

MHK Manifesto
Laurence D Skelly
Independent Candidate Rushen
General Election 22nd September 2016



YOUR FUTURE, YOUR VOTE

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Dear Constituent,

I have been honoured and proud to serve you, the people of Rushen, and our Island these last five years. I believe I have made a positive impact and respectfully ask for your continued support, trust and vote again in the next House of Keys election on 22nd September.

It is fair to say this last political term has been the most difficult and challenging the Isle of Man has faced for many decades. The banking crisis, with its resulting recession and huge £200M VAT loss, has contributed to a significant slow-down in our local economy. I feel we have chartered a safe course in this fiscal storm and are looking forward to a better and brighter future.

There have been many difficult and unwelcome decisions that ensured we reached a necessary rebalanced revenue budget. This has been achieved while maintaining a positive economy with high employment and having minimal impact on our valued public services. However, there is still much work to be done especially with the Brexit issue and that is why I wish to stand again to represent you and our Island. It is vital that we are not complacent, but continue the drive towards a more secure and sustainable future.

My job as Minister for Economic Development has been to maintain economic growth that will create and secure jobs for our people and this must remain a top priority for the next administration. Positive sustainable economic growth is vital to support the high level of social welfare that we enjoy today and desire for tomorrow.

I am a strong believer in creating a balanced society where enterprise is encouraged. Yet we must help, care and enable those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable. Our elders must be allowed to enjoy a comfortable standard of living in their later years. Investing in our young people is investing in our future and education; the development of skills and knowledge is critical to ensure that they gain maximum opportunities in life.

The role of Minister carries much responsibility for our Island. However, I have endeavoured to be easily accessible to everyone, willing to listen, working diligently, honestly and fairly for the community of Rushen. Responding to constituents' concerns will always be a priority, because I believe that listening to the people ensures you remain well-grounded and more able to represent you.

If re-elected I will continue to work in the same manner and focusing on strong leadership and clear vision for what is in the best interests for you, the Isle of Man and all its people.

Yours,



Laurence D Skelly

Health & Welfare

Our health system is subject to an ongoing professional independent review to ensure we attain a consistent level of health care that we require and rightly demand. There have been a number of issues, including waiting list times, that have significantly improved but which need continued attention. It is very clear there will be increased pressure on resources in the coming years, particularly health and social care, and it is therefore important that we continually review our strategic position and objectives to ensure we attain the required standards.

I fully support the wider utilisation of community facilities like Southlands new and old, as the expansion of these care facilities has many advantages that will help achieve better patient outcomes.

Elderly Members of Community & Pensions

We need long-term planning to ensure those in need of care are looked after properly and those who are able to enjoy more active lives are encouraged - and have the opportunity to do so.

We have many social care organisations providing excellent services for our elderly and if combined with Government, offering wider community-based services, I believe this will enhance many people's lives in their later years.

The bigger challenge will be managing our pension provision. Looking at demographics, it is quite evident that the current system is in need of reform and the move recently towards the single tier scheme will help sustain the system. It is vital that we protect those who have worked and paid into the system, but also plan for future generations who will expect the same provisions.



Public sector pensions is another area for which Government must find a fair and sustainable solution. Recent changes have been necessary and uncomfortable for some, and regular reviews that are now built into the rules are crucial in order to ensure it remains sustainable.

Education & Young People

I have always strongly believed that investing in our young people is investing in our future. Academic achievement is important and increases career opportunities. It is equally important that we resource and offer wider vocational opportunities.

Five years ago I stated that developing industries and jobs for the future must be a priority and I am pleased that so many are flourishing, including e-business, which now represents 25% of our economy. As the Minister responsible for this area, I was pleased to gain Tynwald support to create the Nunnery ICT education campus, which will provide a major boost for future generations. I have also supported apprenticeship schemes across several industries, including engineering, ICT, finance, hospitality and social care.

I am delighted to have played a role in determining the redevelopment of Castle Rushen High School. This was long overdue and we must ensure that it remains on track to realise a state-of-the-art school and associated recreational facilities that will bring significant benefits for young people in our community. I have also supported the pre-school care provision that has been achieved for Rushen in recent years.

