

## Tim Craig – Onchan

### Political Questions (2016)

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

To improve the quality of decision making and legislation for the benefit of our Island, and to help restore people's faith in national politicians.

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

Reduction of central government by empowering local authorities, robust promotion of the Isle of Man as an international business centre and returning the economy to a stable position. This should all be underpinned by clear policy objectives for the whole term of the next parliament.

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

As at national level, stronger and more empowered local authorities providing services to their districts with less interference from central government. There is a group of people often referred to as "the squeezed middle" who have found their financial position undermined over the years by successive decisions of central government, and the time has come to restore the benefits they have lost over time.

**How well do you think the present administration has handled the major**

The present administration has dealt badly with the majority of major issues

### **challenges of the past five years?**

over the last five years, which is why my manifesto says that the inefficiency and introspection of the last five years has to change. Not enough thought has been given to consequences when action has been taken, and too much unquestioning reliance has been placed on the judgement of civil servants.

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

The decision by the United Kingdom to leave the EU, and the knock-on effects of those negotiations must be one of the significant issues, especially how the UK will retain business links with both European Union countries and the rest of the world. Likewise how it develops its relationships internally with devolved nations such as Scotland and Northern Ireland will impact on our own links with all of the UK countries. There is no point in trying to second guess how this will evolve, but we must be vigilant in protecting our own interests.

The diversity of our population is another factor likely to be affected by Brexit, depending on what restrictions are applied in terms of residence and freedom to work on nationals of other countries. That also applies to how we develop our relationship with the UK in terms of benefits, pensions, residence, etc.

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

As above, it is too early to make definitive answers other than to say by vigilance on any proposed developments, and by strengthening our relationships with other countries holding devolved government in the UK.

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

This is one example of financial mismanagement of the last administration. I have already said that I want stronger and more empowered local authorities and reduced central government. This naturally leads to fewer contributors to the scheme to pay benefits. There has to be a long-term strategy to restore an asset base of investments which are ring-fenced and can be used to support the pensions fund. Fund management and performance will be critical in the next few years, and the monitoring of investment performance will need to be stringent.

Let's not forget that the pension is one of the biggest attractors to jobs in the public sector. In the private sector, there are a variety of fringe benefits from bonus schemes and health care to cash-in hand and the ability to take personal benefit of scrap materials. To lose the

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

pension provision entirely is not viable unless it is replaced with something else, but I am not yet in a position to propose a definitive solution to this problem.

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

I struggle to bring any examples to mind and look forward to hearing what the current Members of the House of Keys will cite as the improvements they have made.

The increase in indirect tax and direct taxation through increased waste disposal charges to local authorities, and the imposition of the toilet tax to cover the MEA financial debacle are two that come immediately to mind. There is also the loss of elderly persons residential care through the demolition of Glenside without making suitable alternative provision, leading to the current bed blocking problems in our hospital - now prompting the purchase of the new facility constructed in Douglas.

There has been a lack of disposal and development of government owned sites in Douglas. Both the old prison and Glenside sites are still vacant in Victoria Road, the former DHA headquarters at Homefield has not been sold, and Lord Street has not been redeveloped. The

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

Summerland site is still a blot on the Promenade, and the old Park Road School site remains vacant.

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

There are regular comments that the economy is too reliant on banking or e-gaming, and these may have some basis in fact at any given time, but the economy has always evolved, and the benefit of a small jurisdiction is that it can move quickly to take advantage of opportunities.

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

The digital sector of the Manx economy has not reached its full potential, and I still see areas like the creative arts, software development and data management as areas ripe for growth.

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

Not without good reason - it depends very much on how the UK treats its devolved nations after exit from the EU.

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

See above

**If you are, which aspects of the**

Not at present

**parliamentary system would you change?**

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

The House of Keys. Elevation to the role should be based on ability, not a national popularity poll, and the elected Members should be best placed to make that decision. They should also have the power to call a vote of no confidence and replace their choice if they feel it necessary.

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

Only if a nationalised sea ferry service becomes necessary to protect the transport and supply links with the UK. If undertaken, it should be run on a commercial rather than subsidised basis. There should not be any nationalised air link.

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

Yes. My manifesto commitment is:

*I believe that the Isle of Man should do all it can to maximise the use of its natural resources. We have reached the stage where developments in technology mean that energy from renewable sources such as wind and wave power is a realistic option. We are gifted with an abundance of both and I want a change in energy strategy to put*

**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?**

*us at the forefront of harnessing these elements in an ecologically friendly way.*

No. See above regarding “the squeezed middle”. There is a place for assessing financial ability to pay for services, but this has to be balanced by making sure that there is no penalisation.

See above