

Ballavitchel Lodge
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NOMINATION OF Robert Howard Quayle MHK as CHIEF MINISTER

STATEMENT OF POLICY PRIORITIES

AN INCLUSIVE GOVERNMENT LEADING THE WAY

The next five years will involve unprecedented challenges.

We cannot act in isolation from the wider world.

We must continue our programme of active engagement on the world stage to ensure that we are recognised as a mature and responsible jurisdiction.

During my time as the President of the Manx National Farmers' Union then as a member of the DOI and the Department of Economic Development and latterly as Health Minister I have gained extensive off Island experience and made many contacts. I have also made numerous contacts via attendance at British Council meetings, attending UK party conferences and have on occasions deputised for the current Chief Minister, along with attending numerous meetings at Westminster.

It is important cross government and parliamentary contacts are maintained and enlarged especially in the face of the recent UK decision to leave the EU.

There is much to do for the benefit of our constituents who have given us a clear message in the General Election. They have instructed us to change the way government behaves, to collaborate, work harder and to engage, establishing an open dialogue. My overarching priorities are;

- Protecting those most in need
- Encouraging enterprise & innovation
- Invest in our education
- Promoting an inclusive and tolerant and sustainable community
- Promoting open and inclusive government fit for the 21st Century

Dealing with each aspect in turn;

Protecting those most in need

During the last administration the imposition of charges for Government Services has imposed an unfair burden on the middle low and fixed income section of our community. This has been compounded by changes to our economy so that there are more people earning very substantial salaries whilst others exist on a very low income supplemented by benefits from the State.

There are many individuals and groups in our society that feel they have borne the brunt of the stealth charges and cuts that have taken place over the last few years.

One of the most obvious has been the withdrawal of the over 75's free TV licences. This has been a cut that has hurt an important and valued part of our community and under my administration this would be reversed immediately. This would be one small step on the direction of travel that we need to take over the life of the next administration. We need to stop penalising pensioners and re-examine various charges such as charging pensioners for train travel.

I am sure honourable members could name many charges that have raised little in monetary terms but cost individuals a lot.

One of the many charges that requires change is the way in which the sewerage rate is being levied, moving to a more equal and fair system than the one currently in place.

We also need to move away from defining those most in need by benefit thresholds. There are many in our community that have earnings or income that places them above the thresholds yet they are still struggling to make ends meet and are the first to feel the effects of the decisions that we make. That section of society has been expanding over the last few years and we must recognise that these are a group of people that cannot continuously endure further charges that simply removes more money from their pocket. We also need to be more focused on individual need rather than simply placing individuals in neat categories.

I will push Treasury to continue its work towards increasing the personal allowance to over £14,000 which would assist the lower paid and take a significant number out of the tax bracket altogether. This would have a significant impact on many families and individuals that have been struggling with ever increasing living costs.

Our health and social services are critical to help those most in need. Our health service needs to adapt to the changing needs of our island.

Soon after being appointed Health and Social Care Minister it became apparent to me that our current health care model was unaffordable for the next generation. I

initiated a new 5 year strategy based on early intervention, community based care and openness. We need to do more in publishing and reducing waiting times at Noble's, implementing tele-medicine and promoting the patient's charter and keeping it under continual review.

The introduction of regional health hubs across the island will enable more treatment in the community relieving the pressure on acute services.

The digital strategy will play a crucial part in this in enabling us to look at processes and efficiencies. I have first-hand experience of this Minister for Health when I helped push forward the digital strategy within the department that will deliver substantive savings of £2million for each of the next five years following its implementation.

Encouraging enterprise & innovation

In order for our island to move forward with confidence into the future we will require a dynamic and sustainable economy that is flexible enough to deal with not just local changes but also changes within the global economy. This can only be achieved by building a sustainable economic eco-system based around flexible legislation that can be responsive to our changing needs.

This also feeds into the concept of living and working sustainably. All policies that come forward should contain some element of sustainability.

We need to continue to help new start-ups and small and medium sized businesses grow to become the big businesses of tomorrow. Alongside that we need to make sure that we continue with targeted regeneration projects around our island, to deliver a modern environment for those businesses to develop.

With this in mind I took a proposal to Tynwald in 2013 stating that we should set up a £50million enterprise fund which would lend money to successful local companies looking to expand and also to encourage new business to the island. This project / fund has just been launched by the Department of Economic Development and will be a great help in growing our economy.

In relation to our islands finances, I would also propose undertaking a total review of expenditure on our services which would be based upon a complete review of our priorities. I would host a series of seminars for all Tynwald Members to have their input. We do not have the monopoly on good ideas and we need as wide a range of views as possible. As you will realise, this will take some months and will not be concluded or costed before the next budget has been finalised. Treasury has only a short period to draft, and agree with Council, the budget which has to be presented

to February Tynwald. By way of illustration it has to be finalised and agreed for submission to Tynwald by the end of the year and I would prefer to consider the options in detail rather than doing it in too short a period of time and running the risk of unintended consequences.

