

Andrew Barton – Garff

Political Questions (2016)

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

To make a difference. I spent most if not all of my working life standing in the corner at the back as a member of the media in fact as a photographer you cannot question but only watch. I wish to stand in front, question challenge and change, work together as a team and to represent the constituents of Garff.

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

We need to grow the economy that goes without saying, we benefit from a very large, professional and experienced industry and they know what they are doing. I think we should get behind industry and understand how the Government can help and support our local business ambassadors and encourage industry to continue to grow our economy.

Whilst it is extremely important to be balancing the books, investment in the road infrastructure is now critical, it's a false economy not to be spending on all the roads, they are decaying, we're not going to stop using them and investment is needed, especially Douglas promenade. I believe the horse tram rails are here, Douglas Council are replacing the promenade lighting, so I think the

Government should concentrate on the aesthetics of Douglas and get the road done making it attractive to visitors and for residents alike.

We have thousands of sq ft of empty office space, we need to ask what is being done to fill this space with productive business AND workers all contributing to better our financial community. I would work to find incentives that might turn this problem around.

Why has Nationwide decided to pull out of the Island? We need to know in order that we could plug this gap and prevent other established business from leaving.

We need to get behind recreating the Isle of Man as a cold water holiday destination, we have empty boarded-up hotels which will blight our hopefully newly refreshed promenade I would like to see nothing more than a thriving well-presented Island with attractive tourist accommodation. I would like to work closely with the tourism team to see how this can be achieved. I would go further and like to explore how we can maximise the benefits of the 30,000 visitors we receive annually (TT) on a parish by parish basis.

I would like to see what we can do to

work with the Tourism team to develop our maritime based tourism activities. This can also be said for flying clubs there is much that can be looked at to see what can be done in relation to attracting more visits from private aviators.

Whilst the coach parties are important and good for local spend, are we sure that we are maximising this opportunity. We have large parties coming here and yet the visiting coach drivers have told me they have yet to see a Government official physically welcoming them here. What is the purpose of the Welcome Centre and how can we get the Government to better engage with our visitors.

The finance industry has done a fantastic job in growing our economy over a long period of time, but the age of austerity is now upon us. I am very concerned with the way Government officials are spending the money generated by local taxes and would like to thoroughly review the Government's spending policies.

All too often tenders are put out and for the most part are awarded to off Island companies especially around motorsport events, yes these lucky off Island companies may well set up a local small

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

office but we need to give priority to local companies already established and engage with them in order that they can be assisted to offer what is needed rather than just take the quite incorrect stance that ' it cannot be as good as a UK based operation', I see this as supporting our business and should be enshrined as policy, so allowing monies spent to be re invested in our community and not sent away off Island.

The constituency has grown in size considerably, and now encompasses the area north of Onchan Harbour. What I would like to impress upon the constituency is that the MHK not only works for you but is equally available to you. Whatever issue develops during the next life of the Government I want to make sure that people can easily reach me to discuss any issue that affects them.

Fortunately, the enlarged constituency benefits from 2 MHK's and it goes without saying that whomever I share Garff with, I am very keen to work with for the benefit of all of the constituencies residents.

Laxey Regeneration is looking good now but I believe that there is still more that can be done. We already live in the most beautiful part of the Island but I will

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

push for continued regeneration in all areas so that we all continue to enjoy a very high quality of life.

I am at a loss as to why the Laxey bridge took so long to re-build, especially as the TT bike event in Laxey was forced to move to another part of the Island. I want to know why guarantees were not given to ensure the bridge was open on time allowing Laxey's traditional event to continue on the beach front!

The current administration has had a number of very difficult issue to deal with, and perhaps their communication of how they have handled these could have been improved.

As a resident of the Island, it would be easy to think that the Cabinet has been slow to react, and failed to achieve much in relation to the big issues that it has been facing: pensions, under financed health service, declining finance services industry, Brexit, investments of our precious Reserves, failing road infrastructure.

I have been reporting on many of these issues for years and whilst I know that the Ministers are working hard across all of these issues and have very good reasons

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

why progress is often slower than expected, better open and frank communication is essential.

I would push for a very clear, open and honest method for communication with the public.

Brexit and the Economy have to be the most important factors because without continued growth we will quickly see a drop in Government revenues which can only lead to either increased taxation (we don't want another 'toilet tax' forced upon us) or a cut in services that are close to the bone as it is. The Brexit has shown us that people do not like scaremongering, so we have to face up to these issues in a frank, open and honest way.

Additionally, I believe that the Government spends far too much of our money unnecessarily. As a member of the next Administration I will be asking how DED is spending its budget - just how many 'business class flights' were taken in the last 5 years, how much this cost the electorate and were these necessary? Government has its rules in place and I want to make sure that excesses in travel, accommodation, subsistence and hospitality are prevented from

happening. Too many of our officials have been traveling in too much comfort for too long and I want to take a long, and close look at what has been going on.

