique to the island. It has been caused by governments and authorities around the world over promising and not considering the possibility of what has occurred in the world economy.

We have to seriously investigate being an early adopter of National Basic Income. By paying everyone a basic income, it can create a much more flexible workforce as jobs begin to disappear and become less secure. It would also serve to make the island a more attractive place for businesses to locate to, creating more jobs and importantly, tax income.

There are funding calculations which need to be settled but I believe that we will need to look at this in the very near future.

This is a worldwide issue and we can learn from how other jurisdictions have begun to tackle it.

Government have started to take steps to deal with the problem but what ever

we do it will cost us a lot of money. Those who are receiving, and are due to receive their pension, have done nothing wrong, they have planned their retirement around a promise made to them.

We need to be reasonable and keep those affected informed and do the best we can for them.

This will probably mean them paying higher contributions for reduced benefits but what they must realise is that if the island can not meet its obligations to them, there may be no option other than to slash payments in a 'state of emergency' situation. Estimates suggest that this could happen before the end of the next administration in 2021.

Would it be morally right to cut health, education, social care etc to meet the pension deficit? It will be the lower earning and most vulnerable who will be expected to bear the full cost of this and that would not be unacceptable. We need to take steps to ensure that the pension issue does not affect other sectors of the community.

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

Very little has changed for the better, some things are no worse but we are in decline in many areas.

We do apparently have lower crime figures but with a shrinking population,

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

this could be expected.

We have an ever growing economy but in reality, this is not something which has trickled down to most of the population other than in salaries for those who work in the economy.

There is insufficient tax take for the island as a whole to benefit from the continuous growth to any great extent.

Health service waiting lists have increased.

The disposable income of the population has shrunk, causing a crisis in the retail sector.

House prices are falling as people leave our island, this leaves people in negative equity and stalls the economy.

We pay more for food, energy, housing, motoring and entertainment and yet we have less choice.

We have more people working two or even three jobs on zero hours contracts to earn a living. It is becoming impossible for many young people to plan for the future. Some are working only twenty hours or less a week and need to claim benefits to survive!

Eventually we will be forced to consider National Basic Income, I think that when we do, we can offer businesses a truly competitive edge and encourage flexible working arrangements without

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

penalising our workers.

A job should lift a person out of poverty, not keep them in it!

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

Yes, and the finance sector is in decline leading to a dependence on e-gaming, this is not healthy.

We urgently need to diversify our economy.

We need to grow our tourism offer once again through large specialised events for example.

Specialist high value light manufacturing could be attracted, where shipping costs are only a small part of the value of the product.

I feel that the export of Manx produce could also be a growth area. These examples could lead to increased employment opportunities and tax revenue for government.

The government's job is to create the environment for growth, securing competitive air and sea services, allocating land for building, providing a vibrant lifestyle and a safe and secure environment.

Are you in favour of increased independence from the United

Yes, I believe we need to take more control of our own destiny. We live under

Kingdom?

the constant threat of punitive consequences when we try to plough our own furrow.

If you are, in which areas?

The customs agreement could be reviewed to allow us freedom to generate our own tax revenue on goods and services.

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

Yes, most definitely!

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

I welcome Lord Lisvane's review of Tynwald and await his report with interest. I feel that for an island of around 85,000 people, we are over governed and probably need fewer politicians in national and local government. Personally, I would like to see the Legislative Council become a publicly elected body with the sole purpose of reviewing legislation. I don't believe that MLC's should sit on government departments, this interferes with their ability to be impartial.

Who should have the responsibility of electing the Chief Minister?

The House of Keys or Tynwald when Legco is publicly elected.

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

Only in part, the government should be a shareholder with a seat on the board in return for a concession. I don't think the

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

government should get involved in trying to run air or sea services but we should have a voice where our vital life lines are concerned.

Yes, I am interested in tidal power but wary of the effects on sea life which need to be better understood and catered for.

I am concerned that the benefits of wind power may not be as great as they appear to be when the costs, efficiency and environmental issues are considered.


What does concern me is that we would continue to generate electricity for our own consumption using the existing methods to justify the expense of the power stations. We would not benefit from cheaper power as we would not be a customer!

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

I believe that a person's tax return could provide sufficient information for means testing purposes.

If you are, in which areas?

Any area which results in a person receiving financial support above and beyond sickness and disability benefit. Public sector housing generally has rules



already in place, it is up to the authority to enforce them if they see fit.

Any changes to a person's financial status should be gleaned from their tax return to assist local authorities to review eligibility.

This would need a change in legislation to enable fairness for all concerned.