

In Touch

CAMPAIGN EDITION

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Dear Elector

The campaign has now begun in earnest and most of the candidates have been put under the spotlight on Manx Radio, with both a long interview and a short video. Both of mine are available on the Manx Radio election micro-site (<http://election.manxradio.com/>). There will be a further head-to-head session between me and Mr Anderson on 14 September.

Some people have expressed the opinion that, with all the problems facing us, experience will be essential. I agree entirely, but using that as an argument to elect the same people again, the very ones who have got us into the present mess, is a bit like employing an architect to design a house, discovering on its completion that the roof and foundations are defective and the walls are crooked and then re-employing the same architect to sort the problems out because he has experience of the project.

Yes we do need experience but new, dynamic and different experience, not more of the same.

A common theme throughout many of the interviews has echoed David Cannan's (MHK) comments that this is probably one of the worst governments we've had in living memory. You judge, but we are all losers as a result of things that have happened in the last 10 years.

A similar theme among sitting members, and particularly those associated with the Council of Ministers, is denial. Well, on 29 September you the voters will have an opportunity to call the shots and make the changes. Last time, if just over 100 people changed sides I would have been your MHK. I sincerely hope that this time you will allow me the privilege of representing you. It is the time for change and I want to be part of it.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Geoffrey Boot". The signature is written in a cursive style.

NATIONAL ISSUES

► The Economy

The economy dominates national issues. As I suspected, we have not been getting the full story and now it seems that we are to suffer a £189 million reduction in our VAT refund, equivalent to nearly 40% of our total government spending budget.

What can I say about the present administration? I suspected that the Chief Minister and Council of Ministers were keeping something back and, I guess, hoping that it would run until after the election. Luckily for us, sadly for them, it is now in the open. I am sure they've known about the majority of these cuts since the new agreement was negotiated 3 years ago. The Chief Minister admitted that there was a 2-year notice period and yet made no provision and carried on business as normal, rose-tinted spectacles and all.

There will be no quick fix. The first thing, and I find it quite amazing that it hasn't already been done, is we need a proper assessment of just how much VAT we would raise if we went it alone and

collected our own VAT.

With people buying so much across, in fact nearly everything comes from the UK including many of our services, it is not an easy calculation. Other jurisdictions manage without the refund and their general sales tax is substantially less than the high rate of 20% VAT. How on earth did we get into this mess?

Well the signs have been there for some time, with Ministers going across and boasting about our affluent economy, visitors from the UK government being shown our public expenditure — power station, incinerator, new prison, hospital, schools — and our own politicians simply not having the necessary business experience and certainly in most cases neglecting to keep in touch with their political counterparts in the UK.

I've been to party conferences in the UK and the Gibraltese and their Chief Minister hold regular receptions and have stands, and the Falkland Islands the same. Even cities in the UK hold receptions and

have stands, but there is scant or no evidence of the Isle of Man telling its story. This has got to stop.

The present government has no mandate to enter into any further agreement with the UK over VAT. The UK government should be made aware that it is only fair that any decisions be deferred until after a new government is elected and they've had an opportunity of making contact at political level, rather than allowing civil servants to make all the running.

My own experience of regulation and legislation is that however good your civil servants, and I do believe we have some excellent people on the Isle of Man, when you're negotiating from a position of weakness (we are a UK dependency, they are not the enemy), political intervention is the way to make progress.

Well we'll all be watching this space as without the money — the basic tool to provide health, education, police, etc — we are in serious trouble.

Time for positive change. Manx solutions to Manx problems

► Schools

Over the last few months I have visited all three schools in the Glenfaba area and had conversations with the head teachers. I have to say that not only was I very impressed by the facilities, but also by the enthusiasm and dedication of the staff. Our standards are

high and discipline is good. We must continue to resist absorbing some of the disastrous changes to our education system that have wreaked havoc in the UK.

We don't suffer from many of the problems that they have across, but we have to be careful that we continue to tailor our education system

based on our principles, rather than making changes to adjust to the UK model. Frankly this is discredited when one looks at the continuing deterioration in standards. Why should we follow? Perhaps they should



look at our system and follow us! There have been some recent changes to the

curriculum and I do hope that these are not a reaction to changes made in the UK.

► Freedom of Information

Transparency is not a word you could use about our government. Yes, superficially the web pages point you in the right direction and there is a lot of information out there, but when you want to dig deeper on core issues you come up against a brick wall. I've tried on a number of occasions by direct email to the departments concerned to obtain what I would call fairly basic information on our television service and health service provisions, sometimes receiving no reply at all and on other occasions being told that the information is not in the public domain.

