

HOUSE OF KEYS ELECTION 2021 CONSTITUENCY OF RAMSEY



VOTE X MANN

WHERE YOUR VOTE SAYS

“YES”

TO A NEW MEDICAL CENTRE

&

“NO”

TO THE CURRENT MARINA PROPOSAL

Dear Elector,

Covid 19 – better to be safe than sorry

In view of the continued risk associated with Covid 19 I have concluded that it would be safer not to engage in the traditional house to house canvassing for votes. I have instead prepared this much more detailed manifesto and if you would like to ask me any questions or would like me to call on you then do please either ring me on **470630** or email **smann@manx.net**

Introduction

It came as a considerable honour that a group of Ramsey residents put their trust in me to stand in the forthcoming House of Keys election. It was my solemn response to them that I will not let you down. I regard the prospect of serving the people of Ramsey with respect and humility. Over many years I lived and worked in Ramsey and have been in the company of many of you in good times and bad. For those of you that do not know me, I hold an Honours Degree in Law and a Post Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice and have dual qualification as a Manx Advocate and English Solicitor. I am 64 years of age and have been married to my wife Carolyn for 38 years. I have had a full working life in law and law enforcement. The balance of 22 years in the Isle of Man Police from which I retired with an exemplary service certificate and 20 years as a qualified lawyer demonstrates that I have seen both sides of the legal spectrum and the growing need for better Government. I have also recently spent several years as the Island's Deputy Legal Aid Certifying Officer and I have considerable experience in the importance of fair access to justice for those on limited incomes. I enter this election because I have been asked to do so and because I can give my full time to the job. I am ready to represent the people of Ramsey to the very best of my ability and with the all the vigour tenacity and experience that the battles ahead will require. I was the last candidate to declare but please be assured that considerable planning was involved in the timing. Before declaring, I had to stand down from the last two legal positions that I held leaving me clear to give my full time to representing Ramsey.

The importance of our young generation

To some of our young electors this will be their first election and a first opportunity to shape the government of their future. It is a sad situation that a few are unaware of what the House of Keys does and what as new voters their role in society should be. Those that are aware and do take an interest in politics are quite rightly unhappy with many of the decisions made in the past in respect of climate change, housing, job prospects and their ability to sustain their future on the Island. They were given a vote but to what extent have they really been consulted? Most will say that there is nothing on this beautiful Island for them to do and I very much agree. As a small Island we lack many of the basic entertainment and social facilities that young people have in the UK. The long wet days of winter are not made more lively by simply having access to a mobile phone. What we sow now will be the benefit our young people will harvest in the future. Will it be a good or poor harvest? There is no greater failure by one generation than to fail the next. Our young people will rightly want change and I want to see that change. We must lay the right foundation for their future. If we continue to want to build on sand and damage the fragile ecology they will have no future. I want to see more engagement directly in the schools and more periods spent in the public gallery in the House of Keys so that they can see what their government is doing for them. In future elections, I would like to see our young people appearing as candidates. To all electors I ask the simple question – what has Ramsey gained for our young generation in the last five years under the last administration? If you have young people in your family, you know what the answer will be.

Ramsey says “No” to the current marina project

Ramsey bears the scars of historic mistakes and we are surely not about to make another. I am firmly against the current Marina project and have been since I took up the issue with the Chief Minister in April 2019. It is a scheme that, to me, makes no sense whatsoever. On very good legal grounds, my letter to the Chief Minister, written on a personal basis, expressed the hope that we could all avoid a very public confrontation and a costly legal battle that Government could not win. In my view the current proposed Marina scheme represents the biggest single mistake that the Town could make since the demolition of South Ramsey and the closure of the Northern section of the Steam Railway.

The risk of the project failing or the development firm going into liquidation leaving central Government to clear up the mess is both a realistic possibility for any large commercial concern and also a potential nightmare scenario for Ramsey. There are serious marine conservation issues that render the scheme something that those of you who care for our environment would strongly reject, and with good reason. If that were not enough, the south beach is public land with historic prescriptive rights of public usage and as a substantive asset of the town is not currently for sale or available for lease. There is no room for properties in the area of the scheme to suffer the equivalent of planning blight any further. They are entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of their property without interference from the state. The Government has a duty to bring this situation to an end. We have reached a pivotal time for Ramsey where we have to stand and be counted on the current Marina issue. The resounding message on the current Marina project from me is that Ramsey says "NO" If you elect me that is how I will represent you. I am hoping to record a massive level of votes on election night so as to be able to declare that the current Marina proposal has been soundly rejected. With your help, we can deliver that powerful message from the town directly to the developers and drive forward better and more sensible ideas for the future.

