

A Manifesto for Positive Change

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GEOFFREY BOOT
Prospective MHK for Glenfaba & Peel
General Election 22nd September 2016

My Vision and Manifesto for Positive Change



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On 22nd September you have an opportunity to choose two people to become the first MHKs in the new combined constituency of Glenfaba and Peel.

It doesn't seem long ago that I was canvassing in the by-election for Glenfaba - how quickly the year has passed.

I undertook in my manifesto to communicate and I have done so almost on a daily basis via social media and my webpage. There have also been two newsletters. I committed to deal with your problems as efficiently and quickly as I could and I have, in most cases, replied within 24 hours.

I have worked with our Commissioners where I can to ensure joined up Government. I promised the people of Foxdale that I would strive to secure much needed road improvements and tackled this head on at my first Tynwald. There will be some inevitable disruption but Foxdale will be a better place for it.

The new St Johns' Sewage Works is now programmed and there is now commitment for a new sewage plant in Peel together with continuing regeneration within the town. This is much needed and I will continue to press for further funding.

I have had two departmental roles with six delegations within the Department of Economic Development (DED) and a linked role in the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture (DEFA) in Food Retail. These delegations have kept me busy but not distracted me from constituency work (the acronyms are not the best, DEFA and DED). The visitor centre at Knockaloe is also a step closer.

So what for the future? Brexit has thrown some uncertainty into the equation. We need a positive outlook as I believe there will be opportunities to re-exert a bigger measure of independence and unburdening ourselves from the constant flow of EU/UK regulation on which there is very little democratic debate in Tynwald. We can become an even better place to live and do business.

Tynwald has belatedly started to address the issue of Public Sector and State Pensions. This is something that should have been done at the beginning of the last Parliament. At least we've now made a start. I have served on the Strategic Sea Services Working Group which has resulted in an offer of a new User Agreement from the Steam Packet.

My Select Committee work, particularly with the Social Affairs Policy Review Committee, has resulted in a fairly hard hitting report about problems within Children's Social Services with recommendations that I hope the next Tynwald will follow through.

It's not going to be an easy ride over the next five years. We are still carrying a budget deficit of around £80 to £85 million and whilst we have substantial reserves of over £1 billion we cannot keep eating into this.

Government has carried out some restructuring we need to continue the momentum on departmental costs and examine what we actually need to do rather than sometimes what we want to.

The number one priority for me over the next five years is to ensure that our economy continues to grow. Without growth in the private sector we will simply have insufficient individuals paying tax to support an aging population. If our business base shrinks we will not be able to afford pensions and all the good things that we all want like an improving health service, good schools and education system, social services that work with communities, continued improvement to infrastructure and, as we all know, locally repair our roads.

In the past I know that people have felt disengaged from their MHKs, I want you to know that if

I am re-elected I will not vanish for five years but will continue to engage with you via social media, my webpage blogs, newsletters when appropriate, consultation, by telephone and attending and supporting local functions with my wife Suzie.

I sincerely believe that I have the experience to do an excellent job as your MHK locally and for our Island as a whole.

POLLING STATIONS 22ND SEPTEMBER

Peel

Centenary Hall, Atholl Street, Peel, IM5 1HQ

Glenfaba

North East Patrick - St Paul's Church, Mines Road, Foxdale, IM4 3 HB

German - St John's Methodist Hall, Main Road, St Johns. IM4 3NA

Southwest Patrick and North Patrick - Glen Maye Methodist Church, Hill Terrace, Glen Maye.

IM5 3BF

You will receive a polling card shortly before the election and your polling station will be shown on the card. Even if you don't get a polling card you can still vote if you are on the electoral roll.

Manx solutions to Manx problems

My Personal Profile

One of the big complaints I hear about MHKs is that they come with little or meagre business experience, entrepreneurial skills and have little knowledge of what goes on outside of our shores. So I thought a short résumé of where I come from would be helpful both on a personal and experience level.

I live with my wife Suzie at Ballagarraghyn in St Johns. We take great pride in tending to our garden, maintaining a friendly eco system and environment on the farm.

We have four children all of whom have now left home. Two are married and we have four delightful grandchildren who love the Isle of Man.

