



News from Gilbert House

30/01/2020
Vol 1 Issue 13



Message from the Chair

MLA Teslyn Barkman - Natural Resources

January is always a good opportunity to reinvigorate yourself for the year ahead.

At the recent Corporate Management Team and MLA priority setting meeting we walked through the progress on the Islands Plan 2018-2022 to date and set our targets for 2020. This is useful to see where we need to reassert effort and priority, or overcome what's stalling progress. Importantly, the Corporate Plan objectives for 2020 need to align well and be achievable.

Here are a few of my priorities for 2020:

- Maintaining our valued trade links in the face of Brexit.
- Combatting the spread of invasive species including the need to bring established calafate under control.
- Addressing the outcome of the referendum. We need to commit to look at the issues Camp face in representation, and protections, whatever the outcome of the referendum on constituencies.
- Highlighting our priorities and barriers to economic development with the UK government and Ministry of Defence.
- Appointing the developer of the Port and motivating the development through early contractor engagement.
- Pursuing and supporting relevant environmental science and research and the establishment of a strengthened environmental and policy team.
- Implementation of the waste management strategy 2018.
- Finding a better balance within immigration protocols in order to strengthen our workforce. It's essential that our borders are robust but they must also encourage immigration.

There is plenty more to achieve besides these areas and services across the islands will continue to develop and grow. For the Departments, January is also the month to submit operational and capital budgets.

The Assembly's collective manifesto for our term is the Islands Plan 2018-2022. A government structure that runs without a formal opposition is an unusual system and although priorities across individual manifestos are often similar, the 'party' collective is our chance to progress the whole Falklands. Without formal opposition scrutinising work it is essential that all ideas are shared and that the public feed into the process through committees, meetings and consultations. We always welcome ideas and questions too.

The full Islands Plan 2018-2022 can be accessed here <https://www.fig.gov.fk/assembly/public-papers/literature/send/143-literature/2170-islands-plan-2018-2022>

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Message from the Chair— MLA Teslyn Barkman	1
MLA Leona Roberts	2
MLA Roger Edwards	2
MLA Roger Spink	3
MLA Stacy Bragger	3
MLA Ian Hansen	4
MLA Mark Pollard	4
Key Dates & Contacts	5



In the next few weeks we will see the first group of de-miners leave the Falklands as the project to clear our home of land-mines moves towards completion.

After almost 40 years of living with the scourge of land-mines, I find it almost unbelievable to think that we are within sight of the day that this will no longer be something that our community has to live with and so I am incredibly grateful to the Safelane Global de-mining teams and all the support staff who have made this possible.

The UK Government's commitment to the project has been massive and the FCO's role in this shouldn't be overlooked.

More than 22 million square metres of land will have been returned to our community by the end of the project - from areas around Stanley and the Murrell, Goose Green, Fox Bay and Port Howard.

Removing land-mines is painstaking, dangerous and difficult work, and it is entirely appropriate that we formally thanked the teams at a public reception in the Town Hall. Each of the first 36 men to leave was presented with a Certificate of Commendation, signed by all the MLAs on behalf of the people of the Falkland Islands. The Governor also presented them with 'challenge medallions'.

As someone who remembers the days before minefield fences I have to admit that I have struggled to even look at Yorke Bay without feeling anger and sadness since it was mined, so I'm excited and happy to know that in the near future our children will once again be able to enjoy this beautiful area - something I never dared dream would be possible.

The next few weeks are looking very busy with visitors, including two FIG-hosted conferences with the Red Ensign and the Commonwealth Women's Parliamentarians (from the British Islands & Mediterranean Region) meeting in the Islands. Both are going to be interesting events which raise the profile of the Falklands internationally and I'm sure will bring long-term benefits.

MLA Roger Edwards

Public Works



The Falklands Convention

On Wednesday last, 22nd January, Google Alerts incorrectly stated that Spain had ceded the Falkland Islands to Britain on the 22nd January 1771. Sadly the 1771 agreement known as the Falklands Convention effectively recognised the Sovereignty claims of both sides - Spain and Britain.

When I saw this Alert I was reminded of a visit to Salisbury Cathedral many years ago with my wife, Norma, when we came upon a plaque on the wall in the North Chancel stating 'Earl of Malmesbury - while attached to the Court of St James he solved the problem of the Falkland Islands'. Obviously we were fascinated.

