

HOUSE OF KEYS GENERAL ELECTION THURSDAY 22nd SEPTEMBER 2016

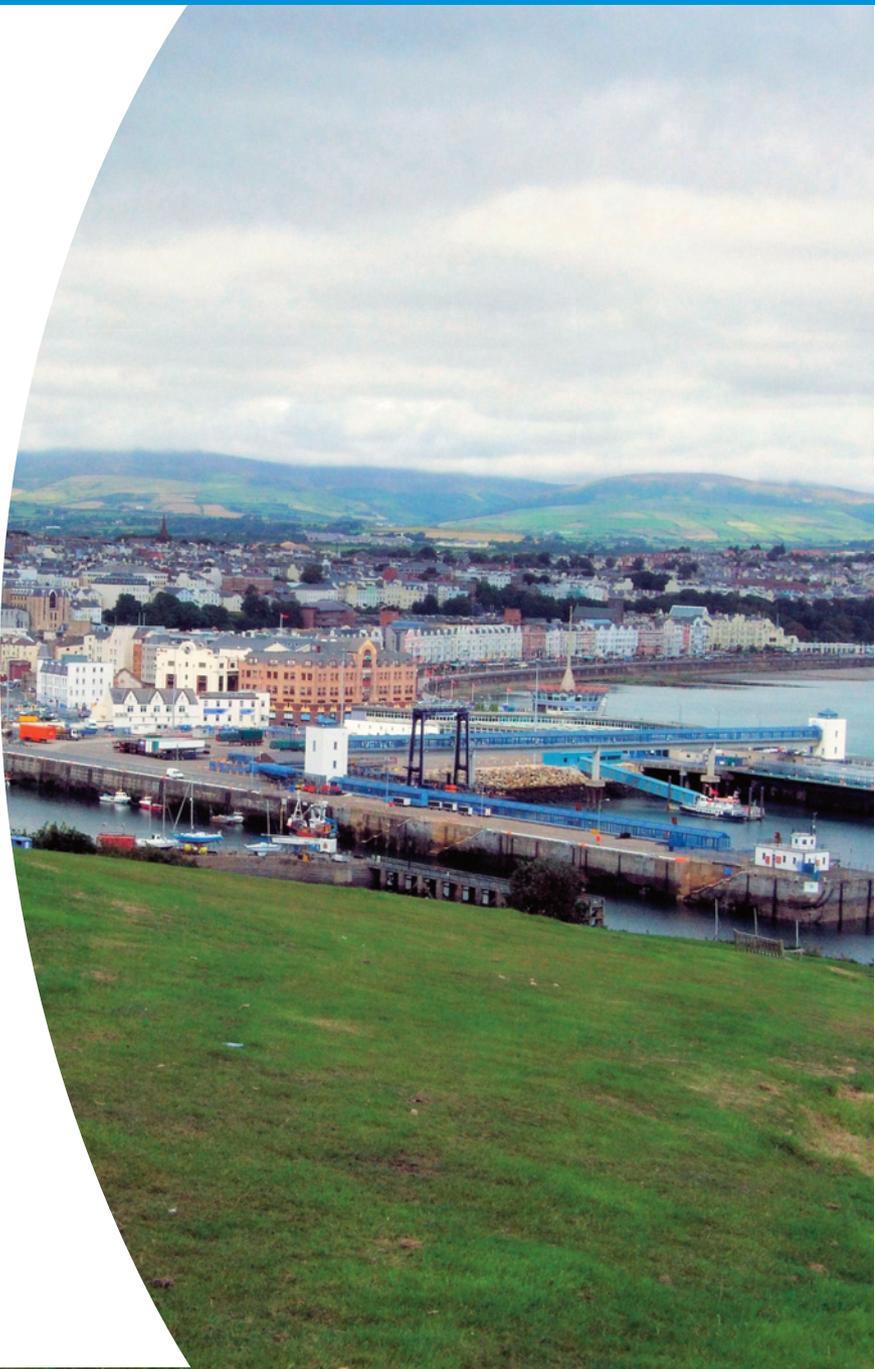
Kate BEECROFT

South Douglas



Taking action...getting results





Kate BEECROFT

Dear constituent

You kindly trusted me with your vote at the general elections in 2011 and I am asking that you will do me the honour of voting for me again. In my constituency letter, which you should have already received, I set out some of the issues that I was involved in during the last five years and I trust that you will agree that I have worked hard on your behalf.

There is no escaping from the fact that the next five years are going to be some of the most difficult that the Island has faced in many decades so it is even more important to have MHKs who are not afraid to make sure that their voices are heard and who will work fearlessly on your behalf.

There can be a bright future for the Island because there will also be many opportunities but government must have the will and the drive to take advantage of them as they are recognised.

We can have a bright future if we seize opportunities and work together as a unified and cohesive team with the objective to do what it takes to make the Island the best it can be for all of us.