Restoring the town to former glory

Aside from the marina, the retail area of Ramsey needs to be completely brought back to the vibrant shopping street that it used to be before the most recent structural changes in the street plan sent it into terminal decline. In short, poor infrastructure work in Ramsey has nearly killed the town. We have still to see a single multi storey car park whilst at the same time punishing our shoppers with too short periods for parking to permit a proper shopping experience. Ramsey rates have been far too high for far too long and there is a very good argument for looking very closely at what is being delivered and how much of the financial burden central government should be funding. Whatever it takes we have to see fresh ideas and modern inspiration in our retail sector and if you elect me I want to see the town restored to its former glory. We need to formulate from within the town a major regeneration scheme and Government needs to engage in the purchase and redevelopment of vacant retail sites. Dereliction in the middle of our town tarnishes the image of us all and much stronger regulation on dilapidated properties is essential for the future. I have been recently told that St Olave's Church is on the potential closure list and we cannot see another of our beautiful buildings in Ramsey be lost in this way. St Pauls and St Pauls Hall are in need of major repairs and we need to raise money within the community to put them back into good order. These assets of our town were built by previous craftsmen who gave their time and skill to create something good for our town. We need to learn from their example in how we improve the town for the future. If we do nothing else, our town needs a cosmetic make over and I will be urging the Commissioners to introduce schemes to get commercial properties painted and areas such as their yard on Station Road and the areas around the Coastguard corner and the Lifeboat house need to be completely revamped. The northern end of South Promenade is not and never has been blighted in the past by commercial storage and collective junk. Where the quayside ends the promenade begins and one way or another it will be improved and our tourists will return.

Health – An ambitious new hospital project and my proposed Princess Anne Medical Centre

I have a major vision for Ramsey and our nation and it forms the backbone of my campaign. The current provision of medical care in Ramsey is insufficient to meet the demand of our population. One fairly dated traditional GP practice will always struggle to cover the entire north of the Island. I recently petitioned Tynwald for the redevelopment of Ramsey Group Practice and Ramsey Cottage Hospital into a multi purpose modern medical centre with in house pharmacy scanning and diagnostic services. I presented my petition on July 5th before HRH Princess Anne and it is my vision that our new hospital complex and medical centre will bear her name and we will invite her back to the Island to open it. We need far more professional medical staff to run an effective GP service for our community. Ramsey Cottage Hospital needs complete redevelopment to provide 24 hour first responder A & E, a much larger range of out patient facilities, minor operations and status as a secondary hospital to Nobles in the event that the operational capacity of Nobles Hospital was ever affected by a localised incident. The current pandemic has underlined the importance of enhanced medical facilities and shown our local GP provision to be hopelessly inadequate. I commit to you, the voter, to do everything within my power to deliver on substantively improving the situation within the next five years.

Our Island can and should deliver world class healthcare and it is a credit to our nursing profession that the recently formed Manx Care is in line for an award through the efforts and inspiration of our leading senior nursing staff made in pursuit of excellence in early nurse training and made long before Manx Care ever came into being. I have already held a meeting with the Chairman and CEO of Manx Care and attended their recent first public board session directly questioning the position over GP provision in Ramsey and the north of the Island. Manx Care is insufficiently funded and has not been handed the property assets to be able to make any substantive changes other than a primary objective of saving money. In short, the Island has been cheated by the apparition of a new entity that has been left with very little room to make the changes that are so urgently needed. I say the Island needs an immediate figure of some £250 million to replace outdated medical facilities and if you vote for me that money will have to be found. I propose that our gambling industry should work more like the National Lottery and if we do have to sustain it on our Island then it should be called upon to make a major contribution to our healthcare on a voluntary basis or otherwise face an equivalent gambling tax on the massive weekly profits that it makes.

If elected, I will be calling a meeting with Manx Care and our local doctors to see the start of the new medical centre project. Your vote will ensure that I have a strong mandate in that meeting.