I have alluded to Douglas Promenade and the creaking road infrastructure, but with ever increasing demands for a higher population, I believe that we must focus on improving our existing infrastructure.

Finally, who would argue that our health service is adequately funded or run? I have a great deal of respect for Minister Howard Quayle MHK and I hope that he remains in place to continue the excellent work that he has done so far. We want a strong, well run and efficient health service with low waiting times and excellent standards of hygiene and I will push for the necessary funding and reforms to enable this to happen.

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

Economy: The economy is the be all and end all of the Islands ability to provide the highest quality of life for its residents. Without a growing economy we cannot provide more than what is presently available.

I recognise that industry do a fantastic

job of growing the economy and I want to support their efforts in whatever way I can. Yes, they do it for their own reasons, but I want to look at ways that we can actively support our industry.

DED is primarily responsible for the economy and they have produced the Vision 2020 document, but I am concerned by the reliance upon the digital economy to bring in the vast amounts of growth that it predicts. I want to know more. I want to know what the DED teams responsible are doing, I want to see their strategy documents and I want to meet and assess the people we have charged with this very important job.

Frankly, I don't think that the civil servants doing these jobs are doing the best job possible and I want to challenge what they are doing, why they are doing it and how much of our money they are spending to do it. Most of all I want to know what their results have been. I am sceptical but will be delighted to be proven wrong, but I can assure you that they won't pull the wool over my eyes.

Government Spending on Travel and expenses. This is a sore point with me because as far as I am concerned there is little to no justification at all that civil

servants can travel around the globe in Business Class seats and expensive luxury hotels claiming huge expenses whilst traveling on our 'dime'! There is no justification that I can see and I want answers. For a start I want to know the costs and once we know that, I want to introduce reforms that better reflects the costs involved. I want true open and honest accountability and I want these figures openly available for inspection and scrutiny.

Government Spending on Infrastructure. I am an advocate of improving our urban environment. I think that better looking urban areas will make it nicer to live here and leave visitors with a better appreciation for the Isle of Man. I would like to see further significant improvements to our urban areas and villages. But I want improvements done right so we are not continually digging up freshly laid roads or pavements and I want them done quickly and on time so I want to see greater accountability by senior civil servants and closer monitoring of performance.

Government Spending on Health. I support our health service and I know many people have had life-saving operations and quality of life saving procedures. I applaud every one of our

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

health service staff. But there are always improvements to be made and I would like to see the senior health team encouraging and rewarding staff for genuine improvements, if a valuable contribution to cost saving or efficient working practises can be made I would like to see greater appreciation and recognition.

I would also just like to say thank you to our health services staff, you do a terrific job, often under very difficult circumstances.

I tend to concur with Minister John Shimmin MHK in this matter, "there are thousands of dedicated staff in the public sector, working hard to serve the people of the Isle of Man. It is not easy to ask them to pay more for less in their pensions, but further change is necessary to secure the long-term future of these schemes.'

We must all recognise that the problem has built up over decades and there is no quick fix. It is pointless spending time debating why it has happened, and we are not alone. There are many other Governments facing the realities of pensions obligations, fund deficits and increased longevity of pensioners.

I believe that it is not the role of politicians to impose their own solution to the problem, but we should rely upon the experience and expertise of the professionals who have years of experience in handling these types of issues to come up with recommendations and for us, as members of Government to take proper, considered, sober assessment of and to base our decisions under our collective responsibility of managing public finances for the benefit of our residents.

We may have to take some hard decisions resulting in greater contributions from Scheme members coupled with reduced benefits, but in doing so we must also explore every possible alternative for closing the gap as quickly and rationally as possible.

For my point of view, I would support protecting the pensions funds whilst encouraging new recruitment and retention of the professional staff that are needed to deliver services. I would not like to see drastic changes that negatively affect the number of people contributing into it. '

'Additionally, I agree with Mr Shimmin that the obligations created to date

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

between Government and public service pensioners is a debt that has already been incurred and must be honoured.

Our Urban development, what has been done is a great start for the better, I think that the star has to be our railways. Whilst everything else appears to have stagnated they have been building new rolling stock acquiring new locos, I know that there have been issues but lets be fair the repairs have been rectified at no additional cost to the IOM. We are getting a rejuvenated railway station in Douglas, we have a superb dining train, promotions galore to attract customers and passengers including tourists, we can dine at night on Snaefell summit and enjoy an improved Laxey station, they have added greatly to Laxeys regeneration.. One can only wonder what they will do with the Horse trams given time and a chance. They certainly have my support and would get more if I am elected.

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

There is a noticeable decline in the resident populations contentment, especially with the current Government. I would encourage more engagement, to work as a team with all levels of

government and residents alike. Residents are financially more challenged as the cost of living here has grown and grown a lot. Our young school leavers have to make a difficult decision about debt if they wish to go to University, our education system is so good that often students may well find they have ample qualifications to attend the university of their choice but lack the funds or wish to avoid the debt and if they return they cannot afford a home, this is not unique to the island but new ways of helping them need to be found if not we have to expand on the ideas we already have.

