



A New Approach

to Government

A Manifesto by
Chris Robertshaw
for the 2011 General Election



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CHRIS ROBERTSHAW

Personal Profile

Elected to the House of Keys for the first time just over a year ago I am again standing as an independent candidate. Aged 63 and married to Joan, I have two children and five grandsons. I retired in 2005 as Managing Director, Company Secretary and Registrar of Sefton Hotel Plc after a 35 year career in tourism. At various times I was concurrently a director of the Manx Housing Trust which was dedicated to assisting those with particular housing difficulties, a member of the Isle of Man Hospital Administration Committee, a member of the Tourism Marketing Partnership, founding managing director of an incoming direct sell tour operator, a director of an IT company and a member of the Chamber of Commerce Tourism Committee. I am currently a director of the Charity Kemmyrk and a member of the Douglas Regeneration Committee, a member of the Institute of Hospitality and a member of the Positive Action Group. I was schooled in a catholic seminary and as a young man served in the British Army in Libya, Cyprus, Germany, England and Norway. If re-elected I would accept a government post if offered.

Why I wish to represent Douglas East

"Get Douglas right and we will be on the way to getting our whole economy right"

Having spent most of my working life in the constituency I have chosen to stand here again for one very simple reason.

The future well being of the Isle of Man and its economy rests, to a great extent, on whether or not we can make a success of our capital, - the heart of which is Douglas East. In my manifesto last year I said we had a whole range of problems that if not tackled head on, would be passed on to the next generation and that we must not let this happen.

As events of the last year have unfolded this need has grow ever more urgent so I do not set out, as is the case with many manifestos, to make all sorts of promises to you that I cannot fulfil, rather I will try to set out a course of action for the Isle of Man as a whole but which will, in turn, have significant and beneficial impact on Douglas and which in time will make it a better place in which to live, work and relax.

I make no apology for repeating what I said last year - Douglas East is the most important constituency in the Isle of Man and I would not wish to stand anywhere else.

MY MANIFESTO - A NEW APPROACH



“ My manifesto was entitled a new Approach in 2006 and 2010 and so it is again because we are still waiting for an administration to come forward that is capable and determined enough to tackle the challenges ahead – we can wait no longer!”

I spent some time in my last manifesto outlining what I thought was wrong but here I want to face the future and spell out what I believe we should be trying to do to ensure the island has a bright future.

As all our hopes and ambitions will rest on whether or not we are able to successfully develop and grow our economy on a sound and sustainable basis it is right that this should be the priority in my manifesto. It is here that the greatest challenge exists and therefore appears first under the heading **Growing Our Economy**.

This then leads into and informs **Towards a Better Capital** which looks at how I believe such an approach will impact for the better on Douglas. I also return to the subjects raised last year concerning the constituency, bringing them up to date in the light of recent events and looking at where gains can be made.

The next section revisits our civil and public services with particular emphasis laid on the impact of the significant upcoming reductions to our national income and how that should inform what we need to do in the coming years and is entitled, unsurprisingly, **Cutting the Cost of Government**.

Part four revisits the subject I dealt with last year in some detail, namely **Improving National, Parliamentary and the Democratic Process** focusing on where there have been steps forward as well as where there is still need for much progress.

Part five looks at some really important issues from the perspective of the individual and the family and raises matters which impact on the role of both in our society entitled **Our Justice System and You**.

Part six considers **Environment Issues** and asks for a refocusing of priorities.

Part seven identifies the importance of a fair tax regime under the heading **Government Income in a Turbulent World**.

Finally I return to the matter of our **External Relations** and the growing importance of this subject.

The **Conclusion** and **All about Voting** can be found at the back of this manifesto.



GROWING OUR ECONOMY

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We cannot just cut costs - we must also find innovative ways of growing our economy in what is a very difficult and increasingly competitive environment

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At the heart of the Isle of Man's business proposition has been the ability to offer a competitive taxation regime combined with the responsive nature of our administration to new opportunities. In an increasingly challenging economic environment however this will not be enough and we now need a new, additional engine for future growth.

To find this I believe we must look to where we have the edge over most other western economies; whilst most carry huge national debts, we do not. These reserves are placed with fund managers who in turn invest off island so although we enjoy a return there is no vehicle to allow a small element of these funds to achieve on island returns.