The appalling state of our nation

This election is for national government and on that level our Island has suffered over the past five years with both affliction from nature in the form of Covid 19 and the self induced affliction of a less than satisfactory government. The catalogue of errors delays and cost increases in major developments and contracts tends me to suggest that few members of this last administration can claim to have demonstrated sufficient competence and attention to detail to be elected again. This once proud independent nation finds its image tarnished with the business of gambling, the business of proposed cannabis production and the wholesale acceptance of lowering social standards. When food banks and homeless shelters were first introduced few thought that this wealthy society in which we live would ever need them. How wrong they were and how far from our once proud nation have we now drifted. Visually, our towns and villages display the results of years of poor town and country planning. There is lack of maintenance and destruction of many aspects of the Victorian heritage that was our architectural historic hallmark. In place of once viable and aesthetically pleasing buildings there are now demolition sites, temporary car parks and areas akin to bomb sites. This last administration has left our Island in a pitiful state whilst patting themselves on the back for a job well done. We are now going to have to pick up the pieces. Going forward, government must lose the constant habit of self praise which seems to have originated in the UK and has never, to my knowledge been the hallmark of the respectable restraint historically seen in this Island. Good work is quietly seen on the road to a better quality of life for all. This is the new way forward and together we can make Ramsey and our Island great again.

One single case of a well respected Ramsey resident has demonstrated a crass incompetence and disgraceful attitude toward disability and equality. It seems that all the combined intelligence of the House of Keys and the senior Civil Service were defeated on the issue of simply putting a mobility scooter on a bus. The influx of UK local government themes, policies, mannerisms and lack of accountability have left our once proud administration weakened to the point of being near wholly reliant on the adjacent Isle and unable to provide answers to the daily failures seen before us across the raft of Government Departments. Freedom of information and the Government Ombudsman are both schemes that I have found to be failing. A further example has been the lame acceptance by our Island that a generation of women should be left short of their rightful pension entitlement in the pursuit of apparent equality. The gross unfairness highlighted by the Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) campaign has affected many women in the Isle of Man with individual losses suffered by many of up to £70,000. They have been cheated by the UK Parliament and we should not be letting that happen here. We should be returning to an Island that leads by example in the national and international arenas. In this next administration, there has to be honesty, decency, integrity, transparency and above all an end to the poor service delivery of the past. If elected I will not be tolerating many of the attitudes we are now finding under the umbrella of CoMin and the Cabinet Office and I give due notice that I will be conveying a very strong message from Ramsey that generally people have had enough and expect much better in the future. The Island can and will do better.

Housing - A new Housing Minister, Department and Housing Trust - a vision of hope

It is a poor government that cannot house its people and the Island needs a massive social housing initiative. This is an urgent and pressing need. People need houses now. My vision of hope is the creation of a specific Department for Housing, a Housing Minister reporting regularly to Tynwald and a modern housing trust funded by Government, private bequests, commerce and housing bonds. There will be representatives of all stakeholder groups with appropriate qualifications and construction industry experience on the Board. It will need administrative premises and a permanent administrative and housing maintenance staff including an apprenticeship scheme. It will take over the buildings and existing loans and provide all local authority housing for the rental market and run the finance initiatives for first time buyer houses in conjunction with the major developers. This cannot be a half hearted enterprise but a major player in all Island housing provision. Housing Trusts work well and by holding the public sector housing stock can raise the necessary finance to embark on major housing developments without impacting on rates. A scheme to transfer existing housing staff from all local authorities provides the immediate administrative staff for the new housing trust and the same can occur for existing property maintenance staff. In Ramsey that will remove the costs associated with local authority housing from the ratepayers and make housing bonds a sound investment across the Island. Affordable housing needs to be just that, not a rendered house which two years later needs to be painted. We now have estates of rendered houses where the owners cannot afford the re painting and they look terrible and reflect badly on the few houses that do get painted. Affordable housing needs to be affordable at the point of purchase and affordable by a young family paying a mortgage for the future.

Education

Our Island is blessed with good quality schools but sadly few really good prospects for many school leavers. There should be a strong bond of trust between Government and the teachers unions and the Island should be prepared to pay a premium to retain the very best educational standards. In Ramsey alone our primary and secondary schools have hundreds of children currently going through their education. At the same time we are importing hundreds of workers from off Island to fill many specialised positions. It seems to be a great pity that we are not able to produce from within our education system more of the qualified staff our Island will need for the future. I feel the Isle of Man University has a much greater role to play in the future and the facility needs to step up and provide more of the university placements currently provided in the UK. This will keep many of our young people on the Island through to graduation and make a massive saving to parents and students on the costs of further education.

