

Policy statement for:
**A new model of
Government**
**A new style of
leadership**



Election of the Chief Minister 2016

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From: Kate Beecroft MHK

In the attached, I set out the proposed broad principles and strategies, which as Chief Minister, I would use to achieve the change both the electorate demanded by 22nd September, and which also unifies us.

Mine is a change agenda. Not least in the style of leadership, but also in its outcomes. I believe, if we establish strong ethical credentials around the world for good government then we will attract sustainable businesses to our shores.

In short, my core policies are:

- Growing and strengthening the economy
- Progressing social justice
- Delivering long overdue governmental reform

Having reviewed each of your manifestos, I believe those themes harmonise with yours.

What sets me apart from my fellow contenders, is my track record in standing firm on these principles. Even my worst critic, could not accuse me of a lack of tenacity in looking to progress these areas.

I am not proposing in this document a complete programme of government. Rather some broad parameters from which we can all have input. Mine would be a government of consensus.

I intend to publish the actual programme for government, before taking it to Tynwald for approval. I will also review it and seek Tynwald approval annually.

Many have said that this Parliament lacks the political experience of old. I see that as an opportunity rather than weakness, as indeed do the Manx public. We are after all, here as consequence of their wishes. With our 12 new colleagues, we have fresh skills, new perspectives on old problems and new enthusiasm in their resolution. I believe we have hope.

I will not be drawing any ministers or departmental members from LegCo. I will not be holding anyone to a LibVan manifesto. I intend to consult and engage with every Member of the House to build a programme for government into which we all have substantial input.

Tough times lie ahead, and that may well be the burning platform of change, but morally, we have a duty to act to ensure we build a society built on fairness, responsibility and prosperity.

Yours

Kate

Policy Statement

Executive Summary

As Chief Minister, it would be my policy to discuss with each newly elected Member of the House of Keys their manifesto and their objectives for Government in the next five years.

Some of the policy details that I would include in a Programme for Government are:

1. There needs to be a change in the way collective responsibility is applied. I will not hold my Government to a LibVan manifesto. A Programme for Government should be agreed and signed up to. That would then be subject to collective responsibility but Ministers would have a free vote on all matters not covered in the Programme.
2. The budget process needs to change and priority and zero based budgeting methods should be considered. I would instigate an immediate review of the budget process to enable the new process to be in place for the 2018/19 budget.
3. We have to ensure that there is a level playing field for all to ensure continued economic growth. Government needs to continue to work in partnership with business to create the right environment for business to thrive. For example, I would reinstate the successful national insurance holiday.
4. The issues of high energy and transport costs have to be tackled. I would revisit the Manx Gas Agreement and would be in favour of an energy regulator. Our sea links are vital and it is essential that the Sea Services Agreement is subject to an open tender process at the appropriate time.

5. The uncertainty surrounding Brexit makes it difficult to plan for the future. The Island is well placed to take advantage of changing circumstances and we need to ensure we maintain good relationships with the decision makers. To this end, when the UK negotiations are further progressed, I would task the Minister of Economic Development with ensuring that the Island is ready to capitalise on the opportunities which are bound to arise.
6. A solution to the annual deficit of the public sector pension scheme has to be found as a matter of priority. I believe that the current scheme needs to be closed to all except key workers but I am also willing to listen to all potential solutions.
7. I am in favour of most of the recommendations in Lord Lisvane's report and would have the debate on the recommendations as soon as practicable.
8. The role of Legislative Council should be revised, as suggested by Lord Lisvane, so that they do not have a vote on financial or policy matters and play no role in deciding the Chief Minister.
9. I will not appoint Members of Legislative Council as Ministers, Departmental Members or members of statutory boards.
10. I would make Departmental members, in effect, Junior Ministers who would have a substantive role to play in policy and budget setting for their departments. They should answer questions in Tynwald and in the House of Keys on the areas for which they have political responsibility. I agree with Lord Lisvane that ideally there should be no more than one political member per department but appreciate that there are practical considerations to be dealt with.