To combat this I believe we should set up an Isle of Man Strategic Investment Fund which is removed from immediate political and bureaucratic control. This fund, led by the very best people we can find, should be responsible for a **limited** element of our reserves but which would be further bolstered by funds sourced from a tax free government bond issue. The fund would be charged with seeking out medium and long term investment opportunities in three main fields to begin with, namely The Built Environment, Business Start Ups & Expansion and Communications & Transport.

Its creation would be a bold and decisive step forward but I believe it is very much needed. We need a new dynamic model to push our economy forward that is neither wholly government nor simply just answerable to market forces. The fund would be where the best aspects of both private enterprise and government could be brought together.

It is only possible within the constraints of a manifesto to cover just a few of the opportunities this opens up but here are some of them.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Empty Building Sites

Douglas is littered with large empty brown field building sites which have remained vacant for far too long – even during the boom years. We must encourage viable development and we need the tools to do this.

Housing

Our current housing policy is not working. We have shortage of public sector housing, and there is too much accommodation in Douglas of an unacceptable standard. The current grant aid scheme to first time buyers is considerable but is only a short term stop gap measure and is unsustainable. To combat this we need to set up a housing association which would help address the lack of mortgages for first time buyers in the open market, be given the power to intervene to deal with derelict properties as well as being the vehicle for access to part rental, part equity purchase housing. Part of its remit would also be to recognise that public sector housing is now heavily subsidised by the taxpayer and those who could well afford to move to the private sector should do so thus opening up more availability for those in greatest need. The housing association may well encourage those moving out of public sector housing to take up opportunities to access part equity part rental properties.

Underpinning the activities of the housing association would be the need to stabilise the house building market over a number of years such that it encouraged building firms to engage apprentices in various trades and in so doing reduce the level of young people who find themselves not in employment, education or training. The housing association would act as an important market stabiliser.

BUSINESS START UPS AND EXPANSION

The strategic investment fund would need to be capable of identifying opportunities in leading edge technologies and intellectual property. Rather than working on the traditional government grant aid model it would seek to achieve support through the provision of shareholder stakes in the new knowledge based start up companies. This concept could be extended in certain circumstances to existing companies seeking to achieve further growth. Some of these niche market companies which have the capacity to grow out of some of the service provisions currently available to our main stream sectors, could in turn encourage specialist research and development capabilities on the island which again in turn could become platforms for further investment opportunities.

COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORT

I find it wholly unacceptable that our sea ferry lifeline (which in isolation should be a profitable operating company) is deeply mired in external debt with significant sums continually leaving the Isle of Man to service this debt with absolutely no benefit to us what so ever. On the contrary we pay towards this debt every time we travel or buy an item in the shops. We are all paying down a debt not of our making and we need to repatriate these funds. I do not believe in nationalisation but I see no problem with the Strategic Investment Fund, removed as it is from government, being a shareholder of note in whatever shape our ferry service may take in the future.

THE STRATEGIC INVESTMENT FUND IN SUMMARY

Politicians and Civil Servants are not the best people to know where new investments should go nor is allowing a free and unregulated market dominated by short term interests the best way of ensuring our national interests are protected. None the less it is possible for the best of both to work together on the platform provided by a national Strategic Investment Fund. It provides a powerful and meaningful tool to significantly enhance what the Isle of Man does best. I have only listed a few options here but once the fund is established and **proven** then the range of potential options are only limited by the imagination of those capable of creating new business opportunities.

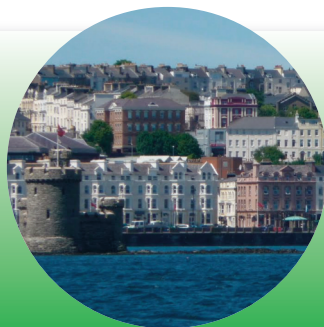
WEAKER SECTORS

Retail, Tourism, Farming and Construction all face significant difficulties.

With regard to farming I touch on what I believe we should do in the section of this manifesto entitled 'The Environment' whilst construction could be assisted in its efforts to maintain work at a sustainable level with what has already appeared in this section.