Having created the Rushen Youth Action Group Facebook page, I am pleased that it has become an effective medium to communicate and generate interest within our young people. We are awaiting the outcome of the planning application for Ballakilley, which would allow us to begin developing an action plan for a skatepark/BMX facility.

Investing in our Island

In my last manifesto I recommended that Government introduce a Manx National Savings Bond. I am pleased to be able to say that Treasury has agreed to introduce a similar scheme for Manx residents to invest in our Island's future.

Government has £1.5 billion in reserves, invested in traditional financial institutions that are mostly off-Island. With Tynwald support, I secured £50 million from those reserves to create an Enterprise Development Scheme to invest in local business and local jobs bringing wealth to our economy.

International Relations

External factors will play a significant role in our future and I believe the Isle of Man must remain vigilant and that we must do all in our power to ensure we maintain our political autonomy.

As a responsible nation we have demonstrated our international cooperation and political maturity. With the Brexit issue following the EU Referendum in the UK, we have also reviewed our independent economic resilience and with the UK moving towards greater devolvement, I believe it is prudent to consider all our constitutional options. This needs a thorough review and a clear understanding of the implications and benefits before mature debate can ensue. We need to focus on what is in the best interest of the Isle of Man, its economy and all our residents.

Housing

Ballakilly development is well underway and I was pleased to play a role in helping create 39 affordable houses along with 17 acres of recreational space that will hopefully see a home for rugby and other sports, along with green pathways.

Dilapidated properties pose an issue for Rushen and around the Island and I am glad that Rushen MHKs led the way in introducing new legislation giving more powers to deal with this longstanding matter, and ultimately encourage redevelopment of unsightly properties.

The first time buyers' programme has helped many young people get on the property ladder but I believe there is a need for a review to consider widening the programme and ensure its fit for purpose.

Environment & Energy

Our recent UNESCO World Biosphere Region accreditation, the first entire nation to gain this prestigious accolade, is a tremendous achievement for the Island. It proves our marriage between conservation, development and learning is sustainable and recognises our Island is a unique and special place to live, work and visit.

The Isle of Man must continue to play its role as a responsible nation and I supported Tynwald's 2015 recommendation for a series of measures to adapt to climate change, including a National Sea Defence Strategy, which is important to our Rushen coastline.

Energy is vital for any dynamic economy and I am delighted we have secured agreement for renewable projects - a wind farm, connected to a UK wind farm, and tidal power - in our Manx territorial sea waters that will generate revenue, jobs and potential energy security for us.

Tourism & Localism

I regularly attend both trader meetings in Port Erin and Port St Mary to understand the needs of our retail offer and local economy. Stimulating jobs in Rushen is important, and I was instrumental in introducing wider support that provides aid to those considering investment and creating jobs.

Regeneration has been a long time coming and I was glad to see improved paving in Port St Mary. Work is just starting in Port Erin to realise the joint travel terminus along with road and paving improvements that will make our built environment more attractive and benefit both business and our community.

As one of the founders of Rushen Heritage Trust I have been pleased to assist create this fabulous community movement and spirit who value our rich history and wish to promote and educate through the many events and activities.

Working together, Rushen MHK's managed to secure a direct bus route to Noble's Hospital which has proven a benefit to our community.

Our visitor economy has seen sustained growth in the last few years, which is greatly welcomed as this industry is powerful in boosting our local economy, including our indigenous industries of farming and fishing.

We must continually seek to improve our tourism offer so we have a dynamic and attractive place to visit, live, work and encourage investment.

National Marine Centre - Celebrating UNESCO Biosphere status & Marina

I believe Government needs to seriously consider capital investment into the former Port Erin biological station site to create a National Marine Centre, a multi-use facility that will be a major attraction for tourism, leisure, education, environmental, heritage and business-related activities. One that is marine-focused and celebrates our newly acquired UNESCO Biosphere status.

Commitment has been made to review the marina option again for Port St Mary and I look forward to engaging with the community to review the options.

