

Chris Locke

Having been brought up by the coast in South Devon the sea greatly influenced my life. After leaving school I chose a career in the Merchant Navy, joining the Royal Fleet Auxiliary in 1977. In 1986 I moved to Plymouth where I completed my formal maritime examinations becoming a Master Mariner in 1989. My first overseas deployment took me to the South Atlantic as part Operation JOURNEYMAN when Argentina was making overt intent to invade the Islands and so by chance my lifelong relationship with the Falklands began at the age of 18. Five years later in 1982 I returned to the Falklands on board the tanker RFA PLUMLEAF as part of the Naval Task Group and ever since those early days have always felt a true bond with the Falklands. Following the Conflict I returned to the Falklands on many occasions making lifelong friends and in doing so fully embraced the very special way of life the Islands offer.



After a full career at sea I graduated with a Masters in Defence from the UK Defence Academy. I subsequently worked in Navy Headquarters in Portsmouth before taking up the position as the Queen's Harbour Master at East Cove. This was extremely important to me as it offered me the opportunity to use my maritime skillset while at the same time live and work in the Islands I loved. In 2012 Nancy and I were married here as it was important to both of us that we should be married in the country we were making our home. Four years later, and after 38 years of service with the RFA, I left the MoD to take up, on local terms, the position as Harbour Master and Marine Officer for the Government. I was fortunate to be in a position where I could make a difference to the development of the Islands, which ultimately led to the introduction of the Falkland Islands Maritime Authority and the associated improvements in maritime safety and crew welfare. In fulfilling this I became familiar with the procedural processes of Government particularly those regarding legislation, policy, finance and budget. I believe this knowledge will greatly assist my work as an MLA should I be given the chance to sit.

The decision to put my name forward is not one I have taken lightly, however it is something I feel passionate about and has its foundations firmly set in my formative years, particularly those of 1982 which changed my life forever. At this juncture in my life the opportunity and desire to serve the people and Islands has never been stronger, for this reason I felt compelled to put my name forward to be considered to work as an MLA for the country I was part of liberating. I am confident that through informed decision making and open debate I can make a positive difference to the future of our nation; that is why I am asking for your vote.

Here are my views on the following key issues, while not exhaustive I am hopeful they give you an idea of my passion for the Islands future and my vision for where the next Assembly needs to focus its attention.

National Sovereignty

As a SAMA Veteran and as a person who values what it means to be a Falkland Islander, I would not compromise on the Sovereignty of the Islands and would undertake all steps to uphold our right to Self Determination.

Environment

I am passionate about the environment and the way we utilise our precious natural resources. We see the effects of climate change around the globe but most importantly on our doorstep in the Islands, particularly with habitat change and erosion due to dryer seasons. The Islands need to be more active in environmental matters; we must take our part in reducing the effects of climate change. If elected I will endeavour to make environmental and conservation issues a priority and work towards setting appropriate timelines for a carbon neutral future. This work will include options for utilising carbon offset initiatives.

I support the recently published Falkland Islands Environmental Strategy 2021-2040 although it could have gone a lot further; particularly regarding timelines, targets and action plans. Renewable energy development and technology is moving at a fast pace, it is a mistake to wait until 2050 before we have 100% renewable power.

There is enough evidence for me to say NO to open pen salmon farming in the Falkland Islands and I support the work of Salmon Free Falklands. While I understand the argument for revenue generation, I believe the environmental risks to our pristine coastline and waters significantly outweigh the potential fiscal gains that could be made through aquaculture development. Throughout the world we have seen the effects that open pen salmon farming has made on the environment, we simply cannot take the risk of allowing this to happen in Falklands waters whatever the monetary gains may be.

Health

Hospital infrastructure, which is literally our lifeline, is in a poor state due to years of underinvestment and while the current modernisation programme is addressing some issues, particularly regarding orthodontics and diagnostic equipment including CT and mammography, I am concerned we are never going to succeed in providing a building that is fit for purpose and future proof.

I commend the work of all in the health sector and believe we must support them by ensuring the provision of fit for purpose facilities. If elected I would support the development of new infrastructure as I question if the current upgrade is in the long-term providing real value for money.

Delivery of Tussac House needs to be undertaken without further delay, as postponement will only lead to increased cost but more importantly further anxiety to our vulnerable people who need this facility. While the conversion at Hillside is a stopgap it must not become the long-term solution.

Education

The children of the Islands represent our future. It is vital that our educational structure serves them all regardless of ability or status. Education for the older members of our population is also vital particularly through vocational or further academic studies. Good work on nursery provision and the SHIELD project has been undertaken by the previous Assembly however, with our predicted population growth the new Assembly will need to address issues regarding both the IJS and FICS footprint. I would support a full review on both buildings and their associated facilities to ensure our education campus, including those in Camp, keeps pace with modern educational needs and developments. Not doing so would be an injustice to the future generations of our children, which I cannot accept.