I am deeply concerned about Tourism. It is clear that there has been no appreciable increase in the number of leisure visitors to the Isle of Man this year just as mainland resorts are reporting a 15% increase in business. I put this down to the cost of access at a time when the market has become more price sensitive. The burden of the debt which the ferry operating company is having to carry is now doing considerable damage. Tourism may not be a big player but it cannot be left to drift like this indefinitely.

Retail is also under increasing pressure but had we had the same upturn in our arrival numbers that have been enjoyed away I am confident that this would have fed into the retail sector at a difficult time and helped stabilize income.



TOWARDS A BETTER CAPITAL

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We need truly innovative thinking if we are going to bring our capital to the standard required.

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In my manifesto last year I highlighted many of the problems Douglas faces and tried to look at some of the solutions. In it I argued that if we were going to make Douglas a whole, happy, well balanced and successful town in which it is a pleasure to live, shop, work and play, then there was a huge task ahead. I repeat that statement now but having had a further year to consider these issues and the growing threats facing the Isle of Man due to budgetary constraints I believe we will need to be truly innovative in our thinking.

There is much to do and I will try to tackle some major issues here but first I would like to touch on a few areas where progress is being made, all be it, slowly.

The Main Shopping Street

It feels as if the talk about the regeneration programme for the town's shopping centre has gone on for a very considerable period of time but having been co-opted onto the regeneration committee soon after my election, I am better able to say that progress is indeed being made (all be it that there is no great evidence yet on the ground apart from the first exploratory phase in Upper Nelson Street). Ultimately our main shopping street will be very much improved with a fine pedestrian surface, a new lighting scheme, screened seating in the roads leading off to the promenade and an attractive palate of colours selected for an innovative painting scheme for all high street properties. We simply must make our main shopping centre a place people want to come to rather than find they have to out of necessity.

The Douglas Promenade

The consultation on the refurbishment of the promenade which is the centre piece of our Island capital has reported back with overwhelming support for its upgrade. The favoured approach being the moving of the double tram track at the centre of the road to a single track with passing places repositioned adjacent to the seaward edge of the road together with a resurfaced roadway, a central island with the pathway and car parking positioned between the tram track and the road. This will link into the upgrade of the main shopping area described above to create an attractive and enjoyable entity.

Integrated Public Transport

Although I feel strongly about this as I indicated in my manifesto last year I must accept that in the current economic climate progress will be slow. None the less some progress is still possible – with the removal of the tram track on the promenade roadway to its own dedicated space it will be suitable to carry trams sometime in the future. In anticipation of this option I understand it is intended that the MER and the horse tram track will be provided with a connection. This would be the first small step towards being able to travel by tram into the centre of Douglas from all stations to the north. Since I first raised this subject I accept that it has been the subject of a degree of sceptical incredulity on the part of some but to those I point to the dramatic increase in the cost of fuel for private vehicles in the last twelve months alone since my last manifesto, the high costs of running the loss making tram and bus services which compete with each other from Ramsey to Douglas and the fact that our capital is drowning in traffic and suffering major parking problems. Where we are now is not sustainable in the longer term. We must prepare for the future as well as live for the moment.

Turning to those areas where less progress is being made.

Housing and the Built Environment

Here we are, having passed through a very long period of unprecedented growth in our economy and yet looking around the constituency you would never know it: we have far too many empty undeveloped building sites, derelict properties that have been allowed to stay in that condition for years on end, far too many substandard flats, difficulties in getting onto the housing ladder short of the government throwing money at the problem and a serious shortage of public sector housing. If this was the best we could do when money was readily available and the economy showed no sign of slowing, where will our capital be in a few years time when the growing budgetary constraints have started to bite?

It is time to think again.

In the earlier section entitled 'growing our economy' I propose a radical new approach but here I would like to spell out how it could impact on our capital. The Strategic Investment Fund is capable of providing a tool for renewal but for it to work there would have to be a legislative and regulatory response. When empty brown field sites, derelict and semi derelict properties remain in such a deleterious state for what are clearly totally unacceptable periods of time I believe that we should be willing to apply compulsory purchase orders at fair and reasonable prices to ensure their redevelopment by the Strategic Investment Fund before being returned to the market in one form or another, for either sale or rental.