Readers will recall that Louis de Bougainville landed in the Falkland Islands in 1764, with the intention of establishing a permanent base at Port Louis on East Falkland. In 1765, the one unbeknown to the other, the British under John Byron made their own landing at Port Egmont (Saunders Island) off West Falkland. Responding to Spanish pressure, the French handed over Port Louis to their closest ally in 1767 and it was renamed Puerto Soledad.

In June 1770, the Spanish governor of Buenos Aires sent five frigates to Port Egmont. On 4th June 1770, a Spanish frigate anchored in the harbour; she was presently followed by four others, containing some 1400 marines. General Madariaga sent a note to George Farmer, the small British force Commander, that having with him fourteen hundred troops and a train of artillery; he was in a position to compel the English to quit. Farmer responded by saying he would defend himself to the best of his power; but when the Spanish landed, after firing his guns, Farmer capitulated on terms and the British were permitted to return home in the 'Favourite' leaving behind a lead plaque.

When the UK Parliament assembled in November the MPs were outraged by this insult to national honour and 'the Foreign Office began to mobilise for war'.

The Earl of Malmesbury, working in the office of the Ambassador to Spain, helped negotiate an agreement which was delivered on 22 January 1771 in which the King of Spain "disavows his violent enterprise of Bucareli" and promises "to restore the Port and Fort called Egmont" but sadly it ended by saying "this engagement to restore Port Egmont cannot, nor ought, in any wise, to affect the question of the prior right of sovereignty of the Malouine, otherwise called Falkland's islands".

What a shame Malmesbury did not press a little harder, we may not be in the position we are today.

MLA Roger Spink

Government Services

We are currently looking forward to travelling to West Falklands for Legislative Assembly to be held at the wonderfully scenic setting of Hill Cove on 31st January taking the opportunity for some public meetings whilst we are on the West. The importance of taking the Assembly on the road should not be underestimated it means that we all get to not only experience the roads and public services provided to Camp but also get extremely valuable feedback from Camp residents who always seem to have more thought provoking and searching questions than we face at our more regular Stanley meetings.



With the Assembly half way through its tenure we are reviewing the priorities for the next two years and the progress to date. The results of many of the actions we have taken often take longer than expected to flow through to the economy and actions such as the second flight are an example of where tourism will gradually increase to the benefit of many camp businesses. It will be useful to hear what appetite there is in camp for Salmon Farming personally I am undecided it has large environmental issues that need understanding and sorting if possible but there are also great benefits to the camp economy. We will be taking steps to find out a lot more about the pros and cons before any long term decisions are made so we can be as well informed as possible.

The long suffering issue of communications is something I look forward to hearing opinions on and we can brief people on what steps we as a Government are able to take to improve the situation.

Budget preparation time is on us so it is the ideal time to raise anything people feel has not been dealt with by this Assembly. Immigration and the difficulty in navigating our current immigration forms is an area that a lot of effort is being put into with some results there is more to do.

MLA Stacy Bragger

Education and Community



2020 began with some terribly sad news for the Education Department with the sudden death of travelling teacher Larry Langford. By all accounts he was a funny, friendly and kind man, well known for his trademark Hawaiian shirts and shorts. The sudden nature of his passing has come as a real shock to all who knew him and I would like to extend my condolences to his family and friends, his work colleagues and the children he taught. Larry made a very positive contribution during his time in the Falklands and he will be missed.

This coming weekend an Early Years Conference will take place in Stanley following a smaller event held on the West. The experienced early years consultant Kym Scott has travelled to the Islands and will be the events keynote speaker. The event will also see other experienced local professionals delivering sessions on different areas and it will be really useful training opportunity for those in the childcare sector attending. We are a year on from the introduction of the Childminding and Daycare regulations and the conference will be a chance to recognise the tremendous work that the nurseries and childminders have done and the progress they have made. I am really looking forward to attending the event to learn more and to again recognise the importance to our community of this sector and the people who work in it.

I write this piece the day before the United Kingdom leaves the European Union. The last three and a half years following the Referendum have been tortuous whether you supported Leave or Remain. The argument has been settled through December's General Election and I do have a sense of relief that we will for the next few months hear less about the subject while the trade deal talks take place. However, personally I feel a sadness that the UK is stepping away from the European community in these turbulent times and that Friday will be a very sad and regrettable day for the United Kingdom and its Overseas Territories.