Kate Beecroft



Local issues

Saddle Mews

Many residents are concerned that there is a planning application to convert the residential care home into one bedroom apartments. Their development is intended for those aged over fifty and they are rightly concerned about the effect this change of use could have on their lifestyles. They have been assured of any assistance they need from me.

Roads



There are many roads in Douglas South that badly need attention. Money is allocated each year for road maintenance as part of the budget process but that does not necessarily mean that it all gets used as intended. As stated later, **the budget process urgently needs to be changed** and, just as importantly, once allocated for particular expenses it should be spent on that unless there is a very good (and published) reason for not doing so.

I would doubt that all of the money allocated to keep our roads in good condition has been spent for that purpose and that is part of the reason why this is not just a local problem but one affecting every constituency.

Local authority housing

Many have raised issues over Douglas Borough Council houses and I am lucky to have a councillor, Claire Wells, as a LibVan member representing Hills Ward who is

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also on the housing committee. This means that any issues can be speedily and satisfactorily resolved.

The three main threats to a prosperous future for the Island are undoubtedly Brexit, the public sector pension scheme and government finances.

Brexit

The main problem with Brexit is the surrounding uncertainty.

It may well work out that it will be a good thing for the Island ultimately but it is difficult, if not impossible, to plan for the future with so many unknowns. The only things we can do are to keep an eagle eye on events and take advantage of any opportunities as they arise and ensure that we maintain a high profile with the decision makers so they are aware of any consequences that may affect us.

Public sector pension scheme

It is imperative that this scheme is closed to prevent the liabilities increasing as they have been doing.

A new defined benefits scheme needs to be introduced for both existing employees and new members.

We have tried on numerous occasions to persuade government to take this action but they have always insisted that it cannot be done because of the cash flow implications. This is not an insurmountable problem as other countries have used a notional scheme to solve this dilemma.





Government finances

Of the three main problem areas, this should be the easiest to resolve as it is the one where government has the most control.

We urgently need a change to the whole budget process. The current system encourages departments to work in isolation rather than in unison and the unnecessary spending of any budget that has been allocated before the end of the year. As I have argued twice already in Tynwald, a priority based budget process would be far more appropriate and would ensure that scarce funds are spent where they are most needed.

All areas of government need to be looked at to see whether what they provide is actually needed or simply nice to have and, if the former, if they under or over staffed.

The public sector pension scheme is a huge drain on government finances and this has been dealt with in the previous section.

Health

We must maintain a system that remains free of charge for all our residents and ensure that it is capable of meeting everyone's needs.

Standards needs to be improved and the long waiting times that we currently face must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

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West Midlands Quality Review Service have been tasked to produce independent reports on various areas of our health service. Of the ones that have been completed to date, there are areas where compliance is less than 40%. This is clearly unacceptable and, whilst measures to improve matters are being taken funding does not allow for this to be completed in a timely manner.

The main problem with the reports is that they have no legal standing. West Midlands Quality Review Service have been invited to produce their reports but there is no legal requirement for any of their recommendations to be actioned. This is why I believe that the only long term solution to raising and maintaining standards is **the appointment of an independent health regulator** to ensure compliance with best practice.

This is no criticism of the frontline staff who do an exceptional job in what can be difficult circumstances.

TV Licences

I think that the recent initiative by government to make those over 75 pay for their TV licences is abhorrent and, if re-elected, will work with others to ensure that a **free licence is re-instated** for this age group.





Education

Ensuring that our young children and young people achieve their full potential is the best investment we can make for the future of the Island.

We will introduce a university grant system based on achievement. Those who are academically talented will not have to face knowing that they cannot afford to go to university.

We need to expand the assistance given to those who do not wish to go to university. **Further education and apprenticeships should be equally valued.**

Many people, particularly grandparents, chose to set money aside to help with the education of young people through an **educational deed of covenant**. We believe that this should be encouraged and that tax relief for these should be re-introduced.

Economic Growth

The single biggest factor to encouraging economic growth is to ensure **a level playing field for all**. Many companies have come to the Island to investigate setting up here only to leave after finding out that some companies appear to have more preferential treatment than others.

There are many examples during the last administration where the tender process, if there has been one, has not been open and transparent. Just two example

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are **the Post Office for which there was a closed tender process and the Nunnery which was sold under market value** without government placing it on the open market or even asking for expressions of interest.

I do not believe that there should be confidentiality clauses in agreements with government unless there are the most exceptional circumstances.

There are currently two other reasons given by business for not relocating here and they are transport costs and energy costs. I will deal with these in the next section.

We should meet with businesses and ask them what encouraged them to come here and what would encourage them to stay. We should meet with business sectors off Island and ask what we could do to make the Island more attractive to them.

Government should provide the right environment for business to flourish but should have no part in running any commercial enterprise.

Energy Costs

The agreement that government entered into with Manx Gas is clearly not in the interest of Manx residents or businesses. A way has to be found to resolve this before the end of the contract which has some four years remaining.





