



HOUSE OF KEYS GENERAL ELECTION

THURSDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2011

RICHARD KISSACK
DOUGLAS EAST



MY PROMISE

I shall be approachable and available at home and on Facebook as well as on email. My business is Ambitions Limited and is situated in Douglas East and I would intend to use this as a constituency office manned permanently during office hours.

INTRODUCTION

My name is Richard Kissack and I am 42, married with 4 children and I live and work in East Douglas. I was educated at Willaston, Douglas High and Ballakermeen and was awarded a Masters degree in chemical engineering from Leeds University. I am a businessman and certified accountant and with my wife run a recruitment agency in Douglas. I am passionate about doing the right thing; I believe that this is a critical time for the island where we need real politicians with vision and strength of character. In April 2008 I stood for Douglas Council for Victoria Ward and was elected unopposed. I have served on various committees in the Council but most enjoyed the Leisure Services Committee which develops and maintains the parks and gardens where I have also served as Vice-Chairman. I have also served on the Pensions Committee for the Isle of Man Local Government Pension Scheme which acts as trustee for the pension fund, again as Vice-Chairman. As an accountant and local businessman I feel I have excellent credentials to work in government. I am prudent by nature and due to this one of my priorities would be to examine the loss making areas of government and to try and develop solutions to remove this burden from you the taxpayer. As a current Douglas Councillor I would be very keen to strengthen the links between local authorities and the government for the good of the Isle of Man.

IMPORTANCE OF DOUGLAS EAST

Douglas East is the most important part of the Isle of Man. It is the island's most important shopping centre, most of the big hotels are based on Douglas Prom, namely the Sefton, Palace and Claremont. We have the Sea Terminal and Tynwald buildings as well as the main parts of government. We have a very large portion of the finance sector based in East Douglas as well as some of the best and worst housing. It is very important to me personally as I live and work in East Douglas and have served on Douglas Corporation's Victoria Ward which forms a large part of Douglas East. One of the things that really lets us down is the number of derelict and unsightly properties. A lot of this work is done by Douglas Corporation and within the framework as it stands but there do appear to be enormous difficulties. The cost of legal action seems to be prohibitive. It may be possible to limit the number of years a property may be rates free due to it being in poor condition. In such a way it may be possible to force a sale by putting a charge on the property.



IMPORTANCE OF VOTING

We have been plagued by voter apathy in the past but I beg of you to vote on this occasion because the thing Douglas East needs is for people to at least demonstrate that we care about our area. Even if you do not vote for me then vote for someone you think cares and is capable of doing something positive. You should vote for me because, I shall investigate issues that I believe are important and endeavour to have the courage to do something positive about them in a well thought out way. The schools have already started to educate our young people on how and why to vote and this needs to continue to be built upon.



TRANSPORT -

Buses, Trams and Trains

It is a great shame that the old bus station site on Lord Street has been pending development for nearly a quarter of a century and we have only a car park to show for it. For now it does seem a shame not to utilise the Sea Terminal and car park as a bus station, at least people could wait in the dry on a seat. This would seem sensible and could be a valuable facility for a minimal cost.

CHALLENGES

Due to the global challenges of the credit crunch which led to the re-negotiating of the VAT agreement between the Isle of Man and the United Kingdom, our government must face the challenges of a reduced income. We have many perceived problems some genuine and some politically expedient, we shall have to make efforts to gather evidence and come to a sensible judgement. If we had seen the Millennium bug coming it may have saved us money, if we had seen Enron coming then perhaps the MEA would be in less debt. There is a need for fully conscious people in government to navigate around the dangers.

PARKING

Much of East Douglas was built before the motor car became popular and there are ample reminders for those with eyes to see e.g. horse carriage bollards to protect the corners of buildings and mews buildings having been converted to residential dwellings. As such as the popularity of the car has grown so too have the parking problems of Douglas. Certainly the redundancy of garages which are often used as junk storage rooms has made the problem worse. Retrospective planning is almost impossible for the smaller streets with domestic housing but the planners have done their best with more modern dwellings. It would seem that Douglas town could do with a new car park and perhaps redevelop some of the town in a continental style with parking in the basement, shops on the ground floor, offices on the 1st floor with living accommodation above that. In the short term however I feel the disc parking & permits zone needs to be extended to ensure residents can park near their own homes.