11. The silo mentality within government has to change. A change in the budget process will help this but it would also be appropriate to revisit the idea of a single legal entity. Whilst I could not support the version that was presented to Tynwald by the previous administration this does not mean that there is no merit in the basic idea.
12. Our NHS must remain free of charge but we must restore faith in our health system and to ensure that appropriate standards are maintained. I would introduce legislation to allow for the appointment of an independent health regulator. This would generate cost efficiencies and ensure that basic standards are complied with on a long term basis.
13. I would continue to drive forward the government strategy on digital inclusion to ensure greater and easier access to government services and to improve efficiency across all government departments.
14. There should be a Tynwald debate on setting up a Manx Youth Parliament similar to that in Scotland to promote greater engagement with our young people.
15. We need to revisit our university grant system. It is currently preventing some of our brightest and best from achieving their full potential and I favour the introduction of a system based on achievement. I would direct the Education Minister to bring to Tynwald proposals to ensure that all our young people realise their potential and further education and apprenticeships should be equally valued.

16. We are in straightened financial circumstances and we must reduce the size, scope and cost of government. When making these necessary reductions and savings we must ensure that the burden does not unfairly impact on those who are least able to bear the cost. Too many of the changes over the course of the last administration have unfairly impacted on those on fixed low incomes and this will not be repeated under my government. In this day and age no citizen in the Isle of Man should have to choose between heating and eating. I am in favour of introducing a living wage and making sure that work always pays better than welfare.

This is not an exhaustive list and I intend to consult with all Members of the House of Keys to make sure that the programme for government is inclusive.

If you want a Chief Minister who will listen, who will encourage and develop the abilities and skills of our people, putting the needs of the people foremost, and who will enable you to make your contribution to propose and bring policies to this Parliament so that we have stable, solvent, progressive and humane Government then I respectfully ask you to endorse and support my candidature for the responsibility and the duty of being your Chief Minister.

Background

To be elected to the ancient institution of the Tynwald and the House of Keys is both an honour and an absolute duty to the people of the Isle of Man.

It is to follow in the footsteps of a long line of men and women who undertook the responsibility of public service and who have left us a legacy of accomplishments which we in our own way recognise, respect and build upon.

As part of that public service the next administration needs to recognise that 47% of the public did not engage with the election process and we have a duty to do our utmost to restore public confidence and trust. A people must trust their government.

I have said publicly many times that neither I, nor the LibVan Party, operates from a default position as opposition to Government no matter what. My voting record is in the Hansard for anyone to look up. I have been a supporter of Government policy more times than I have been an opponent to it.

When I have been in disagreement with a Government policy I have fought my corner with the same degree of commitment to presenting an alternative perspective, and with no less a determination to persuade than any other Member of the House of Keys.

I stand by my record and state for the record that it is the nature of politics that debate can become heated on occasion. My proposed programme for government seeks to present principles behind which we can all unite.

We have had the benefit of a Speaker and President in our Parliament who have respected and maintained a good balance in debates between Ministers and backbenchers. To quote Lord Lisvane from his recent report. "There are dynamics which are common to every parliament, which include: the balance between parliament and government; means of challenge and calling to account; the effectiveness of the representative function; and the quality of legislative scrutiny and scrutiny of government".

We may agree to disagree but for the most part we agree not to be unnecessarily disagreeable with each other.

We must have a new Council of Ministers in office that will have a good grasp on the realities we now must deal with as an elected Legislature and the international challenges and opportunities for the benefit of our people together with a clear acceptance that new ways must be found to solve long standing problems. We must change our ways of running and financing government.

Since 2011 it has been a priority of Government to reduce the impact on our Island from major fiscal economic events.

Firstly, because of the reductions in the VAT agreement with the UK of £200 million and the unavoidable impact on our revenues with the challenges and the demands that has made on the provision of Government Services.