MLA Ian Hansen

Health and Social Services

The Christmas and New Year period brought both good news and bad.

On the bad side must be the terrible ongoing bush fires in Australia. As all will know thousands of acres of land has been destroyed and countless wildlife and domestic animals lost. Devastation to farms has been horrendous. Not surprisingly, Falkland Islands Government and its people have decided to set up a fund, initially hosted by Falkland Landholdings in a Standard Chartered Bank account, where anyone can make a donation.

The near fatal road accident on West Falklands involving some of our friends the de-miners just before Christmas was awful news to hear. Thankfully they were medi-vacced out in time to save them, but again it highlighted the problem we have with MPC closure due to rotor winds.

On the positive side it, I was personally delighted to hear the news that my good friend Mr Tex Alazia had been awarded the BEM for his tireless charity work over the years. A definitely well deserved award, congratulations to Tex.

During the last week it has also been a pleasure for us to host a small delegation of three youngsters from Guyana. It is always a positive to welcome visitors from different countries and let them see the true Falklands and meet its people, rather than them having to decide between what we say and the rubbish Argentine rhetoric, without experiencing the real thing.

Just lately I had the misfortune to have to call upon our medical service, and I would like to thank them all for their prompt and professional help.



MLA Mark Pollard

Trade and Industry



I recently put a poll on the Facebook group Falkland Islands Community Board. It was not an initiative of the Assembly but more to satisfy my own curiosity. Whilst I won't be using it to write any lengthy reports, it was really useful to reinforce my idea of what Falkland Islanders consider to be their priorities. A less expected side benefit was all of the suggestions that went along with the poll. Qualitative data to add to the quantitative.

I wasn't too surprised with the top four. Only slightly surprised in the order. Given the result in the relatively recent referendum, to see Maintaining British Sovereignty 4th on the list just emphasises how important Health, Education and our Environment are to Falkland Islands Facebook enthusiasts. Which were the top three in that order. Although I must admit that whilst I put National Security down meaning safeguarding our sovereignty, it was added in its more clear form a little later than the others.

Then we had Housing/Accommodation, followed by Eradicating Monopolies. I would add to be fair to SCB that they are not actually a monopoly and anyone willing to pay the fee can compete with them here.

Improving the Internal Infrastructure was next with More Opportunities for Locals to Get Top Jobs. I would really like to understand if people meant that qualified locals were being denied the chance to compete or whether they felt that locals aren't given the chance to attain the experience and or qualifications to compete.

Preserving our History and Heritage was next followed by Happiness which perhaps lacked definition, was a bit too abstract or maybe just wasn't as important as the ones above it.

That was the top ten. Please feel free to check the poll out in its entirety on Facebook along with the very interesting comments that followed.

I would finally like to thank all those who contributed. Not only has it confirmed or adjusted my understanding of peoples priorities in the Islands as well as given me plenty of food for thought. But it has also given me a sense of participation that people are willing to undertake if asked to get involved. Rarely for social media, the contributions were almost entirely positive or at the very least constructive.

There is going to be a referendum on the 26th March 2020. People on the electoral role in the Falklands will be asked this question:

Should there be two constituencies, Stanley and Camp, or should there be one constituency for the whole of the Falkland Islands?

We as MLAs will happily share our opinions about how we feel, but also feel it is important for the people of the Falkland Islands to debate the issue and help inform the vote.

We will be encouraging the media to try and facilitate debate and inform people, but we are also keen to get ideas from you all on how we can get the conversation going. If you have an idea about how we can do this, are willing to be on a panel, chair a discussion or have any questions then please contact the PA to the Assembly on paassembly@sec.gov.fk

The Single Constituency Referendum EXCO paper can be found on the following link or requested from Gilbert House admin by calling 27451.

<http://www.fig.gov.fk/assembly/public-papers/executive-council-papers/send/411-13-11-december-2019/2612-161-19p-single-constituency-referendum-draft-bills-and-other-instruments-for-approval>

Public meetings arranged on Friday 31st January 2020 regarding the upcoming referendum, Constitutional Review and Update on Progress of the Islands Plan:

13:30 Hill Cove Social Club

17:00 Southern Cross Social Club, Fox Bay

More meetings will be arranged and advertised in due course.

Key Dates & Contacts

Next sitting of ExCo	Wednesday 26th February 2020
Next sitting of Legislative Assembly	Friday 31st January 2020, Hill Cove

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