Agriculture

Ramsey is a heavily residential constituency but bordered by agriculture. I will say one thing with which some may disagree. The time has come to stop paying farmers for the bare conservation of farmland. Our Government takes from them their pride in the industry into which many were born, they do the farming industry no good and with frequently the best of intentions, they do the Island no good. We have a failed agricultural industry because we have had a failed Department dragging it down for decades. There is very little realistic marketing, very little diversification beyond the current suggestion of cannabis and no new ideas. It has stagnated for long enough and we need inspiring new people, modern diversification and a return to maximum production. The agricultural industry isn't a hobby, isn't a toy but it is the backbone of our Island laid low by a chronic malaise. The few farmers that continue to work the land without grants earn our respect and admiration but they are let down by those who have opted to place agriculture into mothballs and take Government payments. I am ready to stand up in the House of Keys to fight for the legitimate industry to cast out the doubts and divisions and get it back into healthy shape once again. Agricultural land that goes out of production should go into Government hands to be leased back to qualified young farmers wishing to embark on a career in the industry.

Fisheries

We are a seafaring nation with a fishing industry that has barely the capacity to set sail. Long gone are the days of herring and walking across a harbour on the decks of fishing vessels. We bought our territorial sea but lost our industry. It is ironic that we have a Ship Registry but register foreign ships in foreign seas. Our harbours are havens but the industry has gone. Somehow, you the electorate, are supposed to accept the loss, see our waters fished by foreign vessels and buy our fish from elsewhere. An industry that was once great can be great again. Quotas will need to change, procedures will need to change, agreements will need to change and most of all mindsets will need to change.

Forestry

A huge forestry initiative is required with better planting and carefully selected species. The recent shortage of imported timber demonstrates that local production should be providing much more of the quality timber required for the building trade. There needs to be greater attention to lowering prices and a wider selection of timber products. If we can import timber products for less than they cost here then there is something radically wrong with how our forestry is being run.

Manufacturing

Our Island was once rich in manufacturing. In some cases the machines lie silent, the factories deserted and the production lines dead. Investment is needed to attract and encourage new manufacturing opportunities to our Island. We have several world class manufacturing companies on the Island and we need to attract more of the same calibre.

The finance industry

You will see that I have not prioritised the finance industry. The position of tax efficient jurisdictions can and will change at the collective whim of others. Our Island can compete with other jurisdictions but for the future it will involve the collective tenacity to stand entirely independent and apart from the UK. Our recent experience has shown a reluctance to do this and a lame acceptance of foreign intervention and the advent of powerful multi national taxation agreements. The finance industry on the Island can no longer rest on its laurels and nor can we continue to rely on the fruits of its labours. On moral grounds, it is time to see the end of the gambling industry, it ruins lives, it ruins families and it operates like a cancer in society. It should never have been attracted to these shores and this Island should never again be associated with it. Whilst it stays we should see that it pays and I will expect to see it making a major voluntary contribution to the cost of our new hospital and medical centre. The industry has to produce new initiatives, products markets and international interest. Our Island needs to step forward again on the international stage and carve out its own status aside from the UK. An independent tax efficient jurisdiction stands with the strength of purpose not to be intimidated by multi national action. I can only say I will do all I can to promote a stronger finance industry but our new government has to have the backbone and tenacity to carry through the necessary change in mindset.

Climate change

I have a balanced view of climate change. There is an element of emergency in some of the practical steps that government should be taking but not above and beyond the health of our people, housing and a strong and sustainable educational system for our young people. I do see our generation still destroying the natural environment and a need for conservation. I see a positive argument for increasing forestation and decreasing the use of fossil fuels. I see a positive increase in the use of renewable energy and in particular harnessing wind and wave power. There is no reason why our Island could not be a market leader in green energy but not by copying other jurisdictions. Given the size of the Island and average daily mileage there is no reason why the entire Island should not be served by electric vehicles. There is a similar argument for electric heating but not served by our current MEA as one of the most expensive producers of domestic electricity in this part of Europe. Our Island is blessed with excessive wind and water. We also have strong tidal currents. It is frankly strange that we have yet to use any of it properly as a power source. If we cannot generate cheap electricity from renewable sources on the Island then we should seek a share in the wind generation fields on the North West Coast. If we have to look out on wind generators on our horizon it is only fair we have a share or purchase part of the wind generation fields

I am sure the success of Beach Buddies demonstrates that we all have it in our hearts to clear up the mess we are making of our own environment but then we go home and continue to be bombarded with single use plastic in almost everything we buy. Our Government needs to look at the products coming into our Island and what goes out through our retail and deal with some of the problems at source.

Recycling

Successful recycling needs to be an idea sold to the public and a habit that forms in the minds of everyone because they want to do it and not because they have to do it. The current process of charging for the disposal of some items and refusing to take others at our local civic amenity areas just results in bad feeling and fly tipping. If the tip is closed or the recycling is expensive the refuse still ends up being dumped so we need to be prepared to pay the staff to keep it open and to offer a full range of facilities totally free of charge. At Balladoole there is a restriction on hardcore yet the coast in front of it is eroding at a rapid rate and a sea wall and promenade could gradually be constructed using the hardcore broken down with concrete starting at the Vullan and working northwards. This is work that could be done by our local prisoners within my scheme for criminals repaying their debt to society. There is no reason why much of our flood defence work could not be gradually progressed using recycled materials and prison labour whilst saving the public purse major financial outlay.