Secondly, the impact on our economy from what has been described as the worst global banking crisis since the great depression and finally the unavoidable results from a slowing down of our domestic economy, mainly as a result of the first two events.

In this House of Keys, we have for the first time in history five women elected to serve and we have in total twelve newly elected representatives coming to the House for the first time.

There have been concerns in the press about the lack of experience in this new House. I know that the spectrum of abilities and achievements of Hon Members encompasses expertise sufficient to meet the expected challenges we must face in the coming years. The skills of Hon Members give this House the flexibility we need to tackle unexpected challenges. We will make the necessary changes to enable us to rise to these challenges and opportunities and make the best of them for all our people.

I will give every Hon Member a chance to participate fully in the process of finding solutions that work.

I want every Member of this Hon House to be as effective and as productive as they intend to be in making their contribution to the prosperity and the well-being of the Isle of Man and I pledge to do my very best so that you can realise yours.

Where we agree

We have been fortunate to have financial reserves. However, hard decisions were made that pleased few people not least those who had the responsibility to make them.

Having read the manifestos from our newly elected Members of the House of Keys, there are priorities stated for government action in the next five years that reflect the wishes of the electorate.

The Hon Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Moorhouse, wants a Chief Minister with a good economic background and is hopeful that Brexit will be to the Isle of Man's advantage. I agree that this next Council of Ministers needs a firm grasp on the economic realities that we face and I will bring together a strong team with the necessary skills to face the challenges ahead. As a businesswoman I fully understand the importance of ensuring we have value for money and of making the best use of the available skills.

The Hon Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Cregeen, said that the last administration faced "unique challenges" and that many difficult decisions were made. Common sense is required and we must focus on the long term prosperity of the Isle of Man with greater efficiencies within Government. I agree with him that to achieve this will require strong leadership and focus to ensure that the Isle of Man continues to diversify and adapt in an ever changing world.

The Hon Member for Ayre and Michael, Mr Baker, has stated Government "must make right choices with a confident leadership, working together, steering a right course, rapidly changing environment". Indeed it must. Further he adds that Government expenditure must be managed "robustly". No more silo mentality or gold-plated vanity projects, Government must recognise the value of money and spend it "properly at all times". On this I am a kindred spirit. The Hon Member also would like to see incorporated a resource bank, a national data bank and a National Ideas Scheme so interested individuals can offer their skills and expertise for the wider benefit of the communities and Island. I can see a great deal of merit in that idea and would encourage him to bring this into our programme for government.

The Hon Member for Douglas Central, Ms Corlett, wants people elected who won't shirk their responsibilities and who intend to protect the next generation. The Hon Member wants to see reform of the rates, parliamentary reform, pre-school education for all and would like to see the idea of a Pensioners Bond explored. She thinks the idea of a deep berth cruise terminal is worth exploring and has concerns regarding the Public Sector Pensions. I agree with the Hon Member on all her points raised.

My colleague, the Hon Member for Douglas South, Mr Malarkey, states that what is needed now is strong and decisive political leadership to manage the challenges of the next five years. Like him, I feel that we need knowledgeable and practiced politicians including a proactive Chief Minister.

These are just a few examples of where I believe consensus can be built and I'm certain that there are many more areas in all of our manifestos where we share common ground.

The Chief Minister and Council of Ministers

The previous Chief Minister has stated that being in that position is often lonely, that people misunderstand and overestimate the powers that office has. Recently a former Minister giving evidence to the Public Accounts Committee stated. "I think that the Chief Minister, on occasions, has been criticised by some regarding the strength of his leadership. But in reality he does not have the power. The power is vested within the Ministers and the Departments, and there is not a right and wrong answer – therefore strong politicians have strong opinions and that is where the difficulty arises".

Our former Chief Minister commented that the power of a Chief Minister is that of hiring and firing.

There is a body of evidence from the past five years to show us what problems have been identified within Government and its Departments, to illustrate the necessity for change, sometimes fundamental change.