From a personal perspective, when I left school I went to college to study Bio Chemistry and Physics. A serious motorcycle accident left me severely disabled for a number of months. This was a humbling start that taught me a lot about disability, a lesson I won't forget.

I started my working career at the Midland Bank - now HSBC - which provided a good base for financial management. When I realised I didn't like banking I went into surveying, auctioneering and estate agency where I qualified and became a partner in a company in the UK. Six years later we sold the company and I moved to the Isle of Man 30 years ago.

A number of parallel business ventures followed. My family's background in farming led to my involvement in a horticultural business which later diversified into leisure facilities, including a golf course. During this time I somehow found time to become a commercial pilot and became involved in a number of aviation related businesses including co-founding Flyer Magazine and launching AOPA (Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association) Isle of Man Region.



Politically, I first became involved at local authority level when I was 24 and have been involved in politics one way or another since.

Both my wife and I have been elected at council level in the UK, where I was Chairman and Mayor for a short while.

Latterly I've been a German Commissioner - Chairman and Vice Chairman. I had to resign when I became an MHK last September.

My business and political involvement has led to many dealings in the regulatory and legislative sector and I have contacts both in the Isle of Man, UK, EU and Internationally.

Working in private business has led me to develop business skills, discipline in applying sound accounting principles and paying attention to detail. Communication is paramount, if you don't deliver or listen to your customer base then you soon suffer and in politics this translates to listening to you, the electorate.

I have committed full time to being an MHK and have taken on a heavy department workload as well as my general Constituency and Parliamentary duties.

In the past, off-island experience has on occasions been viewed with suspicion, but I believe that it is a great asset. It brings new experience and contacts that can lead to new ideas and directions for the future. With the challenges that face us over the next five years I think it is imperative that we have people with consummate business experience and with contacts outside of the Isle of Man, particularly in the UK.

I hope you will give me the opportunity to use the experience that I have gained as an MHK to serve you, the electorate and the Isle of Man as a whole, for the next five years.

Health and Social Care

We need to support on island healthcare and where possible, bring expertise to us so that vulnerable people don't have to travel to the UK. There is concern over access to GPs and waiting lists that have sadly of late increased. This must be addressed.

We have been employing far too many locum staff from consultants and nurses through to social workers and I have taken a great interest in our recruitment process. We offer great incentives, a lower tax regime and let's face it, an excellent living environment. I felt that these were not being promoted sufficiently off Island. Progress is being made, we are now training more nurses on Island. There is still much to be done.

Morale in the health service is not good. We need to resist so called efficiency savings that do not stack up and listen to the staff ensuring proper consultation before changes are made.

I have also been involved in the review of Children's Social Services under the auspices of the Select Committee Social Affairs and Policy Review Committee (SAPRC). A report has been presented to Tynwald as it was obvious there have been some severe failings in the past, so strong recommendations are made to address the situation in the future. I hope that Tynwald will take these forward.

We must protect vulnerable people old or young.

Education

In general our education system is superior to that in the UK and we have resisted, and should continue to do so, adopting their policy.

The schools in Glenfaba and Peel are well run and a credit to our education system. Improvements are required:- QE II

needs a new science, technology, education and maths block. The Clothworkers requires repair and renovation. I will fight to ensure that we obtain good funding and capital programmes for all.

Some of the cut backs in pre-school education have been reversed and more money will be available in the coming Parliament but I think there is still more to be done here.

Licence Fees

The BBC, in the UK is being forced to subsidise free licences for people over 75. I will endeavour to make this the case in the Isle of Man. I continue to be disappointed by the poor coverage we get, despite our large financial contribution.

Experience in Tynwald

With the announcement that five Ministers will not be re-standing, as well as two other members, that means with the usual churn of members there will probably be 10 or 12 new members in the House of Keys. This will present new challenges for those of us with some experience as well as opportunities. It also bodes well for a new outlook and perspective on overall Government policy.

Your Views Count

What I've been doing

Having won the by-election in September last year I embarked on a rapid learning curve. With just a year before the next election I was realistic about what I could achieve. I wanted to learn as much as I could in the short time available.