THE ISLE OF MAN ECONOMY

The Manx have always been financially astute and it is natural to chase the money, at least in business. It is always astute to be open minded to another income stream or business opportunity. We should attempt to be energy exporters rather than gas importers. There will always be wind and rain in the Isle of Man. There will always be a large tidal flow around the island which we should be able to utilise on a modest scale. We could utilise our forests for sustainable woodchip for electricity and heat. Using green energy would seem to be sensible from a home rule standpoint and from an economic point of view. It is a different style of energy not as convenient as fossil fuel but it is renewable and while the Earth turns there will always be wind and tidal power, while the Sun shines there will always be solar power.

Farming seems to be being neglected if we are to judge by the number of full time active farmers which is rumoured to be approaching only 200. We should aim to be more self-sufficient foodwise as this is of strategic significance. We could help by giving charitable status to farming clubs that seek to fully utilise the land. Too much good agricultural land is left fallow rather than grow crops.

A photograph of three wind turbines in a green field at sunset. The sky is orange and yellow, and the sun is low on the horizon. The image is partially obscured by a red curved shape.

PUBS IN DOUGLAS

The social feel of a pub in Douglas has changed in the last 20 years, bit by bit. I would try to encourage the social aspects of the public house and try to make running a public house a profitable enterprise while balancing the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption. I would try to promote the use of locally produced beer with a low alcohol content by trying to give tax concessions as I believe sensible beer drinking in a social environment is a benefit to society.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We have been blessed with some vision and foresight in this area and I take my hat off to the people involved and responsible here. Well done and let us hope and pray we can continue the good work.

GOVERNMENT SACRED COWS

It is an enormous mistake to act as though we have some parts of our government which are untouchable and beyond any kind of examination or remedial action. The next few years will be difficult enough without making the job in hand impossible by putting too many constraints on ourselves. We should try to ensure that any legislation put through Tynwald has a sound grounding and is not merely more legislation for the sake of legislation.

FOLLOWING THE UK AND INTERNATIONAL POSITION

I am a firm believer in home rule. Within our borders we (the people of the Isle of Man) should be able to decide our own fate. We appear to be adopting UK/European standards on healthcare, data protection, child welfare and health and safety to name but a few. This is not consistent with home rule or democracy where we should choose how to live and the rules we choose to adopt. We do not seem to have the debate that I believe we should have on these issues.

There does seem to be a penchant for having an idea introduced and then looking round for 'help' which more often than not comes from the UK in the form of a very highly paid consultant who then advises IOM civil servants who then advise the politicians of the island. As our politicians often place their trust in their 'best people' we can then end up with schemes like IRIS.

HEALTH CARE

Healthcare is generally good with thoughtful provision by medical teams to provide the care required. We seem to enjoy much better hospital care than our counterparts elsewhere in the world. However it remains to be seen whether we can really afford to pay it in the future. The GP service appears to compare satisfactorily with a similar service in NW England. We have budgeted for 2012 £163m for the provision of healthcare on the island. An area where cost savings could be made is in the area of off-island consultants and locums where it is not clear whether these people pay Isle of Man tax and IOM National Insurance.

The 'reciprocal' health care agreement with the UK should be examined more closely to ensure value for money. We should protect our healthcare system by protecting it from those who would wish to take out without making any kind of adequate contribution. To do this I would propose to make entitlement to healthcare dependent on residence for a length of time as is done in some European countries.

I do believe we should make an effort to heed the advice of health professionals in looking at a happiness index for our society rather than just financial measures of success. There are alternative treatments for health problems which are often cheaper than more conventional treatments which we should consider more often.

Everybody in our society has the right to happiness and that includes all minorities and abilities in our society. People with disabilities and illnesses are often treated as 2nd class citizens and I would work hard to try to change this not just by yet more legislation by educating people.



3RD SECTOR REVIEW

We do need to examine what exactly is done by the 3rd sector in the Isle of Man. There is some valuable work done by charities, churches, football clubs and other not for profit organisations on island and we need to see where willing horse are doing too much work.