Ministers cannot act as though "the ends will justify the means". The mantra the Minister is the Department is no longer either appropriate or acceptable. We need change to begin happening now. We have no time to waste.

Further development of our diversified economy is key to the future of our Island. We must create growth and with it good quality jobs for our people. We must ensure our education system is developing the skills and knowledge needed to support our economy. Importantly we must do these things through open debate, with increased transparency and greater accountability.

Moreover, in the Agenda for Change published by the previous administration the policy statements contained within it have been supported and endorsed by me.

No politician alone can find solutions to the multi-faceted problems that Government must find solutions for. That has always required a co-operative and a coherent application of many people, with diverse talents and experiences. That is how we make progress.

It is for this new House of Keys to decide if they want a Chief Minister who will be in the

manner of a conductor hiring the musicians to play sheet music someone else has written, or to have a Chief Minister who has the necessary understanding of Government and the resolution to put the needs of the people over the ego of any Minister.

I would rebalance policy to ensure our domestic challenges are not overlooked in the face of increasing international demands. We need a Chief Minister who focuses more on the needs of the people and allows Ministers to play a greater role on the international stage where appropriate.

It is important that we have change and not only a change in policy, but a change in the style of leadership. Mine will be a leadership based on consensus and collaboration and will encourage everyone to take part and play an important role in driving change.

A Smaller Smarter Government

We face uncertain times and have taken steps to anticipate, where we can, what those changes will bring to us.

The men and women who work for our Government are the people who make the policies of Government work. They are often dedicated professionals who give of their very best and we should remember that without them we can achieve nothing.

We have a considerable body of expertise at our service and as a policy statement we must recognise and accept that the people who work for us in our Government are respected and valued. They are not simply units to be cut from budgets; they are an essential resource of experience and talents which we depend upon for delivery of high quality services to our people.

There are unprecedented growing pressures upon Government in respect of the delivery of both health and social care because of an ageing population, chronic long term medical conditions coupled with a public becoming more aware of the consequences of rising medical costs on the public revenue.

We have to accept that we must make Government smaller, stronger and simpler and we must do that with intelligence and with a proper consideration for the people those changes will most impact upon.

I have been forthright in promoting the wellbeing of the people of this Island. I respect the laws we make and the rules that govern how Government Departments deal with business and the individual. We who make the laws must be obedient to them. If we do not uphold the law we cannot keep the support and respect of the people who have elected us to make them.

We must continue the considerations of the wider issues surrounding the future sustainability of public services and develop a set of priorities upon which future policies will be decided. We must engage with the public over the services that they want government to provide and how they are provided.

We have a duty to support the best efforts to realise long-term objectives to achieve a financially and socially sustainable future for the Isle of Man.

My policy is to maintain stability and to ready us for the opportunities to grow our economy that will come from the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union. We have in place significant preparations for this event and we must waste no time in developing them.

This work will extend far beyond the current budget rebalancing exercise and will require a significant level of engagement and debate with the Island's community.

I accept that for all our strengths, the institution of Tynwald and Government of the Isle of Man are capable of considerable improvement. To use the words of Lord Lisvane, this must be a process of evolution and one that maintains our traditions and our values.

Conclusion

Not having a majority of LibVan MHK's in Tynwald means that of necessity, where my Party's manifesto has described a particular policy, it will be a requirement to invite the support of the elected members in the adoption of such. I will not be holding my government to a LibVan manifesto.

We must have reform to our system of Government where reform is necessary and beneficial, and where indications of those required changes have already been identified and it is my policy to promote and support such changes.

We must protect and enhance our standing as a highly respected international business centre and as a centre of excellence and probity for well-regulated financial services.

We must have a Government that is, to the fullest extent possible, open and transparent in its dealings and we must have a Parliament that can effectively question and when necessary hold to account Ministers for their actions.

The people of the Isle of Man have spoken, they want new ways to solve old problems, they want change. That is why we are here in this Honourable House because of their conviction that we, as the elective representatives of our constituencies, will deliver change.

Let us achieve that change together.



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