Sadly, our Freedom of Information Act has been deferred until the new Tynwald after the election. I personally commented on the same and, whilst it is not perfect and as open as I would have liked, it is progress. If I'm elected I will do my best to ensure that the Act is steered through as soon as possible.

► Farming

This is a big issue in Glenfaba. I've owned a farm here for over 25 years and, although I don't farm hands-on, I do get feedback from a number of local farmers. The system in operation now is, as has frequently been the case, one that in part transferred from the UK. Some are reasonably happy with it, others are expressing discontent.

If we are to retain agriculture as a real, viable economic driver we have somehow got to link production with payment. The meat processing plant is just about holding on but if we lose that, it is a cornerstone to livestock production and value added on

the island.

Isle of Man creameries are doing their best and I have to say I am pleased to see them on occasion representing the best of the Isle of Man at various functions across. However, behind this is a savage decline in dairy production on the island.

If there's going to be any future for young farmers there needs to be some open consultation on a way forward that will enable farmers to plan for the future rather than react to it.



► Communication

Frequently I think the way in which the government makes arbitrary decisions without consultation, or even really issuing a proper rationale, annoys people.

Things that come to mind are the re-scheduling of the buses — surely some local consultation with the users would, at little extra cost, have resolved many of the issues that have resulted from the re-scheduling.

The centralisation of the podiatry service, meaning nearly 400 people now have to go to Douglas rather than Peel, many of whom are elderly and vulnerable, is a case in question. The same applies to the changes to dentistry and the way in which many people, often frail, have to go off island for follow-up consultations that involve no clinical intervention.

The breast cancer specialist saga illustrates how poor communication can literally scare people.

► Health & Safety

No one can argue with the concept of health and safety but in times of austerity I find it hard to accept that we need to set up a new department with additional costs and employees.

The government consultation says that the department will cost initially £360,000. Well, if my experience of government-speak is anything to go by that will be in the first year: by year 3 it will be nearer £1 million. The government is one of the main employers and seems to be one of the chief culprits in falling foul of the health and safety culture. Surely advice from their own inspectors rather than fines would save us all a lot of money.

► Legislation from across

When I look at much of the legislation that we've adopted over the last 5, even 10 years, you can see its origins in the UK or EU. We are not members of the EU and we should start acting like a nation state rather than the UK's puppet. Even the UK government's own enquiry revealed far too much interference with our national policies. Members have to be more independent: not micro manage, but oversee policies to ensure that our civil servants, who are to be fair good at their job, implement the policies we want, not those that the UK thinks we should have.

It's sad that it took the UK government's own enquiry to point out that they were having too much influence over our policies. What does that say about our politicians?



Common sense and the courts are frequently better arbiters of dangerous practices. Spending that money will do nothing to improve our economic output. We must tailor the product to our own requirements. It's just another case in my opinion of departments spawning departments: in other words, empire building.

LOCAL ISSUES

► Roads

I know we had an unusually severe winter but the state of some of the roads, particularly in the Foxdale area, is unacceptable. The Mines Road scheme seemed to take forever and even now the issue of the old tackle shop is not really settled so, whilst the road is improved, there's still an eyesore on the corner. Why has this taken so long?

I will make it my business to work with the Commissioners to make sure that our roads are brought back to the state that they should be in.

► Our local events

✪ Flowers in the West gave Suzie and me an opportunity, not only of seeing some magnificent displays in the chapels at Glen Maye and Dalby, but also of sampling the excellent food at St James. I think the strawberry scones will reside on our waistline for some time to come!

✪ On a more serious note, it was great to see the ambitious renovation plans at Glen Maye which are due to start shortly.

✪ Western Open Garden Day — what a wonderful idea in support of the Western Live at Home Scheme.

What a shame the weather didn't



► Elector's Survey

Replies continue to trickle in to the survey. If you haven't yet completed one I would be very happy to receive it. Although the formal results have been collated I'm interested to receive feedback as the campaign unfolds and some of the issues are aired in the papers and on the radio. It's been an excellent tool for developing my manifesto, which will appear in the very near future.

► Mobile Library services

Tynwald Day gave me an opportunity of catching up with the mobile library service. We only have one mobile library on the island but it regularly services Glenfabá. I was interested to talk to the very enthusiastic librarians and was impressed by the range of services

cooperate! Bedraggled and windblown, we managed all the gardens that were open: a real eclectic mix of large and small — a real opportunity to take a peek at other people's gardens and also contribute to a worthy cause.

✪ This year we've entered the German In Bloom competition, but having seen some of the competition we're not holding out a lot of hope (it may well have been judged by the time you get this newsletter).

✪ We've also entered the Spud competition and have four tubs of potatoes growing well and in competition with each other. I'm sure Suzie's sneaking out at night with

more fertiliser as so far hers look better

available. We are lucky to have the service but it was obvious from what was said that if we don't use it we will lose it.

