

House of Keys General Election - Thursday 23rd September 2021

AYRE & MICHAEL

Tim Johnston



Dear Constituents,

Since early June, I have visited the majority of homes within Ayre and Michael. Not simply to put a leaflet through the letterbox, but to listen to you, the constituent, to really understand the local and wider issues that are of concern. I have really appreciated the welcome and feedback I have received and I will continue to speak to as many people as I can. Within this manifesto I want to raise many of the issues that you have talked about to me.

I repeat my clear commitment that if I am elected on September 23rd, I will not take on a ministerial position in the new administration. If asked, I may well become a departmental member to understand better the workings of Government but ultimately, my main priority is to serve you, the people of Ayre and Michael, and in doing so, to build trust and to ensure you have an approachable, accountable Member of the House of Keys working on your behalf.

I propose to hold regular surgeries throughout the constituency including meetings in the summer recess to get your feedback and hear your concerns. Being independent, I cannot and will not, make policy promises to you that are unrealistic or unachievable but I can promise to provide a voice in Keys.

Thank you.

Tim Johnston

**Standing up for Ayre and Michael.
Standing up for our Island.**

OBSERVATIONS

Rural constituencies like Ayre and Michael are increasingly ignored by our 'Douglas centric' politics and problems, often unique to rural communities, are being overlooked. 'Connectivity' or lack of it, is a real issue, whether it's mobile/broadband quality, public transport or the condition of roads, time and time again this has come up on the doorstep. I will look to work in any way I can to provide the best outcomes for constituents' concerns. I have heard from many the frustration and disappointment you feel that Government is working more for itself than you.

The principal issues you have raised are below. Only by having an MHK who works with the community and local authorities and who is willing to question and lobby on your behalf can many of these issues be faced.

- Post covid recovery and economic planning
- Better control of Government expenditure
- Implications of the Northern Area Plan
- Housing
- Government trust and accountability
- Rates inequality
- Coastal erosion
- Poor state of roads and pavements
- Speeding on our roads
- Isolation due to inadequate public transport provision
- Lack of local MHK visibility within the constituency
- Lack of transparency within the current Planning process
- Hospital waiting lists
- Access to healthcare and GP service
- Inadequate broadband and mobile network provision



ACCOUNTABILITY and TRUST

I will support a Government that shows clear political leadership through a comprehensive and integrated economic plan that sets out a roadmap for the Island's future prosperity. Recent announcements on economic planning should have been done 5 years ago. The next Government must set this out and regain the confidence of the electorate. Lack of communication and silo mentality in Government has been consistently raised on the doorstep.

We need a Government that explores the use of independent scrutiny of our Executive to ensure transparency for taxpayers.

Government must get a grip on infrastructure expenditure and capital projects. Our roads and local services struggle through lack of investment. An 'Auditor General' must be given the power to truly question, scrutinise and recommend to Government the effective use of tax payers' money and their recommendations must be properly acted upon.

The Government's fulltime headcount has increased since 2016 by 424 at a time of increased pressure on budgets and key management pay between 2018/19 and 2019/20 has increased by 18% according to the Government's 19/20 audited accounts. I will support a Government that challenges the constant need to recruit and looks to work more with the private and third sectors to draw in expertise where needed, and utilise more the talent we have throughout the Island. We cannot afford an increasingly burgeoning public sector.

How can the Government justify spending £50 million plus on a landing stage in Liverpool while our local infrastructure crumbles? The recent request from DOI for another £14 million for the landing stage is nearly the annual expenditure of the Department of Enterprise. Government plays too fast and loose with taxpayer's money. I have the experience to question and scrutinise on your behalf.



ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND OPPORTUNITY

There is no doubt our Island faces many challenges ahead. One of the key responsibilities of Government is to help create the right conditions for the economy to grow and prosper. Government needs to remove barriers that disrupt enterprise and ensure a level playing field. From the increase in Government head count, it is obvious that Government is good at creating Government jobs but I would prefer to see these jobs being created in the private sector.

The OECD minimum tax rate is a good opportunity to relook at our whole taxation policy, both private and corporate, to ensure it is providing the best package in an increasingly competitive tax environment. One thing is for certain, we must continue to look for new opportunities to diversify our economy whilst constantly ensuring we have an appropriately skilled workforce who can afford to stay here or come here. Opportunities to develop our high tech and STEM industries need to be seized upon along with green and blue tech business. Climate change will bring many challenges but also opportunities for green investment, energy production and carbon offset.