Culture & National Identity

We all recognise the power of our national symbol, the Three Legs - 'whichever way you throw, it will stand'. In today's world that translates to being proud, independent and innovative.

We can all be proud of our Island and our unique culture. However, all too often I feel we play to our anxieties. Instead we must appeal to our aspirations and recognise our achievements that are immense for our small nation. I want to reignite that deep-seated pride in all our residents and instil a culture of promoting innovation and independent spirit.

Together we can build a positive, proactive National pride that demonstrates the true ethos that makes us different and gives us confidence in our own ability to achieve in all that we do.

Police & Security

There has been understandable concern over safety and crime recently which exposed our lack of crime awareness. It prompted me to visit our local officers and discuss the issue in detail. Despite these concerns, it's my belief that the Manx Force does a sterling job with limited resources, something which is reflected in the overall low crime figures. However, it is clear that policing does require careful monitoring to ensure standards are maintained so we may continue to feel safe and secure.

Government & Political Reform

Adopting a measured approach has seen a reduction of approximately 700 people from Government over the last five years while maintaining a reasonable level of service provision. The introduction of a Digital Strategy will help drive greater efficiency and work towards achieving a smarter and more effective Government.

The decentralisation of some services has seen local authorities take control of important services to deliver benefit to each local community.

The desire for political reform in terms of the Legislative Council has grown, and while I support the work of the upper house in terms of its primary role as a revising chamber for legislation, I feel equality between MHKs and MLCs is no longer acceptable. I believe more collaborative effort with colleagues is needed to realise a necessary reform of the Legislative Council, for the integrity of Tynwald and the Isle of Man.

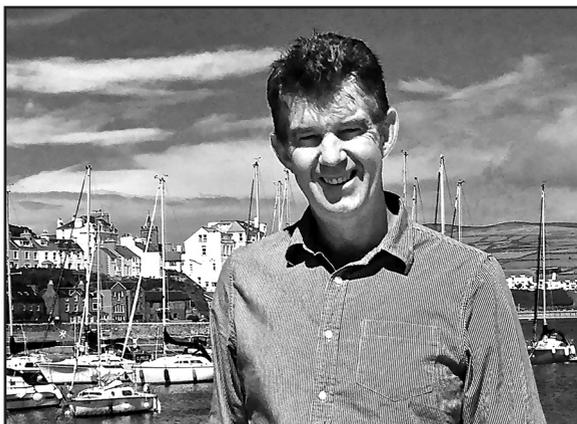
Our Economy, Our Future

As Minister for Economic Development I have attempted to build a growing, sustainable economy for our Island. It is imperative this work is prioritised to support our highly valued social services, including health and education.

Attracting investment to create and secure jobs for our people has been my primary focus and I believe we are achieving positive results, with unemployment now at its lowest level since 2008. Having raised the minimum wage by nearly 10% over the last two years this has in turn encouraged other salary increases and helps local spend in the local economy.

The construction industry is a strong barometer of our economy. But it is still experiencing a difficult period and I believe the retention of lower VAT for this sector is important factor for the future.

One important area for improvement that I want to see developed is Government considering its options in how to assist parents to maximise opportunities when returning to the workplace, in addition to providing incentives for our skilled and educated people to return to the Island to live and work.



Profile Background

I am 54, Manx born and bred. Married to Jackie for 30 years and we have two children, Tilly (22) and Oliver (19). We lived and worked in California for 15 years, where I ran a successful business operating in the travel, tourism & e-business sectors. We returned to the Isle of Man in 2000, after which I worked as a business consultant, before founding an event management company and local wholesaler with Jackie. I was elected to serve Rushen in the 2011 House of Keys election.



Interests: Family first, walking, golf, heritage & culture.

Membership & Affiliations:

South West (two Ports) Regeneration Committee
Rushen Heritage Trust
Southern Health Authority
Institute of Directors
Soundcheck Trust - Chairman
Rotary Club Rushen & Western Mann - Past President
North American Manx Association - Past President
Rowany Golf Club
Erin Arts Centre
British Legion
Manx Inspirations - Director

If you have any questions and wish to arrange a private meeting or help my election campaign in any way please do not hesitate to contact me.

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