I would propose a three month period for the expenditure review which would be assisted by tapping into the resources which we have on the Island and possible outside expertise.

Decisions will not be easy as we all have differing priorities. As part of this review I would also support the idea of examining priority based budgeting.

There has been comment passed that the changes to the rate of the property tax were badly handled and done without consultation or examination of the wider implications. I am more than happy to reverse this, assuming we can find ways that we can continue to finance those that have been lifted out of the tax bracket as a result of this policy.

I would propose continuing with a gradual rebalancing of the budget over the next five years. In my opinion to act quicker would risk adversely impacting upon consumer and business confidence. This would affect our tax receipts and more importantly consumer spending. The next household expenditure survey is due in 2018 and I would not wish to run the risk that consumers spent less as this would affect adversely our VAT income.

Invest in our education

To support any plans for a growing economy we need a skilled work force and education will play a key part. The achievements of our young people have been impressive, but we need to increase the number of good quality teaching professionals to enable our children to reach their full potential. Our young people deserve a good start in life and I would propose a review of the early education facility and preschool provision within the first year of the new administration and any changes to be introduced for the next school year.

Our young people need to be given the skills necessary to make a positive contribution to our economy. This can only be delivered by ensuring that our educational priorities align with our economic needs. Skills gaps need to be identified and people encouraged to consider appropriate training. It is very easy to look at education and the economy as two separate entities but one has a fundamental impact on the other.

Promoting an inclusive and tolerant and sustainable community

As the Minister that helped finally bring forward the much delayed Disability Discrimination Act I am a strong supporter of ensuring we move towards a society that is inclusive of all those within our wider community.

The Equality Act must be brought into full force at the earliest realistic opportunity. The next administration must also work closely with all sections of our community to ensure that any future legislation is appropriate and delivered in a timely fashion.

We are custodians of our beautiful island with UNESCO biosphere status. We need to ensure that we protect our island and enact policies on coastal erosion.

Promoting Open and inclusive government fit for the 21st Century

Open and transparent government should be at the heart of everything that we do. We have all been elected to represent the people of our island and must never lose sight of that fact. The people quite rightly want to know what their government is doing in their name and those decisions must be open to public scrutiny.

One of the first steps I would wish to undertake is to ensure that the Freedom of Information Act is extended throughout government as quickly as possible in order to start creating an engrained culture of co-operation and openness.

We need to ensure greater communication and engagement between government and the people it serves.

I would therefore propose that once a programme for government is finalised that a copy of the programme is distributed to every household on the island and this would be followed up by yearly updates. The next administration not only needs to be a listening government but also an engaging one and this would be one small step in the right direction.

We also need to remove the silo mentality within government and deliver a unified government that works together to drive forward the changes our island requires and the people have asked for.

The Lisvane report forms a major part of the reform debate. I would support the report coming forward at the earliest possible stage and I am supportive of the majority of the recommendations made within it.

There needs to be open and meaningful debate and each recommendation must be debated individually.

I believe it is important that we examine alongside this the whole structure of government from the top down and the way it delivers its services.

To this end, if elected on Tuesday I shall not appoint any MLC's as Ministers. We have a newly elected House of Keys with each member holding a fresh mandate from the public and it is only right and proper that it is from that pool of members that the new administration at a ministerial level is formed.

We also need to address the issue of public sector pensions. This is a matter I raised in Tynwald as a backbencher which led to the reform agreed in June this year. Following this we have taken steps towards sustainability with the cost envelope proposals and a three yearly review process. Some have proposed closing the scheme, but although we all recognise that further changes will be needed in the future it is important that these changes are the right changes. Not just for the taxpayer but also for the members of those schemes, who are also taxpayers.

We need to have consistency and provide not just a sustainable scheme but one that the members of the scheme can have confidence in.

Let's also not forget that when we talk about public sector pension schemes we are not just referring to back office workers but frontline services such as police, nurses and fire officers, just to name a few. If those schemes become uncompetitive with other jurisdictions then we risk losing those frontline workers that we need the most.

General

The proposals which I have set out will not be easy to achieve. However, I feel that with a focused approach and the involvement of all Tynwald Members we can deliver positive results.

An integral part of achieving my objectives will be to produce, in consultation with you all, a detailed plan for the next five years. We have many issues to deal with and it is only by us all working together as an effective team that we will deliver what our constituents have mandated us to do.

To do that we need a good leader who has a proven track record and is a team player and always willing to listen. I believe that I am that person.

Yes there will be arguments and disagreements along the way, but by forming an inclusive government I strongly believe we have the diversity and talent within our new Tynwald to deliver the changes that are needed.

By encouraging a "Team Tynwald" mentality we can deliver not just in the short term but create a strong foundation to be built upon by future Tynwald's.

I want to lead a government whose watch words are inclusiveness, sustainability and transparency. It is only by us all working together we can achieve that. The people of our island sent a strong message at the ballot box and I for one want to listen to that message.

We have a huge opportunity to restore public trust in government and it is an opportunity we should seize with both hands.