In 2016 the Island was granted UNESCO Biosphere status, then and still, the only whole nation to be given the accolade. Biosphere recognises the strengths we have as an Island such as our culture, heritage and traditional farming. Biosphere understands the importance of economic growth and prosperity but provides us with an opportunity to do so in a more sustainable way. Future planning and development must recognise the need for sustainability and reduced environmental impact.

I will support a Government that helps facilitate these opportunities and provides ideas to encourage our young people to return to our Island to work, for example by offsetting any outstanding student loans against income tax.

CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENT AND NET ZERO

Getting the right balance for future renewable electricity production is going to be a major task for the next administration to face, and with the current Government's wasteful record on infrastructure expenditure, it is vital that this is done properly. The Island has a challenge ahead to pay for the Covid pandemic and reboot the economy, we cannot afford to overburden taxpayers. Achieving Net Zero by 2050 will require major changes to the way we live, work, travel and consume. The Island must adopt a pace that creates a fair transition for people and the economy. There will be high costs involved but also new opportunities to create a more diverse economy.

Kirk Michael and the north west coast are increasingly under threat from coastal erosion. Recent funding pledges for Island flood defences must produce workable solutions to address this urgent issue.

EDUCATION

There is no greater responsibility than ensuring a society educates its young people. It is vital that we equip them with the skills they need to succeed at whatever level. Headteachers need to be able to innovate and have the flexibility to manage their schools. Covid has put huge pressure on schools and pupils with many hours of teaching lost. Government must do all it can to help schools and to ensure pastoral care is supported even more in these difficult times.

Schools are a major part of our communities and I will do all I can to help staff, governors, parents and community groups in their constant quest to improve facilities, fund activities and make our schools even better places for our children.

Education must be a top priority. We have the opportunity to have a more tailored education system for varying abilities and skill sets and to work closer with local employers to make sure we are supporting our economy for the future. We must provide opportunities for more upskilling, apprenticeships and vocational training. This also means supporting businesses more who are willing to offer apprenticeships and training.

AGRICULTURE

Farmers manage over 75% of our landscape and Covid has shown us even more the importance of having a reliable local food chain. The value of our fishing industry has also been more recognised locally. The farming industry is a long-term business and needs long term confidence if it is to invest in the future. It is vital that this continues if we are to maintain a viable industry. Government policy is to maintain a local meat plant and it is vital that Government continues to support a viable route to market. The success of Isle of Man Creamery highlights the excellence and quality of Manx produce on a world stage and shows how agriculture is very much part of the Island's success story. The increase in local artisanal food over recent years has been really encouraging. I will support a Government that values our farming industry and understands the wider benefits it brings to the environment. I want to see more local produce used in our schools, hospitals and across Government. Short sighted procurement based on cheapness means we are not feeding our children local, quality ingredients or providing the healthiest options. Remember, a £1 spent on Island is worth over £1.80 to the local economy providing stimulus and employment.

HEALTH

Our health services have had to face constant challenge even before Covid. Manx Care has been created and it is right that it is given the opportunity to start and address the challenges. Funding health services appropriately is vital if we are to maintain and improve services for all and I believe that Ramsey Cottage Hospital is proving how important it is as part of our current and future health infrastructure. Many constituents in Ayre and Michael have voiced their concerns over access to a GP with many elderly and vulnerable people struggling to see their doctor. I want to do what I can to understand the challenges GPs face to ensure constituents of Ayre and Michael continue to receive the care they need.

Covid is leaving us with a legacy of longer waiting lists and delays. This of course means appropriate funding is needed but it is also about making sure we have enough trained health and dental professionals and staff on hand. The Island must ensure that it is providing the right incentives if we are to recruit and keep the people we need here as they face higher housing and living costs. Mental health issues have always been with us but thankfully are much better recognised. Covid has only added to this burden and it is vital that health services are properly funded and do even more to work with voluntary groups and the third sector to identify and help wherever possible. Health education gives the opportunity to facilitate long term improvements in our lifestyles and to therefore reduce the burden on health services.

