

Pat Ayres – Ayre and Michael

Political Questions (2016)

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

To work with the new team to develop policies that will protect the people of the island from the outfall from the EU referendum in the UK. Also to place the IOM in a position of strength in the changing economy of the post EU Europe.

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

The economy of course but also the ageing population and their situation. Not forgetting the young people as education must be maintained to retain them on the island post FE and to bring them to that point in the most efficient manner possible.

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

It is a new constituency of an incredible size, consequently there are many issues. The two things that need national attention at the moment are the erosion issue at Glen Willan where the cliffs are crumbling, one decent storm and houses will be in danger of collapse, waiting until the situation gets urgent isn't the answer, work is needed now to protect the land at the coast.

Also erosion at the point of Ayre is getting worse, the boundary of Wrights Pit is being washed away weekly, we

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

don't know exactly what is in there, it needs addressing before a potential ecological disaster is realised.

Housing, there is a need for housing in the constituency, efforts must be made to identify suitable sites which are sustainable without the need for major changes to the existing villages.

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

Very poorly, no 'plan B' in most cases and others appearing to be a 'rabbit in the headlights' moment. Waiting to see what happen is not the answer.

Ageing population and the loss of so many talented youngsters who appear to see little future in the IOM for themselves.

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

Encouraging business to set up in the island, bringing with them talent and their families so that the economy benefits from the increase in spend. As people drop out of the working population there must be something to fill the gap in national income to support those retiring here. This can only be done through taxation. Retirees have to budget for their lives, a steady income is necessary for that without capitalising on their hard earned savings. Pensions and

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

other benefits must be protected and stealth taxes curbed.

Education will be needed for growing families in respect of grants for FE and a robust education system at the start if we are to reap the benefits of that young talent and keep them on island when they graduate.

The deficit is there, we must manage that. Stop taking from the reserves for vanity projects and stop investing in 'snake oil' schemes that do not guarantee a decent return. It's not government's money to spend without validation, it is money that the people have paid in from their earnings and they need to see it spent wisely.

End any final salary schemes within government, return to the gov pension scheme with real solutions that will generate the income needed to support retired members. No government employees to return after retiring until at least 5 years after post, train up present employees to get rid of the situation where ex-employees return as 'advisors' shortly after taking a large pay-out on voluntary retirement. We have the skills already, nurture them, don't stifle them.

What has changed in the past five years

Difficult one so soon after the 'Brexit'.

**for Isle of Man residents for the better?
(Please give examples)**

There is turmoil at the moment in some sectors so the immediate future is difficult to foresee and may impact on the benefits from the last 5 years.

There has been a lot of investment in the service sector, hotels (Ramsey Park hotel in Ramsey and the new Mannanin Hotel in Douglas) retail outlets (Costa, Starbucks etc around the island) New operators at some campsites for casual visitors and technology companies investing in infrastructure (Currys) and R&D. The regulatory industry, (Shipping register, Plane register) Some new schools have appeared replacing run down and out of date facilities enhancing the learning environment for the children of the island.

The sewage system is being improved, particularly in the north of the island around Ramsey and Andreas.

The roads are being slowly upgraded and rebuilt as a result of the former actions but also emphasis of more rural roads which have been forgotten about for a long time.

Communication has improved immensely during the last 5 years with Wi-Fi becoming available to many areas where it didn't exist before, still a long way to go, but with the communications being controlled by only two companies, we are at their mercy.

New marinas in Douglas and Peel greatly

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

enhancing the environment in those areas.

Environmental improvements in some areas, not to everyone's liking I admit but it is a vast improvement on the visual aspects of many areas that were becoming tired and unloved.

A lack of leadership from government, failing to plan ahead far enough and only reacting when someone else points out the failings.

Lack of accountability for mistakes, "We are where we are" 'Lessons have been learnt' etc; with little indication as to what they are going to do about it.

The imposition of stealth taxes on water and waste charges particularly.

Government subsidies being removed from facilities companies for instance with the imposition of charges, quickly becoming taxes, replacing them but no subsequent reduction in taxes or rates as a result.

The creeping corporatisation of the post office and the hospitals. Waiting lists increasing due to lack of long term strategic planning and poor management or lead from the political members. Missed opportunities (Driverless vehicle research, alternative energy research) from outside our sphere of interest.

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

Of course, the finance industry. In such a global economy that we live in companies can move their base of operation overnight in some cases, we must make it advantageous to them to stay and grow. This isn't happening all the time, there is uncertainty in that market which is global, we should be encouraging growth and tax concessions could be necessary to do so.

"A bird in the hand is better than two in a bush".

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

The eco-system of the island is brilliant, look at health food production. Our air quality is excellent and the ground fertile. Tap into the biodiversity aspects of the food economy, clean air and healthy produce. We have the space to let this industry expand.

Alternative energy markets, wave energy, tidal energy. We could become a test-bed for these innovative areas of research. We certainly have the tides and the wind to utilise and help to develop this area of innovation in the face of dwindling supplies of fossil fuel.

Are you in favour of increased

I think the balance is about right. We

independence from the United Kingdom?

can make our own decisions on most things but also benefit from the size and economic connections of the UK. Of course post Brexit we do not know what is planned. Once it all settles down we will have a better picture but in the meantime we should be looking at all areas of our island and plan for the worst, but hope for the best. So, not at this time but not ruling it out for the future.

If you are, in which areas?

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

Very much so

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

LegCo is meant as an advisory chamber, we now have many members of that house acting in governmental departments. This erodes their ability to independently scrutinise legislation. I think they serve a purpose but as they do not have a mandate from the people they should not have a say in managing the country beyond a 'watching brief'. I think reform is coming, starting with the new constituencies. Better representation for the people having two representatives in Keys, two sets of eyes on the area and fighting for them must be better. A smaller council of ministers would

increase democracy in the house and the ending of 'Collective responsibility' which gives CoMin an inbuilt majority on nearly all votes. I would rather the vote is won by superiority of argument than superiority of numbers.

Who should have the responsibility of electing the Chief Minister?

Members of the house of Keys.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

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?

Travel, TV licences, Rates, Family allowances.