

RODNEY CLARKE MANIFESTO HOUSE OF KEYS ELECTION NOVEMBER 2006

I live in Farmhill Gardens in the heart of Douglas South and have done so for 17 years, where my wife Carol and I have raised our 2 sons who are now married. We have 3 grandchildren of which I am immensely proud. For nearly all my working life, 33 years here on the Island, I have been in one service industry or another and have worked as a Registered Nurse at nobles for 15 years, 5 years managing the renal unit. Presently I am working in property and corporate services. I stood as a candidate in the 2001 election and afterwards became a Douglas Town Councillor for our area from 2002 to 2004. I've served on the Public Works Committee, Housing Committee and the Pensions and Investments Committee while learning how to stand on my own two feet in the Council Chamber and putting forward my case when it was necessary. I have knocked on nearly every door in the constituency and hope to cover every one by the time of the election. Some of the ideas in this manifesto have come from you. Throughout my working life I have got the job done and kept within the budget. I would like to see community life brought back into the area and with your help it could be done. I've spent most of my working life helping people and I am happy to continue doing so when I am asked.

Escalating Energy Costs

Energy costs are escalating at a rate many, many times that of inflation. This is mostly due to world markets but the MEA saga is adding to the escalation.

Since the last government came to power in November 2001 the increase in fuel costs is up to 6 times more than the rate of inflation.

Since November 2001 coal has risen 30%

electricity 65%

gas 72%

oil 100%

These figures do not include the latest increase.

(These figures are calculated from information supplied by the Office of Fair Trading at the time of printing)

We are now reliant on gas that comes mainly from Russia and an electricity cable linked to the main land. Last winter the UK had only days of reserves left and they were having to buy gas from Europe at grossly inflated prices. We are on the end of this gas pipe; the price of gas and our electricity this winter could spiral. We have already had a well above inflation pre winter increase.

To reduce this dependence we will need to be at least partially self-sufficient. Wind generators are going to be a necessity, the problem is that due to the massive debts of the MEA there is probably no money to invest in such schemes at present and will not be for several years to come. However we should be aiming to introduce wind power into our business plans to commence production at the earliest opportunity. Energy is not going to get cheaper in the foreseeable future so the outlay for wind power will become more acceptable. No one wants to see our countryside covered in turbines but many countries have managed to site turbines off shore where they will not cause anyone a problem.

Pensioners

Pensioners are worse off now than they were five years ago. Pensions have only risen 16% since the last election. There may not be any extra cash in the budget this year but we will need to balance the books next year to be able to provide a winter fuel payment of at least £200. Where is the money going to come from? It can be funded from the money that this government is saving by forcing thousands of us into private dental care. Should I be successful I will take this forward.

Nursing Care for the Elderly

There is presently a gross injustice affecting elderly householders. Anyone who has spent a lifetime working to pay a mortgage and now owns their own home, which may be their only asset, is forced to sell it to pay for nursing care. Yes they are given the option to rent the property out but rental income of £800 per month does not cover the £600 plus per week charged for nursing home care! We have a National Health Service and all throughout our lives we are entitled to medical and nursing care for free no matter what our circumstances in life are – SO WHY DOES THIS CHANGE WHEN WE CAN NO LONGER LOOK AFTER OURSELVES. The family home should not be a consideration in funding care; it should be free to all like any other aspect of health care.

Balancing the Books

I have suggested several initiatives and benefits within this manifesto but how would we pay for them? We have just budgeted for and paid for a new hospital, IRIS, new legislative buildings a prison and power station. These have all been massive capital projects that will serve the Island well into the future, As we will not have these expenses in the future (except for the MEA), there must be income available for the planning of future projects. We should also spend the next few years looking after our basic infrastructure, policing, health care, the roads, keeping the Island clean and well lit at night to name a few. Some of these areas have been under funded year after year and now are suffering from the accumulated effects of this. I feel that the present government has not kept spending within the budget or has not been using their finances effectively. If this is the case then we're going to have to get things back into an acceptable balance and take measures to ensure future spending is handled more efficiently.

Open Government

The lack of openness in the workings of our government has always been an issue. During this present period this perception has increased dramatically. The major culprit has been the dealings at the MEA. This is the biggest and costliest overspend government has made to date. An inquiry has been completed and it is vital that we know what has happened, what the consequences are going to be for the economy and for the people of the Island, if we are to restore any confidence in the government.

Government must be completely open and transparent from now onwards and this is not going to happen unless new blood is voted into the House of Keys. The present members have shown they are unwilling to amend their ways and so there must be a change if this is going to happen.

Planning

There was a time when planning applications, particularly in the towns, were refused if it meant that car parking was not provided. This is being ignored at times and more and more cars are being parked on the roads in the town. We are seeing the demolition of properties not previously used for residential housing and being replaced with large apartment blocks. Developers should be incorporating retail units into their developments and government planners should be insisting on it, particularly on Douglas promenade, where facilities are diminishing. We are missing out on a golden opportunity to add value to our town.