CONNECTIVITY

I will be a strong voice for Ayre and Michael in the Keys who understands the needs of a rural community having lived in the constituency for 25 years. Huge sums can be spent on the promenade but if you live in the north then you have to put up with crumbling roads, uneven and dangerous pavements, patchy mobile connection and patience to receive reliable broadband. Plans to change road tax to a weight based calculation are now expected to come to Tynwald sometime in the new session. I will support a Government that recognises the challenges of living in isolated communities and does not penalise motorists. Cars are a lifeline for most and not a luxury. Local business owners need the support of Government, not further cost burden.

Many people in Ayre and Michael rely on a bus service and are provided with a mix of scheduled and 'connect' services. It is clear from conversations with constituents that whilst the present system works to a certain degree it falls well short of solving the challenges of isolation many of you have talked about and needs to be better targeted if we are to reduce the use of private transport.

HOUSING

This is the biggest issue raised on the doorstep. Too many families in communities like Jurby are living in substandard public sector housing and have waited too long for basic upgrades. People deserve better. The present Administration's affordable housing strategy does not address the wide and complex issues raised over housing. We have seen recent upsurges in price and demand effectively making it near impossible for young people to get onto the housing ladder. First time buyer schemes are now out of sync with property prices, and many do not qualify because their salaries are above the criteria but nowhere near enough to afford a deposit. There are many retired people who would happily downsize but cannot find suitable properties or sheltered accommodation. Rents soar as companies buy up rentals and many houses lie empty and/or neglected. Large development companies carry huge influence over the market and hold land reserves.

The latest census must be used to fully understand the needs of our population and tailor future planning accordingly, including pressures on local services. Targeting brownfield and redevelopment sites within communities over greenfield development may well offer the best solutions. The majority of constituents of Ayre and Michael who would be affected by proposed changes to Ramsey town boundary have voiced their opposition to this.

Housing is a fundamental issue for the next Government to face. If families cannot settle in our towns and villages and support local schools and services, and if we cannot attract key professionals to our Island then we have serious problems ahead for our economy.

CHIEF MINISTER

I will vote for a Chief Minister who provides a clear, integrated strategic plan for the future welfare and prosperity of our Island. Someone with the strength, vision and humility to tackle the issues we face and to provide solutions that recognise the needs of ALL in our society and who shows clear leadership. The new administration must rebuild confidence in our political system with transparent Government and better communication.

**VOTE TIM JOHNSTON
FOR AYRE & MICHAEL**

MY BACKGROUND

I am 49 years old, married to Maria and have 2 children aged 18 and 14. I was educated on the Island and graduated from the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester in 1994 with a degree in Rural Estate Management.

I ran a dairy farm in Andreas from 1998 for 20 years and have lived in Sulby for the last 3 years and continue to run an arable enterprise in nearby St. Jude's. I have been involved with the Manx National Farmers Union (MNFU) for 20 years taking on many roles including my present role of President since 2019. Whilst a dairy farmer, I also served on the Board of the Isle of Man Creamery as a Director for three and a half years.

The experience I have gained in running my own business as well as being a Board member at the Creamery, along with the political lobbying, negotiation and chairing skills through my work at the MNFU, can be put to wider use if I have the privilege of being elected in September. If elected, this will be my sole employment.

ELECTION DAY SEPTEMBER 23rd 2021

Please make your vote count. It is easy to say, 'the next five years are critical' but our Island really has some big challenges to face. I hope my background and experience and my straight forward and honest approach will inspire you to support me on polling day.

Thank you for taking the time to read my manifesto.

Tim Johnston

Standing up for Ayre and Michael. Standing up for our Island

Pre-election meetings:

Wednesday 1 September	7pm	Andreas Primary School
Tuesday 7 September	7pm	Jurby Primary School
Thursday 9 September	7pm	Ballaugh Parish Hall
Monday 13 September	7pm	Sulby Primary School
Thursday 16 September	7pm	Michael Primary School
Monday 20 September	7pm	Bride Methodist Church Hall

You will receive a polling card shortly before the election. Details of your polling station will be shown on the card.

Postal Vote

This year, voting by post is available. Either download a form at www.gov.im or contact me and I will arrange an application form. Email timjohnston@manx.net Mobile: 470107

Go to facebook [@timjohnstonforayreandmichael](https://www.facebook.com/timjohnstonforayreandmichael) to view recent media interviews.