Electricity is also roughly double that which our UK counterparts are paying and again this cannot be in the interest of residents and businesses.

An independent energy regulator should be appointed as a matter of urgency to resolve both of these areas.

Transport costs

Transport costs affect every aspect of our lives. Every single thing that is produced here is affected by transport costs. Even beef and lamb that have been reared and subsequently sold here have been affected by the cost of importing feed.

We are tied in with the Steam Packet until 2020 and they have an option to extend the User Agreement until 2026. We should not give them a new contract until there has been an **open tender process**. Currently, only vessels of a certain size can use Douglas harbour but, as government are considering a deep water berth, this may change in the near future. This means that the restrictions on size of vessel would no longer apply and that more shipping companies may be inclined to take part in the tender process.

Government Reform

Our system of government is far from being democratic. You currently have no say in who your Chief Minister will be or what path the next administration will take.

You should have a fundamental right to have your say in these processes. Change does not happen overnight but a start has to be made or nothing will progress.

Immediately after the Chief Minister is elected and he has appointed his Ministers, they should agree and produce a **Programme for Government** covering the five years of the administration. This should be revisited and amended annually. Naturally, all the big ticket items would be included in this and everyone would then know the direction that Government was planning and could hold it to account. This would also form their collective responsibility and all Ministers would have a free vote on anything not in the Programme for Government.

I agree with most of the recommendations made by Lord Lisvane in his recent report and particularly that members of Legislative Council should not be Ministers or Departmental Members and should not vote on any matter involving policy or finance.

I also agree that there should be no more than one department member in each department.

It would follow that more MHKs would then be free to perform that vital role of scrutiny without being conflicted by their other duties.





Law and Order

Our low crime rate has been cited as one of the main reasons that people chose to stay here or choose to relocate here and it is essential that this is maintained. There are other areas that are not as satisfactory or that would benefit from improvement. Reported domestic abuse rose sharply last year with an increase of over 50% reported cases. The Chief Constable believes that some of this is because victims are being treated more sympathetically than in the past and are not as reluctant to come forward. Whatever the reason there can be no acceptable excuse for domestic abuse in any form and the misery that it causes. Apart from the police, every case can have implications for health, education, social care and many more. In fact, recent research has shown that for every £1 spent in preventing domestic abuse it saves government as a whole some £8. So to prevent domestic abuse not only makes sense from a human cost of view, it also makes sense financially.



Mediation

More needs to be done to promote mediation as a first step in any dispute resolution.

No Fault Divorces

When a relationship breaks down it can never be a pleasant experience but it should be made as stress free as possible particularly where any children are involved.

A third reason for divorce should be introduced whereby both parties can agree that the relationship is over but that neither party is to blame.

Manx Youth Parliament

At present we are faced with the dual problem of low voter turnout amongst young people and the associated problem of young people often feeling ignored and excluded from the political process. One exciting and apparently proven way to solve this, as indicated by the enthusiasm generated by the Scottish approach, is to create a Youth Parliament. Moving beyond the current forum of Junior Tynwald, the **Manx Youth Parliament** will meet on the much more frequent basis of once a month, creating a constant political voice for the youth of the Isle of Man.

In its composition, the Youth Parliament will feature elected representatives from different age groups in the Island's secondary schools, with elections occurring every two years, ensuring that all students have a chance to fully engage with the scheme. This process of selecting MYPs and/or standing for election will not only directly engage young people with the democratic process from an early age, but will help to create politically active citizens for the future. Young people tell us that a way of engaging with them is to teach the Manx system of government and Manx politics to all young people over the age of 14.





The Digitised Future

You only have to look around and see how technology has changed even in the last decade and is continuing to change at an ever increasing rate. It is essential that sufficient resource is allocated to ensure that, if we can't be ahead of the game, we are at least equal to it. By embracing technology, the quality of information can be vastly improved as with the speed of obtaining it. It will also allow us to make efficiency savings whilst at the same time improving the quality of all of our lives.

Respect for our Elderly

The previous generation have enabled us to have what we take for granted today. We should respect them and ensure that they have all that they need to enjoy a good quality of life.

We must ensure that the basic state pension is sufficient to give them an acceptable standard of living.

Assistance should be provided to enable them to remain in their own homes for as long as possible.

There should be a **flexible personal care** and support budget to enhance their choice.

We currently have an Armed Forces Champion and I think that it is time we had a **Seniors' Champion** as well who would be fully conversant with all the



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problems faced by our elderly and to act as the interface between them and the various government departments.

Forces Veterans

Those who have served in the forces should command our respect and I would very much support the introduction of a **National Defence Medal**.

I have been a political member in Dept Environment Food and Agriculture and am currently a political member in the Dept of Infrastructure.

I also been a member of the committee looking into the Care and Upbringing of Children and was Chair of the Select Committee on Animal Welfare.

I am a member of the Hills Community Council and enjoy having positive input into the current local issues.





KATE BEECROFT
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DOUGLAS SOUTH



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