► Local Commissioners

I am meeting with the Commissioners for German and will give them my assurance that if elected I will work with them to ensure better local outcomes; the same applies to those in Patrick. We have some of the lowest rates on the island and this doesn't come about by accident.

► Affordable Housing

Good news, the government has acquired the old Farmers Arms & Mart site. I will be pleased to support this redevelopment with affordable housing in the not too distant future. It will tidy up what has been an eyesore since the pub and mart closed.

than mine, or maybe it's just the feminine touch!

✪ The truth of course will be determined at the Baltic and the Cronk y Voddy in due course, when we see what the opposition have grown.

✪ Unfortunately Tynwald Day this year was marred by early rain. However that didn't keep the visitors away and the fair seemed to do good business. We were able to stock up on our homemade jams and marmalades and the Methodist Hall seemed to be doing a great trade in lunch and refreshments.

✪ Sadly, once again there were no fireworks — I don't mean those of political cutbacks! I have an idea, having already spoken to some local businesses, it may well be that we can get some private sponsorship for this next year.

The campaign so far

Back in Christmas 2010 our general election looked a long way off. Having so narrowly failed last time, I have always felt that I would stand again. What I've seen happen in the last five years angered me and made me more determined than ever to represent Glenfabá. In January, on the basis that to represent you I need to know what your aspirations and thoughts are, I mailed everyone with a comprehensive Elector's Survey with prepaid envelope, or the option of replying on the website using my email (geoffreyboot4mhk@gmail.com).

Whereas in 2006 I asked you to tick boxes, this time I asked you to write your replies. As I suspected, this did reduce the number of people who replied but did elicit some very interesting responses, including what some would like to do to MHKs. This has not deterred me! It also took a lot longer to analyse the results, but I believe it was well worth the effort and forms the basis of my forthcoming manifesto.

Thereafter followed a few months of what one might term 'a non-campaign', then the issue of a special In Touch for Foxdale, followed by publication and hand delivery of the Elector's Survey Results.

Now I am well into the door-to-door campaign this has given me

an even better insight into how people feel about the present government and the future. One thing is for certain, you are generally fed up with being kept in the dark and believe that it is time to change the clique that seems to have developed in Tynwald.

It seems you want an MHK who stays in touch locally, produces newsletters, holds local surgeries, regularly updates a website, responds to correspondence and emails promptly and works with the Local Commissioners, but has a depth of experience to act at national level. A big complaint is that MHKs don't have business experience or political experience across.

I can assure you that I come with plenty of business experience and much political know-how, with contacts from across. Please feel free to look at my website for a full CV (www.geoffreyboot4mhk.org).

With my many commitments on and off island some of you have asked whether I will have time to be an MHK. My commitment to you is that, if I'm elected on 29 September, within seven days I will have disengaged from 95% of my commitments and will give you 100% as an MHK.

Please don't get the wrong impression, I'm not just arbitrarily dropping these. The organisations I work with are all aware of my commitment to Manx politics and I already have people in place to take over my obligations.

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Public meetings

I am holding public meetings and, whilst I appreciate that with the advent of modern communication these are not as popular as they used to be, if I haven't spoken to you or met you on the doorstep and you want further information, or even just to question me publicly, then please feel free to attend.

Thu 8 Sept	<u>Cronk-y-Voddy Young Men's Club</u>	7 30 pm
Mon 19 Sept	<u>Foxdale School Hall</u>	7 30 pm
Wed 21 Sept	<u>Dalby St James Church Hall</u>	7 30 pm
Mon 26 Sept	<u>St Johns Methodist Church Hall</u>	7 30 pm
	<i>(provisional as there may be a Requisition Meeting called by the Commissioners)</i>	



HELP NEEDED

Whilst I have a team of people, I am still looking for some additional help. If you feel you could help with the campaign then please don't hesitate to give me a call. Even if it's only to put a poster up, or allow me to put a board up, that would help.

ABSENT & PROXY VOTES

If you are going to be off island, or indeed are off island working, you can apply for an absent or proxy vote. I have a supply of proxy vote forms available and would be happy to deliver one and arrange for a proxy. Alternatively you can contact the government offices (www.gov.im or Government Office, Bucks Road, Douglas IM1 3PG or 685702).

Electoral Roll

If you're not on the electoral roll you can't vote! There are a surprising number of properties in Glenfaba where there are no registered voters. If you think you might not be on the electoral roll, or you want to be on the electoral roll, please let me know. I have a supply of forms and will arrange to call and get the same complete and delivered.

And finally

On the election trail one can't help but marvel at our fantastic countryside and heritage. It is a unique environment and one that I hope I will play a part in preserving.



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