Government for its part has failed the capital in just the same manner as the private sector has but for different reasons in that the Summerland and Lord Street sites remain un-redeveloped. When initiatives are brought forward they appear clumsy and inappropriate: for example the current proposal for the

Lord street site does not include a bus station facility and would require government to hand over much of the value of the site to an external developer for, in effect, next to nothing just in order to enable the site to be developed. This when only a few years ago the government paid around £6 million pound to the Steam Packet for the site just across the road.

We have recently seen the introduction of new laws in housing provision and building regulations which will impact on those landlords who fail their tenants but we still await the new landlord regulation scheme which will be pursued as a priority right from the start of the formation of the new parliament. Responsible landlords have nothing to fear from any of this but irresponsible ones should see this a clear and unequivocal warning.

Parking

The inconvenience residents are put to is now totally unacceptable with many residential streets treated little better than free public car parks. This must stop. It is time to introduce some radical new ideas to combat this problem. Obviously improving public transport as indicated in my last manifesto remains an important part of the answer but the other is to introduce the concept of truly residential streets in town.

I believe we should start with some pilot schemes ear marking a certain number of our residential streets as truly residential with low speed limits, reduced through traffic, marked parking spaces in the street associated with particular properties, street specific parking permits, clear identification of these areas with new coloured street road markings and higher parking fines for those who infringe the new regulations within these special zones. If these pilot schemes require a change in the law in some respect then so be it – I find our current lack of ambition nothing short of an embarrassment.

Also where heavy duty commercial premises are awkwardly located in what are clearly residential areas we should do everything possible to encourage relocation to more suitable sites.

Your Neighbourhood - a New Approach

One powerful lesson that has really come home to me during the year has been the disconnect so many sense exists between the government and their neighbourhood. The feeling that so many different authorities and bodies are involved that residents in the end feel so helpless and isolated as individuals that they give up. Despite this I have been much taken by the efforts of one neighbourhood group that did gather together to try to get things done and this has caused me to reflect on how government in all its component parts can and should respond.

I believe it should be possible to link the concept of pilot schemes for the better management traffic and parking in your street with the idea of a neighbourhood committee made up and chaired by volunteer residents, but including your MHK, your Douglas Borough Councillor and when required your local neighbourhood policeman and other authorities as need be.

This form of neighbourhood politics should be tried and I would be pleased to assist this process in any way I can.

Sport and Activity Opportunities

With the move of the lower school to the new facility at Bemahague, a prime site right in the very heart of the constituency is coming up for redevelopment. I am unaware of any plans set in concrete for this site but it seems to me that this is a wonderful opportunity to use at least part of it for sports field facilities for Murrays Road School whilst still leaving significant land for other uses, including housing built at an appropriate scale to its surroundings.

Looking elsewhere, a number of the large, long empty building sites in Douglas cry out for just one of them, or part of one of them to be redeveloped to include a new cinema and bowling alley amongst other facilities as I am sure no-one would argue they were not needed. If it proved possible once again for the Strategic Investment Fund to find a viable proposition in such a proposal, either as part of a larger development or stand alone, as the sole developer or with other partners - I would consider that a very significant gain for our capital and the Island as a whole.

Conclusion

Bringing all the strands together that I have described in this part of my manifesto could be a powerful tool for change. Some parts of these proposals would be simple to achieve, others more difficult but none of it impossible. All we need is determination and commitment linked with a recognition that the Strategic Investment Fund must make a return on the investments made. It would be no soft option.



CUTTING THE COST OF GOVERNMENT

“ *Protecting our core and front line services
needs to be much more than a hollow mantra
– we need to show we mean it by the actions we take.* ”

There are big budget cuts ahead but we all still retain a strong desire to protect funding in education (including the protection of university funding as far as possible), in health (including a wish to see surgical and dental waiting lists reduced) and in Social Care for the protection of the vulnerable. It is therefore only right that as a candidate I do not talk about making vague cuts 'elsewhere' but actually try to spell out my thinking.

I cannot possibly know in detail where each and every saving can be made but I do know this; unless government can regain the trust and confidence of all concerned in the process then it will fall far short of that which is needed. There is much to do in this regard.

