

Leo Cussons – Rushen

Political Questions (2016)

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

The current government is nowhere near its potential. In creating a sustainable society where all people are engaged and opportunities exist for all. Our way of life is unique and special and this is what brings people from all over the world to our shores. As I have enjoyed being brought up here, I would like this opportunity for future generations.

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

Having a defining vision that all people can work and aspire to. At present the conversation is largely economic. Elected representatives need to take responsibility, giving true leadership and not be afraid of getting it wrong as this is part of the risk of doing something.

Growing our economy is key. Small business should be encouraged in government contracts as this supports our economy and independence. We are in a unique position with the ability to pass flexible laws. This can enable us to compete and strengthen our own economy. Laws should distinguish between large corporate businesses and small businesses, for example a sugar tax on large corporation products such as

Cadbury's and Coke Cola but not on locally produced sugar products supporting our economy. This way we can create a level playing field that young & old entrepreneurs can enter. There are also possibilities in data centres and biomedical industries for us to attract industry and compete in using our flexible legal system. Tourism, in my opinion, is far from fulfilling its potential. We have a unique landscape and individual style and if marketed correctly we could potentially be attracting thousands of visitors interested in exploring the natural beauty of our island for what is the experience of a lifetime. This could build on the opportunities we already offer for walking, dark skies and other outdoor pursuits. Even at a modest amount of 500 visitors a week at a spend of £500 would add a quarter of a million pounds to our economy every week with minimal cost as the infrastructure is already there. We have an educated and creative population and I believe we should draw upon their strengths and areas of expertise to create further opportunities for growth.

I support all tendering projects and financial information being freely available. If government carries the risk and is ultimately responsible for the services then there can be no

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

justification for paying market rates as they do not compete in the commercial market. However there are circumstances where we pay private sector rates in public services as this is deemed the "going rate". I stand for implementing a policy that ensures that we do not allow for this discrepancy in pay. Public sector workers should not be paid more than private sector workers as it is the private sector that funds the economy. This policy would need to take into account all work that is outsourced from government. The costing process would have to be transparent, to demonstrate this policy and be publicly available. I believe that there are considerable savings to be made to the public finances in this area.

We should be supporting our agriculture industry and raising its profile both close to home and further afield, building on the successes we have had, for example, with Manx cheese.

A shift of power so Rushen residents have the larger say in all matters concerning our communities. Attracting sustainable businesses to Rushen to ensure the survival of our vibrant community. Working with Commissioners in each area to attract more residents to Rushen

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

and solving our empty house problem. It is important that there is enough affordable property in the market.

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

Predictable with a lack of direction. Some minor things have been achieved and improved. The major issues have often been handled as the least worst option instead of the striving for the best possibility.

For Rushen residents the main issues are empty houses and dilapidated properties, engagement with elderly, first time buyers' property, health care, sustainable environment, People living and working in Rushen, both feel strongly about the state of the roads. Lack of leadership of the current MHK's has come up in my conversations with voters. B: National Proprieties: clear leadership and direction about what we need to do and putting it into practice. Transparency in government, pensions, defining ourselves in the international community, Brexit and travel links affect us all.

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

Please refer to my manifesto.

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

The government is under a contract with its past employees of whom many have completed long lengths of public service with the promise of a good pension. However there may have to be some give as the issue will come up again. If this is so then the negotiation position needs to be the executive, top paid salaries - which were probably overly generous - have room for change. Currently the cost of setting up an independent pension is considerably higher than in the UK. We need to provide better sustainable options for people. I support a flexible pension where you can stop and start with contributions, decide what level of risk and investment, transferable from employer to employer and an increase in the tax allowance for contributions. Currently at 20%. So for every 100 pounds saved £20 pounds are not taxed

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

I am not really sure much has.

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

Lack of political will from the top to be clear about our goals. Incomes failing to keep pace with inflation, Interest on savings, increase in the cost of living

specifically with recent changes in electricity and gas pricing, unreliability of travel links.

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

No, however the local indigenous industry of agriculture is being side lined by the current members of Tynwald. Part of the Isle of Man visitor experience is eating locally grown produce and it is supporting our own self reliance.

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

Please refer to my national priorities above and in my manifesto.

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

As a negotiation position in our dealings with the UK, Brexit, Europe, we need have to have all the possibilities on the table and that it is believable to the other parties. This is how we strengthen our negotiation position and will be able to get the best deal in international matters.

If you are, in which areas?

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

It is remarkable that, as the oldest continuous democracy in the world and the first country to introduce the suffrage vote, we asked and paid someone to tell

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

us how to do democracy. It seems to be endemic in government that we do not have a culture where people are prepared to make a decision. I believe, however, that the Lisvane report now has to be addressed through open debate which engages and benefits the Island as a whole.

Who should have the responsibility of electing the Chief Minister?

I support the introduction/trial of e-democracy, where all residents can have their say on a number of issues.

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

MHK's in the short term after a public debate. However in the longer term e-democracy could play a significant role in this.

Again as a negotiation position we need to have all options on the table and that we are prepared to use them so that we get the best deal. I am sure that Steam Packet want to keep their monopoly. So there is room for a lot of negotiation between competition and regulation. The services are currently not good enough. If we want to increase tourism or business they need to be improved significantly in quality and price.

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

So long as they do not alter the coastline view.

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

We need to ask a different/other questions, What is the contribution of each person to society and make decisions based upon this information. For example a carer can save the government tens of thousands of pounds. The overriding question is how is one contributing to society.

If you are, in which areas?

All