

Political Questions – Geraldine O’Neill (2011)

Why this candidate wishes to be a member of the House of Keys?

I believe I possess the personal skills to be effective and successful in Government. From my professional background, as a teacher, I work as part of a team to motivate, analyse and assess information. I have successful business experience as a Recruitment Consultant, I am a linguist and I have been involved in International Trade Negotiations. Therefore, throughout my varied career I have successfully networked with many different organisations. I am a problem solver and although we face difficult economic challenges over the next five years, if elected I can work positively and constructively in Government. In my opinion, we need candidates with varied skills and abilities in order to tackle these demanding issues. As a Manx person I want to safeguard and promote our unique culture and identity for future generations.

How well does the candidate think that the present?

All Governments have faced extreme challenges due to the worldwide economic crisis, in comparison to many other jurisdictions, including major economies such as the EU and

If the candidate were elected, what would their priorities be at a constituency level?

America, we are doing considerably well. However, I believe we need greater examination of capital project costs versus benefits, this needs to be the priority of the next Government.

To hold regular constituency clinics/surgeries to advise, help and resolve issues of importance for constituents. To liaise and network with Local Government agencies such as Douglas Borough Council, Neighbourhood Police, Age Concern, Chamber of Commerce and Youth Services. I believe this is essential to provide an overview for all sections of the community living and working in Douglas East. The completion of the regeneration project to make Douglas a more attractive place to live work and visit. Affordable housing for first time buyers. Social Legislation regarding Derelict properties/ rent restrictions and inspections by Government bodies. Tougher penalties and less bureaucracy. Environmental health concerns. Proper maintenance of the IRIS sewage system.

If the candidate were elected, what would their priorities be at a national level?

Continued and sustained investment in Education to provide all our young people with the necessary qualifications and skills to compete in the job market. Health provision for all sections of society, both young and old. Standardised employees contractual working agreements to ensure fair practice for all.

Renewable energy: explore wind, tidal and wave solutions for our future energy needs. Economy: Balance the budget i.e. capital/ revenue spending in order to deliver the educational, health, social and energy requirements of our nation.

What does the candidate view as the main political and social issues facing the Isle of Man in the next 5 years?

Economic issues i.e. balancing the budget yet still maintaining vital Education, Health and Social Services funding. Government needs to reduce its expenditure by analysing the priorities for spending in each department. We will need to examine the staffing structures to achieve economies through more efficient running of departments. We will face serious social issues if we do not continue to fund essential services such as higher unemployment levels, lack of health

How would the candidate deal with the challenges/issues over the next five years - as stated in the Main Social Issues question?

investment could lead to more cost levels administering illnesses etc.

We must offset these challenges by creating wealth and seeking to market the Island successfully i.e. expand the niche markets such as High Tech Industries, Tourism and try to develop Research and Development projects which the Isle of Man could benefit from financially.

What does the candidate feel has changed for the better, for Isle of Man residents, in the past five years - giving examples?

There have been many successful infrastructure projects such as new schools, new prison, marinas in Douglas and Peel, water treatment projects and refurbishment of Public Sector housing. We have also had continuous economic growth despite the economic world crisis.

What does the candidate feel has changed for the worse for Isle of Man residents, in the past 5 years - give examples?

We have felt the effects of the current economic worldwide crisis, the reduction in VAT returns, increased energy costs due to factors outside of our internal control plus difficulties with the Reciprocal Health Agreement negotiations. Overall our relationship with the UK has deteriorated both on a political and economic level.

Does the candidate feel that the Isle of Man has been too reliant upon the financial services industry?

Yes, it has in the past but now as a result of the world financial crisis we have begun to seek other areas for wealth growth such as the Space Industry, e-Gaming and the IT Sector.

If The candidate feels there is too much Financial Services reliance, how does the candidate feel that they would further diversify the Manx economy?

We need to continue to expand other options/ methods of attracting successful and viable new industries to the Island. The Department of Economic Development needs to be leading this approach with active participation from the Private Sector. Utilising the experience and business 'know how' of the successful Entrepreneurs we have on the Island to advise as to how we can profitably take advantage of Government assets.

Is the candidate in favour of independence from the United Kingdom?

Yes, if we could survive economically and politically, we would need a Referendum to have majority public support. To achieve this our bilateral relations beyond the UK would have to be strengthened and developed.

Is the candidate in favour of -and if a standing member, did they vote for- a popularly elected Legislative

Yes, I am in favour of this, because I believe all levels of Government need to be elected in a Democratic

Council?

Is the candidate in favour of -and if a standing member, did they vote for- a popularly elected Chief Minister?

Society.

If a popularly elected Chief Minister is a feasible option, I would want to see 'checks and balances' in operation to ensure any such Chief Minister had the support of the majority of the members of Tynwald, otherwise the day to day running of constructive Government would be impossible.

Is the candidate in favour of nationalisation of air and or sea services to and from the Isle of Man?

No, I believe the Government needs to be a partner in these vital transport services. However, we need business expertise to operate these services profitably.

Is the candidate in favour of onshore wind farms in the Isle of Man?

I would like to see impartial research to backup the financial benefits of this project and to explore the other energy options such as tidal and wave energy.

Is the candidate in favour of Means testing for "universal" benefits and social housing?

We already have means testing for most of our 'universal' benefits and social housing. We may need to examine possible threshold levels for Child benefit allowances in the future. However, we need to be careful to protect the vulnerable sections of society by not inflicting



'cuts' which could create an underclass.