The Quay area is starting to undergo development and we have an excellent opportunity to create a fantastic attribute to the town. Plans have already been submitted for a Lake Road development consisting of many apartments. Don't let us miss out on this chance. If we put thought and energy into the planning, we could make the Quay into a really stunning feature of Douglas South.

Economy & Immigration

Our present wealth is predominantly dependant on the financial industry. Our income is mostly from indirect taxation, money spent by the people who live and visit here. The companies in this industry are here because it suits their operations. We must continue to work with the industry and not rock their confidence in our ability to provide a well regulated and serviced environment. Businesses need staff and support services to enable them to deliver their products. These support services need to be adequately staffed and if there is not the availability of local people then it is necessary to find workers from off island, but are we handing out work permits too easily?

We have the protection of the work permit system but a clearer policy is needed. We also need to have a longer period, maybe 12 years, before a permit is no longer required.

It is the responsibility of the employer to check documents and records to ensure the person is legally in the country and to obtain a work permit for prospective employees. Any employer in breach of these requirements should face a harsh penalty.

Local Government Reform

What has happened to this initiative? It's got too difficult and complicated and because we are now coming to the end of this present term it has been raised yet again. This has been going on for years and the department is getting away with it. The local authorities are managing millions of pounds of our money in providing basic services to the community. Spending should be efficient, effective and not wasted. We should all be having the same quality of service and paying the same price. This initiative needs to be progressed now to bring about fairness and consistency to everyone. As suggested there should be a North, South, East and West divide. The powers that have been slowly removed from local authorities should be returned to let them get on with looking after our towns and environment, of which they are very capable, without further government interference.

Waste

What has happened to waste management and recycling? The much unwanted and expensive incinerator was to be a stopgap while we find other ways of dealing with our ever-increasing waste. The incinerator needs to go as soon as possible, it's costing a fortune to run it. DOLGE should be leading a kerbside collection initiative and it should be backed up with legislation. If full responsibility for waste collection is to be handed over to the Local Authorities then legislation will still be needed to ensure compliance. We should be working with the groups here in the island who are interested and willing to get this problem sorted.

Energy Conservation

We should be using our energy as efficiently as possible. Options that have been considered expensive in the past are now looking more attractive in the light of increasing energy costs. Solar power, wind power, better window insulation, improved cavity, loft and floor insulation and even exterior insulation should be considered. Planners should not hinder householders who wish to erect domestic wind turbines as long as they are sited carefully. We are so entrenched in our building habits that we continue to favour traditional methods. We need to examine other methods used in the construction industry from around the world particularly in the colder countries. Incentives should then be offered by government to encourage the use of any energy efficiency improvements.

Law and Order

Many of you have brought up the subject of teenagers (and some younger children) wandering about our residential areas and town in large groups particularly at night. I am told that there is nothing for them to do. When I ask what could be provided for them or ask them what they want, no one can come up with an answer! So if anyone can come up with an idea (other than a skateboard or BMX track) please let me know.

We are still not seeing police officers on the streets and even less so on the roads. Is this due to poor management or understaffing? If it is a genuine problem of lack of resources and under funding, then lets find a

solution. If we need more police officers we'll have to have them. Drivers are committing offences because there is no fear of prosecution.

LOCAL ISSUES

Community Centre and Police Station

These subjects come up every time there is an election and are forgotten again afterwards. A decent community centre is needed for the area. With the right support and commitment it could house a youth club, pensioners club, gardening or any other hobby clubs, drama group providing entertainment, play group, provide a meeting place or anything else the community would like to do. All these things have been suggested by the residents in our area, I am heartened by the sense of community spirit that has surfaced and I am prepared to campaign for it. The first step is to find somewhere to build a centre, which is going to be the difficulty, so let me know if you have any ideas.

Still there is no police station in the Anagh Coar area. It is still wanted. What seems to be the issue is the need for a community police presence, particularly at night, to keep the teenagers from upsetting residents; but for most of the time they are not breaking the law. This is where a community centre would come into good use.

Affordable Housing

Who is buying up all these £250,000 plus apartments? I can only surmise that they are being bought up by investors, as many remain empty. The trouble is that properties bought for investment are falsely inflating property prices and making it harder for first time buyers to get onto the ladder. If we are prepared to let this practice continue then maybe we should look into having a two-tier pricing system (One for residential and one for investment) or why not tax property sales if they are not going to be lived in by the purchaser and are bought solely for investment purposes?

Education

There are many families in the area with young children and while some schools in the Island offer pre-school classes, Scoill Vallajeelt does not. If it is possible to expand the school to incorporate this necessary facility then it should be done.