Crime – a new initiative - making the Criminal pay

We live on a beautiful Island and within an abundant society. In such a position there is no excuse for crime, there is no real reason for crime and there should be no general acceptance of crime. We have an increasing crime rate which is primarily the result of a failed criminal justice system and providing an expensive holiday camp for our criminals. The recent television coverage of Jurby Prison was an embarrassment to our Island and I never want to see that repeated again. We have let drugs become common place in our society and here in Ramsey and as day follows night, an increase in violence, the use of guns, knives and other weapons will follow. We used to be an Island that was tough on crime and we need to completely reform our criminal justice system. I have a unique proposal in this respect. The starting point is creating a sufficient deterrent and the criminal paying his debt to his victim and to society. The holiday camp at Jurby becomes a working facility and each crime has a tariff and a cost repayment schedule with the result that all the costs of the criminal justice system are recovered. Offenders are offered the opportunity to pay in full on the day of conviction or earn the money to pay the fine, compensation and their keep by way of voluntarily electing to work in the prison factory. The more they work the quicker they repay and the sooner they are released. There is no parole just the choice to work or not to work. Those that opt not to work can do so but face a much longer sentence and remain with a financial liability to be deducted from future earnings or benefits. In the next administration MHKs will have to find the tenacity to take on the criminal. If you make a holiday camp for criminals and advertise it on the television be very sure that they will come here. The recent operation strongbox has already shown this to be the case.

Tourism and Travel

We used to have a Tourist Board and thousands of tourists used to visit our Island every year. We had hotels and we had a tourist industry. Gone, but to me not forgotten. What was once great can be great again. Setting aside the Covid situation from which our Island is strong enough to recover we need to tap into the thousands of tourists who travel to the Lake District and the North West every week. It was a wise move to purchase the Steam Packet Company but better still our Island needs to purchase either a small functional UK airport or a stake in the airport at Liverpool or Manchester. We need to fix our own air bridge and future costs. There is a good argument for leasing a government plane and for a small national airline. On the Island, our railway systems need modern commuter trains and retirement of the old rolling stock. The electric railway should terminate at the sea terminal and until there is a new bus station the sea terminal should double as the bus station giving much needed shelter and facilities to passengers particularly in the winter.

Taxation

We all want more from government but few want to pay a heavy burden in tax. This Island has a history of tax efficiency for high net worth individuals and savings as against UK taxation rates.

Taxes can remain low if public money is spent wisely. Money will have to be found to fund massive healthcare improvement in the next financial year and that will have to come from targeted taxation within the sectors of big business that contribute to ill health in both physical and mental form. Taxation needs to adjust to encourage more use of electric cars and to provide incentives for quicker uptake of other forms of renewable energy.

Government reform

We have had five bad years of government where our Council of Ministers has simply been “the government” with the remaining members of the Keys having little power to change matters. This has not been helped by the Legislative Council having many newcomers who have never even stood the test of an election in the Keys, with some exceptions, have no legal experience and cannot therefore be expected to carry out the necessary role of scrutiny. No surprise that we are not in a very good position going forward. It is not going to be easy to select a good Chief Minister and unless there are seriously well qualified individuals successful in this election, it is going to be even more difficult to select competent Ministers for the various departments. Whilst all Ministers have access to legal advice they will still have had to have a working knowledge of commercial contracts, have negotiated with unions in a conflicting position, been in regular conflicting positions with high ranking civil servants and be capable of negotiating and communicating at all levels of society. They will need to know their way round the finance industry and be able to hold their ground. In the past, that has not been the case and we have to raise the standard of qualification for the role of Minister. It is my view that MLCs should only be selected from people who have previously been in the Keys or, if from outside the Keys, possess a recognised qualification or equivalent experience in law. Major government reform is required and I am not convinced the current system of a Council of Ministers is working in the best interests of the Island.

Your vote counts to deliver those two important messages on election night:

“YES”

TO BETTER NATIONAL HEALTHCARE,
MORE GPs AND A COMPLETELY NEW,
MODERN MEDICAL CENTRE FOR RAMSEY

&

“NO”

TO THE CURRENT
MARINA PROPOSAL

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VOTE MANN
HOUSE OF KEYS ELECTION 2021

