

Cat Turner – Douglas East

Political Questions (2016)

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

I'd like to be an MHK so as to represent the people of East Douglas and the Island, in bringing about the changes needed to make for a fairer society, a more transparent and accountable Government, and the environmentally up-to-date policies which will help our economy and the wellbeing of our people to thrive.

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

- Social justice, including social policy legislation, which affects every family
- A review of the systems we have for tax, welfare and the means-testing of access to services
- The prioritisation of the wellbeing of the people in the island, as opposed to somewhat limited measures of 'success' such as GDP growth
- In particular, a focus on a range of environmental and social issues such as clean, affordable energy, air and water quality, access to nature and the protection of our rich biodiversity which is so important to our economy and wellbeing
- A government that is held accountable for the commitments it makes
- Priority budgeting at Government level, so money goes where it will

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

have the optimum effect

- Douglas East is an incredibly diverse constituency, and one with some terrific resources and lovely, well-maintained areas. However, it's not all like that: there are some unlovely and unloved areas. These need attention, both to show respect to the people who live and work there, and to encourage visitors to appreciate one of the most important 'Gateways to the island'.
- It's also an area with a high proportion of flat-dwellers, many of them single people and some rather isolated. I'd like to see greater attention to the quality and appropriateness of accommodation for these small households, and more community facilities to combat loneliness and financial challenges.

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

On some measures, there have been successes. On the face of it, continued GDP growth and high employment are a sign of success. However, GDP growth is a very limited way of measuring the health of an economy, and can mask rising income inequality, increasing job instability and problems with peoples' mental and physical wellbeing and the environment.

I'd like to think the next administration will take a more holistic approach to measuring its success – by considering the issues that really make for thriving people, communities and businesses;

- security and safety,
- having 'enough' for basic needs and comfort,
- social connections,
- feeling valued and listened to,
- opportunities to learn, grow, contribute to society and flourish,
- access to nature and green spaces,
- excellent international relations and reputation so as to ensure the Island has a 'seat at the negotiating table'.

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


- Politically, BREXIT will of course have an impact – and as yet the visibility's quite low on what it might mean.
- The Island's financial position, including (but not limited to) the public pensions issue needs urgent attention.
- We need strong action on environmental issues, including climate change, clean air and water
- We need to close the widening income equality gap and reduce the amount of job insecurity affecting local workers

We need to review the interaction of our

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

systems for benefits, taxation and the means-testing of access to certain services

- In terms of BREXIT, we need to work hard to protect and enhance the Island's reputation in international circles, building on our political and business relationships with the UK and the rest of the world – and take as proactive a role in ongoing negotiations and developments as we can, to secure the future.
- In respect of the Government's finances, we should move to priority budgeting (see further below). In respect of the public sector pensions issues, see next question.
- In terms of climate and flood risk, it is heartening to see the work being done by JBA Consulting for the IoM Government. This needs to be translated into a prioritised action plan which will be implemented before we undergo too many more cycles of extreme weather. Whilst it may be costly, the costs of inaction could be far higher for households, business and Government.
- In terms of air and water, we should be measuring regularly and to the most up to date standards, especially in potential 'hot spots' for pollution – and making the results



regularly and publicly available. This has the potential to positively affect our economy, human and natural health, and general wellbeing.

- In terms of the income inequality gap, we need to ensure that those on low incomes are not suffering the worst of recent stealth taxes, 'charges' and eroded access to services. It's also important that employers are encouraged and incentivised to avoid zero hours contracts where possible, so that workers have more security and certainty as to their incomes. It might be a fond but unlikely dream, but I would also like to see pay scales less differentiated, so that the gap between what frontline and/or junior workers get paid, and what senior managers/directors receive, does not keep widening. We need to respect all our workers, and reward them accordingly.
- For the young, I'm very supportive of the idea of apprenticeships – but would also like to see the introduction of something akin to a YTS scheme so that youngsters not equipped for more technical jobs can gain experience and confidence at minimal cost to the employer.
- In terms of benefits, taxation and

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

means-testing for access to services, I'd like to see an integrated review of all these elements so that Government income and resources are targeted where they're really needed.

It's wholly unacceptable that this problem has persisted for so long without solid action, including:

- closing the defined benefit scheme to new entrants and introducing a defined contribution scheme in its place;
- and for those still in the DB scheme, investigating whether we can move to an average salary as opposed to a final salary scheme.