Housing and Land

The demand for homes and new housing continues to grow. The development at Sappers Hill and more recently at Bennett's Paddock has eased the issue, particularly enabling some first-time buyers to step on the property ladder. At the same time this has benefited the construction industry and related businesses. However, the way plot allocation and tender bidding is undertaken is increasing prices to an unaffordable level and needs a review.

The new Housing Strategy, 'Housing for our Future' setting out policy to deal with the current housing shortage needs strengthening. I do believe further work should be done particularly in making the process for first time buyers more simple, fairer and most importantly affordable. I know from my own experience just how stressful and difficult it can be to buy a home.

I fully support the view of the Chamber of Commerce on land allocation and assisting the private sector to develop serviced plots through a formalised Government commercial land sales policy.

Economy

A successful economy is vital to the livelihood of our Islands and all who live here. We need to ensure that businesses trading both locally and within international markets are given every opportunity to succeed and flourish.

The fishing industry is key to our economy and the need to embrace its sustainability is vital while at the same time ensuring all who work in this dangerous environment are protected through international and national legislation. Of concern is the sustainment of Ilex fishery and unregulated fishing in an area 200+ miles north of our Islands and just outside Falklands Outer Conservation Zone where we have no jurisdiction on catches or standards. This coincides with the main spawning grounds of squid. The Falklands need to lobby on an international setting to close this area of unregulated fishing if we are to protect our economy but at the same time the potential extinction of this species. If elected I will endeavour to initiate this process although accept it is going to be a long haul.

We need to continue to support and develop our tourist Industry and while the TRIP scheme has been a huge benefit to all in tourism we need to continue investing in this sector. Alongside the cruise industry, low footfall high-end tourism may be an option.

Tax and Pensions

I cannot promise to change the tax system or current pensions on my own however, I can promise that I will push for a review particularly on the latest budget which made no provision for an incremental increase in the Retirement Pension. A review of Tax thresholds also needs to be considered.

Communications

It is vital the Islanders have access to fast, reliable and most importantly value for money communications. Starlink may be an option however I would not rush into its use without considering other options, including closer working with Sure to deliver a more cost effective and faster service. Increased data speeds and 'cloud based' access needs to keep pace with global trends as this is vital for the successful development of the Islands, particularly for the business community whose dependence on global markets is key to their success.

Camp

Whilst Stanley is home to the majority of the population, Camp is the greatest contributor to our agriculture and tourism industries. It is facing unique challenges such as; infrastructure development, rural businesses development, education, transport issues, including a dedicated ferry service and effects of climate change on the land. Communications are just as vital in Camp as they are in Stanley and improvements in coverage and conductivity must be continued. If elected I will do my utmost to work alongside Camp MLA's and their constituents to address these and other rural concerns.

New Port

A modern and versatile port is vital to the stability of the Islands economic development and our livelihood. FIPASS has served us well but a safe new facility is urgently required. If elected I will take forward work undertaken by the previous Assembly to ensure the new port is delivered capable of fulfilling the requirement of our maritime industry and trades. We need to ensure facilities for modern container operations especially those for frozen cargos along with modern reception facilities for the cruise ship industry. The new port should also make provision for the welfare of seafarers. However, the new port will be the most expensive capital investment the Islands have undertaken and budgetary options to either borrow or use reserves needs to be fully understood before a final decision is made. There are arguments for both options, however for me delay in construction is not an option. Each year we ponder the project it becomes more costly and FIPASS becomes more dangerous with the ever increasing risk of catastrophic failure.

Open Government

Honesty and integrity must be the fundamental foundations any elected member of the Legislative Assembly base their work ethics on. I would support a review of the existing policies regarding the openness of Government and in particular, ExCo. Transparent decision making is key to a more open government which I endorse.

I would like to see a long-term overarching strategy document looking out to the next 20+ years which would go some way to smoothing out the 4 year 'strategic bumps' post elections.

The last Assembly witnessed an ever-growing number of FIG positions which has placed additional strains on housing, infrastructure and FIG expenditure. These increases need to be justified and understood before further FIG expansion is considered.

I fully endorse the use of social media for promoting the work of MLA's and Government, however this should be used constructively to facilitate open and honest discussion. I am not a supporter of the derogatory and sometimes vindictive comments seen on the MLA's Facebook page and will not be a part of it. However if you require your MLA to be thoughtful, considered and act in the best interests of their constituency using social media responsibly and informatively, then this is something I will do my utmost to deliver.

And Finally

I do not hold all the answers to our Islands' issues and feel sure that if elected unforeseen concerns and problems will make decision making difficult and at times in contradiction to others opinions. However, what I will promise to do is serve the community honestly and faithfully by working closely with all elected MLA's, the Civil Service and Constituents to ensure the best possible outcomes for Islanders and our Country.

If you would like to contact me on any of the points above or other issues facing the community and our country then please give me a call or e-mail.

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