The next House of Keys has much ground to make up to re-establish trust, not least in the debacle over MHK pensions, whilst government as a whole must show that it accepts that it has become too bureaucratic and top heavy and act accordingly.

The Scope and Structure of Government report came out just before the last administration arrived in office but nothing happened for three and half years and when it eventually did the restructuring was clumsy and rushed whilst scope issues were ignored completely.

With regard to the restructuring process, this was a great opportunity missed to reduce the number of departments and senior officers whilst retaining the front line services. It is too late to go back to square one now as the civil service has been in a state of considerable upheaval trying to cope with all the changes over the last year or so. None the less I would propose an adjustment to some departments in order to streamline the upper echelons of government rather than constantly placing all the costs pressures on the front line services.

Whilst I think it was correct to reduce the size of the old DHSS, I do not believe the re-arrangement of functions was the right one. I do not understand why mental and physical health were ever placed in different departments so I

would bring them back together again, along with adult social care, care services and the learning difficulties section all within a newly named Department of Health and Wellbeing.

The Children and Families Division of social care would be moved to the department of Education and Children. In accordance with Professor Eileen Munro's report, children's social services would be led by a highly respected practicing social worker who enjoyed direct access to the minister.

The benefits section would be moved to treasury in preparation for a move away from universal benefits. This would recognise that the highly paid should no longer be in receipt of a range of benefits for which they have no need.

The housing section would be moved into a section of the new housing association and would become part of a radical new housing policy as described in the section entitled 'growing the economy'

At this point the department of social care would cease to exist along with its central departmental costs. The Council of Ministers would also be reduced by one and concerns about the damage being done by the block vote, as detailed in my manifesto last year, dealt with at a stroke.

Turning to the Department of Community Culture and Leisure, I do not understand why the transport division is where it is when it should be in the department of infrastructure - so I would wish to see it moved there.

The important areas of sport and culture would both be better served by being led by subsidized corporate structures rather than being dominated by a departmental bureaucracy as at present.

Considerable care would need to be taken with the fantastic facility that is the Villa Marina but again it would be better served being driven by some form of corporatized body on a tapering subsidies basis rather than, as at present, a central departmental bureaucracy. The Gaiety Theatre is a very special case and will need some form of supported trust structure.

At that stage the department of Community Culture and Leisure should also be closed down. The Ministerial post freed up by this action should be allocated to a special role of Minister Without Portfolio, the primary remit of which would be to encourage and drive scope changes, eradicate the silo mentality in government where it still existed, encourage corporatisation where appropriate, identify weakness in the capital expenditure process, reduce bureaucracy and look again at the roles and responsibility of local government. This position should only be supported by a small 'change team' and not develop into another department of government: Once this function allocated to it was complete the Ministerial role should cease but consideration should be given to review some of the functions of the Chief Minister to ensure he/she is better able to represent the Isle of Man on a wider platform.

All of this should encourage everyone in public service to appreciate that senior positions are not immune from scrutiny and that ideas and suggestions for new efficiencies and cost savings should come from the front line teams upward as much as they have been coming from the top down. Ownership of responsibility by all is essential.



IMPROVING NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, PARLIAMENT AND THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

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*Our small nation is deeply blessed having
self government through its own ancient parliament.
But to maintain this we must ensure that we
keep adapting it to meet the challenges of the age.*

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This updates what I submitted to you in my manifesto last year on this subject. I have not repeated the block vote chart as shown last year, nor the details of why it is so damaging but if you would like to see it again you can find it on my website site www.chrisrobertshaw.com, click on **2010 By Election** at the top of the page and then drop down to the page with the same title as shown at the start of this section above.

As I said then you are only able to chose the personality of your MHK not his or her policies. I also said that I believed a healthy balance between the executive government and parliament had been lost as a result of the use of the council of minister's block vote when supported by their departmental members (who are required to vote with their minister).

- To assist in the rebalancing process I said we should reduce the number of ministers by one and possibly two, I have indicated elsewhere in this manifesto how we should go about this.
- I am also pleased to tell you that with effect from soon after the general election there will be four new standing scrutiny committees of parliament, the chairmen of which will sit outside government. This is an important step forward and I was pleased to be able to play my part in arriving at this arrangement during the year. I hoped that this will ultimately lead to less members in each department.
- As a result of the broken promise of the last administration we do not yet have a freedom of information act so there will be a need to continue pushing for this in the new house. To avoid an information request overload when we are eventually able to bring this into law each department should, as soon as possible, embark on a policy of loading as much information as possible on to its internet site because the more information that is readily available the less time will be taken up on expensive searches later. Other procedures could be adopted to smooth the path of its introduction to assist the avoidance of excessive costs.