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

Yes Finance and egaming

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

As already suggested I would push for an increase in tourism. It may well be that with the BREXIT holidays abroad will be less attractive for a multitude of reasons, we should harness this and step up the efforts immediately to promote the Island in the UK more enthusiastically and take advantage of this possible opportunity. I would push this as a matter of urgency. New agriculture needs developing, we have a disease free bee population lets sell this and export our disease free

'stock' in fact we have an agriculture which is disease free why not develop into the seed industry. These ideas might need some specialist assessment but seems logical .

We need to revisit and re awaken and encourage the space industry. Satelites are big business and likely to get bigger. I am reliably informed that we are now 3rd in the world in this particular niche.
(source Mannsat)

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

No. There has been talk of a MEXIT, whilst I would not rule it out sometime in the future I would advocate waiting to see how the BREXIT is handled by the UK and Europe itself, the finance industry is currently re alining it would be folly to encourage it to lose faith in the Isle of Man.

If you are, in which areas?

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

No not immediately, however

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

That being said change is inevitable as opinions, needs and economies modernise the parliamentary system needs to evolve, evolving is more gradual than change and therefore

Who should have the responsibility of electing the Chief Minister?

easier to accept and introduce. I feel that LegCo needs to 'evolve' as it is generally regarded by the population as unfairly elected. Careful consideration would be my stance.

In an ideal world the Chief Minister would be popularly elected, unfortunately I do not believe that we would get the best man or woman to undertake the local, national and even global representation that the Island must have. A chief Minister is required to not only represent his/her constituents but indeed to work closely with the business sector, UK and international politicians. Taking this all in to account then the current method appears to be the best but possibly less popular. I do not believe that any possible problem lies with the current method of choosing a chief but in fact that the chief chooses the ministers. Perhaps the ministers should be selected by the House.

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

No a nationalised airline would stem investment in the routes from the 'mainline' airlines, a national airline would not be big enough to compete and would probably be only able to serve a small route. Having said that the IOM should be attempting to own some

key landing slots which could then secure that destination and allow an airline to use/rent/lease those slots. In the short term this may well cost but with the right destinations and the right airline it would be profitable for the airline and the IOM, should the airline no longer wish to operate to/from the IOM, we would not lose that destination.

Sea services are a little more complex, I understand that freight is the profitable 'passenger', all of us have goods, food, parcels in fact something brought here everyday, but we travel by sea as a passenger maybe a couple of times a year or so on average. I believe we are lucky to have the Steam Packet, a dedicated service to the Island rather than an off Island company offering 'a bus service' As long as the Steam Packet service is fit and regular and well priced ,which the IOMSPC currently appears to be promising for the future we should treat it as a privately owned National Service.

Any way generating the required finances to Nationalise would be a very difficult and complex argument to present.

Yes, some may say that that they are blight on the horizon it's a simple fact

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

that renewable energy is here and can even be seen outside of our waters. Within our waters they would generate power and much needed revenue and employment. Lets not let it get in the way of our sea routes/communication however.

DEFA has made a policy of emissions reduction by 80% by 2050, whilst this is a fair period of time it would have to be said that the project would have to be initiated NOW. I agree totally with the current governments emissions reductions plans and it seems to be scheduled with an achievable timescale. I would suggest a subsidy/ Government assistance in some form for individuals and building companies to build environmentally friendly homes and encourage the use of electrically powered vehicles, after all in our Island they should work perfectly.

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

Yes

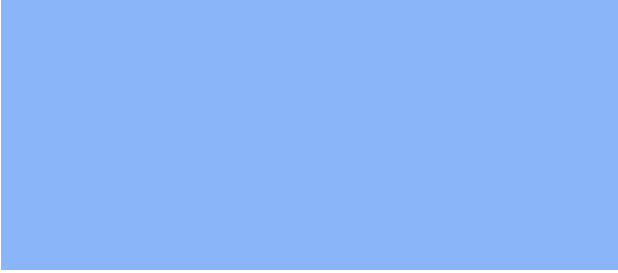
If you are, in which areas?

Whilst I believe that Government is for all and should not be class related, I think we need to review not only who receives

support from the Government, how much and why. In relation to means testing, I don't like the general idea of 'means testing' but where it is appropriate I can understand the arguments in support of asking those that can afford it to pay more in or take less out.

We have a caring Government and we look after the vulnerable in our society and I applaud that and will always support the Government's efforts for social inclusivity. At the same time, unnecessary and inappropriate expenditure is a drain on all of us, whilst I want the support to go to the people that need it, I want it withdrawn from those that don't. I support rigorous assessments of all social payments to ensure only the people in need get the help that they need.

I don't expect those that have worked hard all of their lives to go without or pay for something that others get for free. It's not fair, but one of the defining characteristics of a good and caring society is for those that can help those that can't, and in this respect means testing can be an effective leveller. I would like to explore how the Government can introduce the wider introduction of means testing but would



also wish to look at how it can give something back to those who support our society through additional contributions.