A brief overview:

- Department of Economic Development (DED) - member with six delegations which are Retail Sector, Construction Sector, Mines and Minerals, Department Property, Clean Tech and Support for the Built Environment.
- Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture (DEFA) delegation around Food Strategy and value added linking to my DED retail responsibilities.
- Served on select committees and in particular Social Affairs Policy Review Committee. Produced three reports to Tynwald in Procurement and also Children's Social Services.
- Represented Government at the International Festival for Business (IFB) selling the Island as a great place to do business and also our Clean Tech industries.
- Visited many businesses both in the constituency and Island wide, in particular the Meat Plant, Ramsey Bakery and Isle of Man Creameries and local Quarries and recycling.

- Attended Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference on behalf of Isle of Man.
 - Liaised with Manx NFU.
 - Engaged in regeneration with particular emphasis on Peel through DED.
 - Secured funding for Foxdale Highways improvement and a sewage plant in St Johns. Worked on a new commitment for a new sewage plant in Peel as well as looking at solving the silting issue in the harbour and the raggatt leachate problem.
 - Kept to my manifesto commitment to reply to communication usually within 24 hours. Communicated almost daily through social media, a website blog and newsletters where appropriate.
 - Tried hard, and not always succeeded, in getting Highway repairs done. Tried to address some of the issues with regard to greenway access and access to Government owned land.
 - Flagged up internet access speed and mobile coverage.
 - Flagged up speeding issues.
 - Dealt with many constituents issues and problems.
- This is just a taster that gives some idea of the cross section of issues tackled.

Law and Order

There is a good story here, crime rates are at their lowest for some 30 years and a credit to our Police service. We should not relax our vigilance nor see this as an opportunity to cut the Police service even further as any relaxation on minor crime can quickly escalate to more serious offences.

I am a great believer in retention of a local visible policing presence.

Digital Inclusion

We have one of the highest internet connectivity rates in the developed world. There are however still sections of society, particularly older people, who need help grappling with the new technology.

Government has also been slow at digitalising its services, something that needs addressing in the short term.

Our Economy

Working in the Department of Economic Development (DED) has given me a great insight into the work that goes on behind the scenes that doesn't get reported. I have enjoyed my work in this Department as I really believe that economic growth is the key to our Island's future.

Tourism has increased but there is still more to do. Financial services are in decline due in part to legislation from the EU and USA but are still a substantial part of our economy. Going forward we need to explore new ideas - crowdfunding platforms and innovative off-shore finance packages come to mind. The Island has done much to comply with off-shore pressure with regard to beneficial ownership, etc, but wisely resisted the extremes.

E-business including E-gaming has been a great success and is now around 20% plus of our GNI. We need to continue encouraging the IT sector and the recent lifting of restrictions and work permits will help. It is sadly very simple for these businesses to relocate.

The £50 million Enterprise Development Scheme is already attracting a lot of interest. We need to make sure we get value for money. The recent Islexpo was a great success with over 1,000 attendees and looks set to become a regular event.

I have been involved in Clean Tech, we have an agreement with Dong Energy for an off-shore Wind Farm, but there is a lot of work to be done here. We have three agreements for the development of tidal energy which I see as having great future potential.

Who would have believed a few years ago that we would have one of the

most successful Aviation Registries in the world? This sits very well with our Ship Registry, which is 10th fastest growing registry in the world.

It comes as a surprise to many people to know that we have a considerable manufacturing base on Island that employs over 2,500 people. We must continue to work hard with our grants structure and help these companies develop and bring new ones on board. Diversity is the name of the game.

With Brexit, there may be potential to ensure that our off-shore supermarkets stock and sell more local produce.

There may also be opportunities for more specific favouring of local procurement.

We are doing well but must keep up the momentum.

Tynwald Attendance Record

During the Parliamentary year I have missed two House of Keys sittings, one Tynwald sitting on Government business with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Jersey and half of a Tynwald sitting on Government business representing the Department of Economic Development at the International Festival for Business in Liverpool. I have voted without abstention on all motions and debates when in attendance.

Time for Positive Change

Government Reform

I responded recently to the Lord Lisvane inquiry into the workings of Tynwald as I feel that some reform, particularly of the Legislative Council, is necessary. The Council should have much more of a scrutiny function and there is reason to look at their cost as they do not carry a constituency workload.