- With a reduction in the number of departments as well as in the number of political members in each department and the introduction of scrutiny committees, this would rebalance parliament sufficient to open up the way for a directly elected Chief Minister. The process adopted to achieve this would need to show that the successful candidate was able to gain the confidence of both Tynwald and the electorate as a whole. From that time onwards you as a voter would be able to properly participate in the selection of government policy as well as the personality of the candidates in your constituency.
- I believe Tynwald has badly damaged its standing with the electorate by allowing public sector pensions to be reviewed before those of the politicians. It should have been the other way round. It is at last trying to catch up but this degree of insensitivity toward the electorate was foolish and just goes to show how our parliament has removed itself from day to day realities. There is much to do to recover lost ground.
- Last year I said that the local authority structure should be re-organised and simplified but that little was happening. Hopefully the growing financial pressure will spur this on. If we are not to see structural change for the moment then it would be good to at least see a greater move towards shared service provision on the basis of gains available through the economies of scale.
- A green paper has now arrived in Legislative Council which if successful in its passage through both houses would result in it being directly elected. If you return me to the Keys I will be supporting this.
- Steady progress is being made to create an Auditor General which will assist in that most important of subjects – accountability.
- I have been appalled in my year in the House of Keys by how often expensive external consultants are employed to decide matters which could just as well, or better, be carried out in house. I cannot understand why the wealth of knowledge and ability that exists within our community is not put to better use.
- It is surprising to hear well established members suddenly start decrying the amount of expensive bureaucracy that now exists in government as we approach the election. Where have they been for the last five to ten years and what did they do about it during this time? For my part my record shows that I have resisted new over bureaucratic legislation as much as possible with some success. We need less, but better legislation in future.
- I wish to see our health and safety legislation become much more practical. I have a real sense at the moment that there is a tendency to find those party to an incident guilty until proven innocent. This creates a sense of fear and encourages ever more paperwork and a defensive mindset. To repeat the title of my manifesto - we need a new approach.



OUR SYSTEM OF JUSTICE AND YOU

You might remember that I first raised this issue in my manifesto last year with these words:

“ *It is often only when someone hits a difficult period in their lives, through serious ill health, employment problems, family upset, financial worries, environmental stress or housing difficulties that it becomes possible to appreciate just how helpless you can feel.* ”

My further enquiries into our justice system during the year since then, in pursuit of a greater personal understanding, have only helped to further raise my concerns.

- The cost of access to our judicial system is simply too high for most people and thus beyond reach. This is neither acceptable nor right in our society. Legal aid alone is not the answer.
- The adversarial way our system works when dealing with cases at the less serious none criminal level often seems to do more harm than good and proves expensive in the process.
- If unhappy with the service provided by an advocate there appears little recourse to a fair, prompt robust and transparent complaints procedure.
- I have grown seriously alarmed during the year by the quality and conduct of our prosecution service. This has undermined my confidence in our system.
- I am deeply unhappy with the function of the family and children's court.
- On occasion I felt that our over small juries appeared cowed by both the judge and the whole experience of being involved in the court process.

- At a higher level I have been surprised at the degree of political involvement in the selection of our Deemsters – something which flies in the face of the Latimer House guidelines.
- The retiring Attorney General himself has acknowledged that there is a division of loyalty in his role and has suggested how this might be resolved. This should be pursued.

I cannot, nor should I, pretend that I have the answers but there are a number of steps I believe we could and should take.

- We should pay particular heed to the Family Justice Review which is looking into the family courts of England and Wales, and which is due to report soon.
- A mediation service has been on the cards for some time but little in practice seems to be happening to bring a robust and trusted service into being. We must get on with this as I believe that in certain circumstances pre court mediation should be compulsory.
- Politicians should be removed from the selection panel for the appointment of Deemsters.
- The process for making a complaint against the service provided by an advocate should be well advertised, robust, prompt and effective and be seen to be so.
- An appropriate body should be formed to consider the suitability and effectiveness of our current prosecutions service, the size of our juries and whether an adversarial as opposed to an inquisitorial approach to resolving certain cases remains the most suitable and effective way of administering the law.
- The Ombudsman Service, once introduced, should be carefully monitored to ensure it is developing in the way it was intended.



ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

“ *It is all well and good being enthusiastic about wind farms but there are a number of important tasks much closer to home that we must deal with.* ”

The wind farm has become an iconic mascot in the environmental movement but the degree to which we wish to protecting our environment should not simply be measured in this way alone, because this can also distract us from other important tasks close at hand.

The root of my concerns here lie in the fact that despite having had a Council of Ministers system of government now for over two decades we have still not overcome the habit of 'silo thinking' that leaves each department developing its own policies oblivious to consequences elsewhere. We have failed completely to grasp the importance of an integrated holistic policy platform. On an Island with a population of our size and potential for integrated policy making I consider this quite extraordinary and unforgivable. It is not just the duty of government to try to resolve current problems but to look forward and to do its best to anticipate the future in a fast changing world.

Please consider, by way of example, just two problems that are growing around us by the day for which we see no apparent resolution.

- Our agricultural 'policy' is creating a world where farmers are paid not to farm and yet where endless millions of pounds leave our shore every year to pay for ever more expensive fuels for our homes. This in a world where the only way prices for traditional fossil fuels and food can go is up in real terms.
- We continue to build out of town housing estates that in turn will produce ever more cars the volume of which our roads were not designed to take. We have no real vision for the refurbishment and revitalisation of so much substandard property, with low heat insulation standards, in our capital and elsewhere.

Considerable progress has been made in recycling projects in recent years and I am encouraged by the degree of focus that now exists. None the less there is still much more that can be done and I hope the next government will continue pursuing further progress when and wherever reasonably possible.

Once and for all we need to deal with silo government by the introduction of policies which are fully integrated across government. This applies to environmental issues just as in any other areas. It is about time the council of ministers started to function as I believe is was first intended.

Having said that answers will not be easy to find but that must not deflect us from working for progress. To begin with it would be good to see an open and honest debate on these subjects.



GOVERNMENT INCOME IN A TURBULENT WORLD



We have to maintain a highly competitive tax regime whilst ensuring a sense of fairness - that is the challenge that faces the incoming administration.



With the high degree of turbulence that exists in our government's income stream it is only right that I lay out my thinking on the subject before the election.

We have seen a dramatic reduction in the level of income from indirect taxation, the abolition of ARI which came hot on the heels of the discontinuation of DPC and we must also now be concerned about how the proposed combination of NHI and Income Tax in the UK might cause a backwash into the Isle of Man.

This all presents tremendous challenges for our Treasury team but it is extremely important that it applies a sure and steady hand throughout this turbulent period ensuring commercial confidence is not undermined. I therefore support the removal of ARI and the retention of the zero ten regime whilst ensuring thereafter that we do everything possible to maintain the confidence of all in the fairness of our overall taxation regime.

My views on the Customs and Excise Agreement are laid out in the section entitled External Relations on page 19 overleaf.



EXTERNAL RELATIONS

“ We need to rediscover a greater confidence in taking actions and adopting laws which best suit our needs rather than to, all too readily, follow the UK. ”

Constitutional, Legislative and Political

I make no apology for repeating what I put in my manifesto last year, namely that which the UK Justice Committee on the Crown Dependencies said when it reported its findings on the degree of undue interference in our affairs:

“It is the informality of this process together with these rather broad responses which leads us to suspect that the UK Government does indeed influence island legislation at the policy level. This seems a rather paternalistic approach to island legislation”

If the UK thinks that - just what is in the minds of our political leaders?

In my manifesto last year I argued that 'our ministers had lost the confidence, or the ability, or both, to truly govern the Isle of Man'.

