

## Louise Whitelegg – Ayre and Michael

### Political Questions (2016)

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

If we really want things to get better on the Island, we can't just sit on the sidelines and gripe about it. It's up to us to make things happen. I want to help make those things happen by being part of a House of Keys that can actually get to grips with the huge job it faces in the next five years and that puts the interests of the Manx people first and foremost in all that they do.

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

Every part of Government has to be up to the job. And to make sure of that all levels of Government have to be truly accountable and truly transparent in the decisions they make and the actions they take.

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

I've been asking the voters of Ayre and Michael what they think the priorities should be in the constituency and those are what you'll see in my manifesto. Certain issues though come immediately to mind such as the problems of coastal erosion and flooding, how much the Jurby Medical Centre is used, local bus services, speeding vehicles, supporting our local farmers, businesses and industry and helping local village centres to

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

remain as the beating hearts of their communities.

We don't know the full facts behind many of the decisions made over the last five years and to be frank there's really no point in crying over spilt milk. But it's been the Government's apparent attitude of "We're not interested in your concerns, it's just for you as the Manx people to like it or lump it" that's really made people angry and disillusioned. I don't think there's ever been a time when Tynwald has had had such a bad reputation as it has now. Yes, of course sometimes Governments do have to take unpopular decisions but to steamroller them through Tynwald again and again just makes the electorate think that Tynwald lives in a separate world that doesn't really care about them. And I think most people would agree that the administration has handled that really basic problem of the disconnect between the people and their Parliament very very badly.

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

I think undoubtedly the biggest problem we're going to have is sorting out the pension fund. Which then creates the equally big problem of balancing the books without creating even more

suffering for the vulnerable or harming the economy on which we all depend. And in order to tackle these huge and urgent problems, we absolutely have to have a Government whose structure and machinery is fully up to the frankly mammoth tasks that we're facing.

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

We need to come up with a clear long term strategy for both Government and the Island as a whole which we can all get behind. Not just empty words in glossy brochures but a real and binding commitment. And that means there really must be full legal accountability for actions taken by anyone in Government. Only then can we have an administration in which the Manx people can truly place their trust.

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

We can't keep kicking the can down the road because there is no more road left. The current scheme needs closing to new entrants and replacing with a defined contributions scheme. That way, whilst we are left with the existing scheme to tackle, we can still make sure that public sector employees continue to receive pensions packages that attract the staff the public sector needs whilst still being affordable to the Manx taxpayer.

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

I'm sure that there are some things that have improved in the last five years, although good news stories are not the ones that make the headlines. Our high streets are starting to look smarter, we have some new schools on the Island, recorded crime remains relatively low and the Island is still a safe place to live.

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

As I said earlier, we don't know the full details behind many of the decisions Government has taken over that time so it's not really possible to give specific examples. In general though, we've seen things for example like real incomes for most people stand still and for some actually fall as the basic costs of living on the Island have just risen and risen. And sadly I think that many tough decisions have been dodged to be left to the new House of Keys.

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

Certainly there's still quite a dependency upon the finance sector but that's being overtaken now by an over-reliance on E-gaming. We need to take great care that we don't repeat the mistakes of the past of having if not all then certainly most of our eggs in one basket.

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

Ultimately it's businesses that help to grow the economy but the Government can play a big part in helping businesses. A strong Government can do this by supportive legislation, purchasing practices and a better targeting of promotion of the Island to the wider world. The global economy is a very uncertain place so we have to plan for as many possibilities as we can and make sure we see what's coming rather than it simply hitting us.

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

I think certainly with the changes that will happen now in the UK because of the BREXIT vote that's something the Island needs to keep in mind.

**If you are, in which areas?**

We have to really look deeply at our political relationship with the UK Government and the taxes we share with them.

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

Absolutely. I was very pleased to read Lord Lisvane's report and I think it gives us a great opportunity to tackle some of the problems in the present system that have left many people feeling ignored and that Tynwald sits in an ivory Wedding Cake.

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

We have to have an open election for the Chief Minister and properly specified powers for MLCs.

**Who should have the responsibility of electing the Chief Minister?**

That would have to be for the House of Keys to do in an open election. Whilst having the Chief Minister elected by the voters is basically a good idea, it would need wholesale changes to the Island's constitution.

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

I think we have to have control of key air routes and landing slots. With the likely expansion of Heathrow we must ensure that we have a guaranteed access there once again. And we need to get back to having good air links with other business centres which are absolutely key to competing in a modern global economy. We need to secure the Island's sea lifeline and improve services but we must take care not to be forced into deals to do so which aren't in the Island's best interests.

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

Of course, so long as they're for the Manx benefit. We would have to make sure that the environment is properly protected from any adverse effects. One

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

**If you are, in which areas?**

particular type of project I'd like to see looked into further is the use of tidal generators given how they can help in reducing coastal erosion, which is of course a big concern in Ayre & Michael.

Sadly we don't have unlimited resources so that necessarily means we have to do our best to make sure that those resources go to the people in most need.

I don't think you can generalise like that. I think it has to be considered on a case by case basis.