When it comes to local Government (our Commissioners) I am not convinced that big is always better. In fact two of our parishes - Patrick and German - have some of the lowest rates on the Island. They have no permanent premises, part-time clerks and members who claim no allowances. This is local Government at its most efficient.

Peel, a larger area does have premises and a full time Clerk but seems to have sufficient work without need for amalgamation with Patrick and German.

Local Issues

While I have primarily been MHK for Glenfaba I have taken a keen interest in what has been happening in Peel, particularly with regard to the need for a new sewage treatment plant and getting a commitment from Government to do the same and finding a permanent solution to the silting problem in the harbour.

Peel regeneration is a priority for me. It has started but it needs to extend through the whole of the surrounding areas. Further work should be more sympathetic to what is already there to preserve Peels individual character. Peel has much potential and I will be pressing for further funding over the coming years. There is also a case for more business development within Peel. At present too many people commute to Douglas.

I have addressed many constituent's issues; some that I have been able to help with and others that I can't but at least I have explained why not. The poor condition of roads is a huge topic of contention! DOI cuts have meant a lack of proper maintenance and new approach is required.

Speed continues to be an issue. I did meet with the Chief Constable to ask for better enforcement.

Finally Suzie and I have attended a number of local events and it never fails to amaze me the amount of effort put in on a selfless basis for charity funding and local good causes.

Housing Provision

Unfortunately both our Planning and Building Control Departments are understaffed. I understand people's frustration at delays and also the lack of enforcement. The planning system sets the tone for our overall environment and must be properly staffed and resourced.

There continues to be a shortage of affordable housing. While it is unfair to expect private sector buyers to subsidise affordable housing, as happens in the UK, there are possibilities for planning permission on land that perhaps wouldn't qualify for normal planning consent for social development. This needs careful examination.

Government should encourage the private rented sector, which in many cases provides much needed accommodation that would not be otherwise available. However, there need to be concise standards that are understood by all and a fair contract system.

Future Government Expenditure

The loss of our VAT refund is still affecting our economy. We are currently running an £85 million plus deficit which cannot go on forever as our reserves of over £1 billion will be depleted within the next 10 years or so. It is important to continue the pressure on Government Departments for efficiency. However, we have reached a point where economic growth is key to securing our future.

As I have already alluded to, my work in the Department of Economic Development has revolved around this. If re-elected I will continue to press not only for economies but for the growth that we need.

The last administration was slow to address the big financial issues, but latterly Government has been addressing the issue of Public Sector Pensions and in July we passed recommendations for reform of the State Pension.

Why I wish to represent the new constituency Glenfaba & Peel

'Represent' is the operative word. I would like to represent Glenfaba and Peel as well as the whole of the Isle of Man.

I like to sample public opinion and do get feedback from social media where I post nearly daily. The election campaign itself has opened a whole new raft of opinion.

I enjoy constituency work and solving people's problems, this often involves vulnerable people who need representation and help. Many argue that MHKs should concentrate on national matters, but the truth is, there can be no real division between local and national issues. You have to be capable and willing to address both. A failure to keep local issues in focus and assist people when

they need help or information is, in my opinion, a failure of duty.

I promise you that if you re-elect me I will stay in touch.

Unlike some MHKs I do have a dedicated member of staff, as well as my wife, working with me, so I am able to respond to enquiries and queries often sooner, but barring holidays within 24 hours.

Sadly Government sometimes seems to lack vision and certainly communicates badly - something which we need to improve on! We need to become better at helping small businesses. Local householders and businesses find restrictions while Government slip things through under the radar - the silt dredging

and dumping at Poortown come to mind.

Our Island has a great parliamentary tradition. The new combined constituency contains the Royal Chapel and Tynwald Hill where the worlds longest standing Parliament was founded well over a thousand years ago. Peel with it's fantastic Castle and Harbour complex and cultural activity has long been one of our favourite destinations. I well remember when our children were younger on the odd sunny day sitting on the beach watching the seals thinking how wonderful this was.

Together, Glenfaba and Peel offer a unique combination of countryside and town unmatched anywhere on our Island and I look forward to being able to represent you.

Manx solutions to Manx problems