What shook me, once elected, was the degree to which this proved to be the case as I found Ministers just nodding through UK legislation with little scrutiny taking place. This has come about due to their over reliance on senior officers who in turn too quickly defaulted to 'off the shelf' legislation from the UK. To respond to this we need to do two things:

The first concerns our civil and public services. It must be debilitating and disheartening to work in those departments of government where such procedures as mentioned are prevalent, so those departments need to be freed up and challenged to seek out better and more cost effective ways of fulfilling their responsibilities. These solutions might be found, either internally, or around the other nations of the British Isles, much further afield or a combination of some or all of these.

The second is to ensure in future that our government interferes less in day to day minutia of government departments but rather redirects its energies toward building a proper mandate from the people for its overall strategies. If the Council of Ministers has no clear mandate from the electorate then that

weakens their position in any negotiation with external bodies. If there is no known position to defend then our representatives are likely to be much more amenable to alternative suggestions. This is yet another reason why the electorate should have the opportunity to choose policy as well as personality at a general election.

This greater clarity of purpose and confidence in leadership will better enable the Isle of Man to take its place on an international stage when and where the opportunity offers itself and to robustly fight its corner.

The Customs and Excise Agreement

The further agreed changes to the customs and excise agreement will have such an impact on government's budget that there have been, understandably, calls to break with the UK and collect our indirect taxes. I would however caution against any knee jerk reactions.

The fact is that the Isle of Man was doing incredible well under the earlier agreement and even now, with the adjustments made, we should not consider the outcome unfair, unreasonable or unattractive. The latest agreement still gives recognition to the estimated value of our off island internet purchases as well as that passing through on island businesses which are registered for VAT through their UK parent. It also denies any requirement for customs barriers and associated costs.

The truth is that we must have previously known we were doing incredibly well but chose to continue to expand our cost base regardless. If criticism should lie anywhere it must be with those who allowed this to happen despite knowing the full facts.

We may wish to cancel the agreement in the future but we must first put our own house in order whilst quietly considering all options, collecting further detailed data and establishing the full facts both for and against as there are strong arguments either way.



CONCLUSION

There can be NO doubt that the next few years will be very demanding as the government tries to deal with the imbalance in its budget. In this election candidates have quite rightly been quick to defend the importance of protecting the health and education services and the vulnerable. When asked how this will be achieved the sensible and reasonable response is to argue that we will have to cut our costs and grow the economy. I concur with all of that but it is the next question 'yes *but how?*' which is far more difficult to answer.

If you do decide you wish me to serve as your MHK in the next parliament then I hope it is in part at least because I have done my best to try to begin to answer that last question in this manifesto. That is why the economy and the government's budget are set as the centre piece to this manifesto. It is all well and good arguing for cuts but to do so without a clear focus as to how this might be done and how we might grow the economy in mitigation would be an inadequate response.

Neither cutting expenditure nor growing the economy will be easy in the current economic climate we find ourselves in and further difficulties could yet come our way. What is certain is that success cannot be achieved unless the people of the Isle of Man are well informed, understand the challenges ahead and are able to play their part in the process. In the end though it can only be achieved if there is a degree of trust in our government but sadly it has done little to deserve that trust in recent years - so there is much to do.

It is my sincere and fervent wish that we will be able to look back in five years time, smile, and say we, the people of the Isle of Man and its government did it and did it together.

I came into politics because I was one of the fortunate generation that saw almost unbroken economic growth during my career and I wish to do all I can to see that those who follow have every possible chance in life as well.

Thank you for bearing with, what is, quite a long manifesto.

Chris Robertshaw

ALL ABOUT VOTING



The election takes place on
Thursday 29th September 2011

Between the hours of 8am and 8pm

You should be sent a polling card by post
in the next few weeks which will show your
ward by a four letter prefix to your polling number.

Please use this as a guide to
where you should vote:

TYNWald should vote at Scout Hall, Demesne Rd

DERBy should vote at Rosemount Church Hall

WINDsor should vote at Loch Prom Methodist Church

CREScent should vote at Loch Prom Methodist Church

STRAnd should vote at Douglas Town Hall

If however you wish to lodge an absent vote with the returning officer
please ask for an application form from one of the following:

By calling into any police station

By going on Line to the Chief Secretary's website www.gov.im/cso

By ringing me on 4943 18 and I will bring one round to you.

**This application form must be in by the 19th September if you are going
to vote off island or 23rd September if you are going to vote on island.**

Please ring me if you need any guidance on filling out the form.