HOME AFFAIRS

This department seems to create some of its own problems and I would attempt to examine it very closely. I would support an attempt to compile an independent list of complaints in relation to the police as well as an independent means to investigate them. I am deeply concerned by the number of suicides, drug overdoses and mysterious deaths that occur on the island and I would like to see more support given to the vulnerable to minimise this risk. Every loss of life is sad but is especially so when it could have been prevented and is a young person.

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN

In general this Department has been run well and achieved satisfactory results. Children generally seem to be getting an education and kept happy enough.

We should endeavour to ensure that our graduates do not slide into debt as a result of their education either with loans or overdrafts. Their education is an investment by society in general and it would be grossly unfair to restrict the options on graduates by forcing a mountain of debt upon our best and brightest. I would be extremely reluctant to force loans onto students who wish to continue their education.

One option to save money may be to consider greater co-operation between the Business School at the Nunnery and the Isle of Man College or even have a single principal.

Professional education and continuing adult education in a vocational sense should be promoted as a viable option as it is often the better option for those who are academically gifted but impecunious.

FAMILIES AND SOCIAL CARE

For any society to flourish families are vitally important. It is important to understand that there are many different kinds of families not just the blood-related nuclear family. Other types of family include foster, step, neighbour and church as well as yet others. As such there are many people on the island who do not have the extended family system that is valuable to new parents and should assist families when needed. Social services are sometimes regarded as not being helpful during times of need for some of these families and in some cases interfere to the detriment of the family and the children. It is my intention to investigate these instances and see what can be done. Perhaps a "buddy" system could be implemented for new parents with no support.

The pink book lists a massive amount of money we spend on social care namely £318m gross expenditure, this represents 36.5% of revenue expenditure for the Isle of Man Government.

In my opinion our society is being shaped by government services which affect large proportions of our people and in particular our children. It is of such fundamental importance that the whole benefits culture of our island and scope of social care should be examined in detail in an environment free from UK influence and attitudes. We are a much smaller and more interactive society and should remain relatively unscathed from the worst excesses that may afflict the UK. Social care planning is influenced by worst case scenarios and this alone may be enough to create problems we should remain free from.



MEDIA

The BBC licence fee collects approximately £5m per annum on the island and the coverage for news in the island is not comparable with the Channel Islands. I would propose to collect the fee on island and pay the BBC what we believe their service is worth. This would not mean we would necessarily lose valued services from the BBC it would simply mean we paid for them differently. In my opinion we are certainly overdue our own TV station, however this may for commercial reasons have to take the form of a video sharing website for short clips and short programmes.



SELF-FUNDED PARTS OF GOVERNMENT

It is reasonable to view some parts of government as potentially self funding. This seems to be an opportunity that should be grasped and embraced. At least we should aim to reduce the losses that are required to be funded from central government.

REORGANISING GOVERNMENT

In general I would want to slim down the number of local authorities from 24 on an island of only 85,000 people. In particular car parks should not be the concern of central government departments. Once local government is at a viable size the complexity of function which could be transferred to local authorities is increased. Real responsibility for social housing should rest with local authorities. The money collected from rents for the local authority housing stock should remain in the hands of the local authority and not just a fraction of the rents collected, the remainder should be used to re-build social housing stock.

On a simple departmental level we may need to reduce the number of departments and see if we can possibly transfer as many functions to local authorities as is practical. These may include social housing and social care with only a central government supervisory role.

POLITICS IN THE ISLE OF MAN

Politicians must actually be the ones in the driving seat not civil servants. We should be very careful of imported consultants who 'advise' or 'train' our civil service who then 'advise' our politicians. We should be alert to meaningless platitudes like 'good governance' and 'best practice'. It is difficult as a citizen to be sure of what is really going on in government or even society as a whole. This is partly because of the difficulty of getting hold of good information. This flow of good information needs to be helped by a large number of concerned citizens and a Freedom of Information Act which makes it a legal requirement to disclose information. I believe this should apply to charities and private companies as well as government.

Yours truly



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