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

- The passage of a Freedom of Information Act, at long last, is a cause for celebration on the people's behalf
- It's been good to see the Government at last making plans for climate and environmental action (albeit not enough)
- There has been some diversification in the economy (again, albeit not enough)
- The increasing number of trade agreements and tax information exchange agreements is heartening

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

in terms of our future international standing

- Steady growth and low employment are, on the face of it, positive, though they may mask more subtle problems
- Our Police Force is to be commended on the generally low crime rates despite budget constraints
- A more stable Revenue Budget is good news

The fact that the Island is being recognised for its glorious natural environment, including the awarding of UNESCO Biosphere status, holds considerable potential for our economy and reputation

- The slow pace of implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act has been woeful, and businesses should be encouraged/incentivised to put measures in place before it becomes mandatory
- Rising income inequality, stealth taxes, cuts to many essential services and the erosion of work security are increasing pressures on households at all levels
- Anecdotal evidence of increasing numbers of skilled workers and potentially excellent employees is a worry for our businesses

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

The culture in some Government departments needs much to be desired

Yes: or rather, on one or two sectors. We still have a preponderance of reliance on tax-oriented financial structuring, an industry which has its international detractors and in some areas is contracting.

The diversification we have seen into e-gaming and other digital industries helps to a degree, but these industries can still be prone to flight risk, and it would be good to see more businesses with stickability being established.

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

- Encourage inward investment and make the grant process more easily navigable
- Support local entrepreneurs. The DED Small Business Startup Scheme is excellent and I'd like to see an IoM Version of Local Entrepreneur Forums (<https://reconomycentre.org/home/lef/>) to encourage truly sustainable small local businesses
- Initiatives around premium-priced Manx foodstuffs for the export market are to be encouraged, but so is access to affordable, fresh locally sourced produce for our residents
- There are immense opportunities in

the clean-tech and appropriate tech arenas – including in energy and heat generation and storage. The Island is falling behind some of its peers in establishing itself as a jurisdiction for trialling, benefitting from and providing the legal/structuring/insurance expertise in these areas

- The BioMed cluster also offers some great opportunities for diversification, in an industry which has the potential to affect peoples' length and quality of life
- I also believe the Island could adapt some of its undeniable skills in the finance sector, to develop products and services in the sustainable finance arena – an area growing rapidly

We also need to make it easier for small organisations to open bank accounts, whilst of course remaining compliant with necessary AML/POTF requirements.

I am.

I believe the island will be best served by a friendly and close relationship with the UK, negotiating access to markets where

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

If you are, in which areas?

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

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

necessary – but that our interests will be best served by being able to make more locally-relevant policies. That needn't mean watering existing protections for people and environment – it could simply mean ensuring regulations and legislation is proportionate and tailored to our local needs, and our needs as an internationally-trading nation.

Yes.

- An end to the conflicts that discourage politicians from challenging Government, which arises from the fact that attachment to a department brings additional salary – thus allowing dissent to be punished by loss of that role
- An end to politicians being able to claim £6k per annum in unreceipted expenses – unthinkable in any organisation with proper governance
- A review of the role and rewards package for MLCs, including the potential for them to be publicly elected to ensure decision-making is not compromised

More robust and transparent review and complaints mechanisms in connection with

Who should have the responsibility of electing the Chief Minister?

both the parliamentary process and Government

The Members of the House of Keys.

In addition, those candidates intending to put themselves forward for the position should say so in their Manifestos.

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

Not necessarily – although community-owned services, where the people of the Island could invest into transport services on and off the island, would be interesting. The more important thing is to ensure reliability, affordability and sustainability.

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

Yes, provided that they're carried out in a way that is sensitive to the environment, and to the needs of other users of Manx waters. We have an abundance of natural resources which could provide our residents and businesses with energy and heat security, and security of price, and at the same time benefit the Island's long term finance by avoiding the need to export cash for fossil fuels from overseas. This would also enable the Island to establish itself as an ideal base for cleantech/renewables trialling and implementation, along with the ancillary opportunities in terms of skills, jobs, and

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

legal/financial and other services associated with these projects.

Yes.

If you are, in which areas?

This should be a matter for In all areas – but only in conjunction with

- a) consideration of the Scope and Structure of Government report, and
- b) a thorough and integrated review of the Island's tax, benefits and welfare system, and how this interacts with means-tested access to services.