



News from Gilbert House

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Message from the Chair

MLA Teslyn Barkman - Natural Resources

There is no plan to this referendum. Although I welcome the hard work of our administration staff who've made it the most debated referendum so far. It was great to hear Barry welcome my criticisms of the referendum, it would look like a uniformed front otherwise.

I don't support that the Government should be using its time in pursuit of a single constituency, which is the declared ambition of most members. I believe we should be using the time of the Government to look into the issues of representation that we have so we can present people with a range of options to address the problems.

I think a blinkered choice of one constituency to 'fix' everything is uninformed at the moment as there is no plan to back up how it will 'fix' the problems.

The truth is, it isn't about our opinions, it should be about where we can take others opinions. Listening.

Perhaps realizing the validity of argument, a member asked me recently why I hadn't come up with a full set of alternatives to a referendum. Isn't it great when you've been speaking into a vacuum...

There are alternatives and I've offered my thoughts on what could be done repeatedly, including in the formal meetings of the House of the Legislative Assembly.

We can look at the roles and responsibilities? Should we be full-time? Are their support structures we could have to encourage more people into politics generally? Could a structure be built to encourage more people from Stanley to stand for Camp? We can look at the General Election process?

I proposed a motion to request that the CE take on the task of researching the issues with Camp representation and alternatives to a referendum. A response was a general 'yeah well that may be something to look at but we've called a referendum now so we'll wait until that is done'.

I don't need to have all the answers (not just because I didn't call for this referendum); fundamentally, we can ask people what's wrong and as a Government exert our effort to fix those problems.

There is no plan how this would work in practice other than how individual MLAs 'thinks' it will to them. We won't be the group to implement it, and we won't likely be the group running the country in 30 years.

The truth is it's the only thing to look at. As an assembly we have again offered an ultimatum with no plan on how a single constituency will work, and no formal commitment made to look at the real issues in our democracy if that one ultimatum isn't chosen.

If one or two constituencies are chosen by the people I will respect that, and continue in my commitment to address the issues of representation in our country.

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We recently hosted the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) group from the British Islands & Mediterranean Region, an event which was hailed as a great success - thanks here is due to our Clerk, Cherie Clifford, who worked exceptionally hard on organising this.

The programme included opportunities for delegates to meet with Islanders from town and Camp and they left with a much greater understanding of the Falklands - always important for us as a country. In terms of the specific CWP aims it was also a successful meeting, with a broad range of matters discussed.

Women from our community gave truly outstanding presentations and were a credit to our Islands - each one must be congratulated. I hope we will see some of them as MLAs in the future.

I believe that this conference can bring long-term benefits to the community - we have opened up some meaningful conversations with the potential to bring about real change. At the very least I hope to use this event as the foundation for a mentoring programme and action to encourage more people to stand for election.

Which leads me to the fast approaching Single Constituency Referendum...

I have no axe to grind on this matter - my support for the referendum is born from comments made to me and others by a number of Campers who believe they would be better served by a single constituency. The more I see and learn, the more I agree - a view backed up by the fact that two long-standing Camp MLAs also believe this a single constituency would benefit Camp.

Currently, it is difficult for farmers to serve as MLAs. It's a full-time job and requires attendance in Stanley - understandably, most people who have chosen to live in Camp don't want to have to spend most of their time in town.

Fewer candidates means reduced choice for Camp voters and there is a very real risk of a situation where there would be so few candidates that no election would be required.

I recognise concerns expressed about Camp "losing its voice" in a single constituency, but I don't share that view. I believe that having eight rather than three MLAs beholden and directly answerable to Camp would only strengthen the voice of our rural population.

Some say there are "lots of options" other than a single constituency - I have not seen anything that convinces me of that. Suggestions have included part-time or fewer Camp MLAs, more telephone meetings... all of which would lessen Camp involvement in decision-making and policy-setting.



One of the CWP delegates made an interesting point last week, saying that there are "no women's issues - there are societal issues" and they affect everyone. I agree and I feel much the same in this case - anything that negatively impacts Camp has to be an issue that concerns us all.

There's so much more that could be said, but ultimately it comes down to this: I believe that Campers deserve representation that is as broad and full as possible - Campers shouldn't be limited in their choice or in their voice.

Whichever view you take, it is important that there is a good turn-out - so please use your vote.

Krysteen Ormond, guest speaker, delivering her thoughts to the CPA BIMR group

MLA Roger Edwards

Public Works

Man Carrying Drone

Some months ago I wrote a short article regarding the advancement of drones and their capability of carrying humans.

Well the time is here.

'Urban Air Mobility' a phrase belonging mostly to aeronautical engineers is now changing to that of rich hosts boring their dinner-party guests about the latest must-have device: a flying car!

The idea of car-like personal transport has been around for decades, but only in the past few years have propulsion systems light enough to lift such things off the ground become available. The crucial breakthrough was the lithium-ion battery - also used to propel road-based electric vehicles. Such batteries, along with super light-weight airframe materials and ultra-efficient electric motors can carry humans over tens of kilometres before they need recharging.

The first such beast generally available is the BlackFly, made by Opener, a firm in Silicon Valley. BlackFly is a single-seater with a range of about 30 miles and a top speed of 70mph.

What is special about the BlackFly is that Opener has designed and built the vehicle to conform to the American rules on ultralight aircraft and hence no pilot's licence is needed to fly it. Sadly no such category is open to us here in the Falkland Islands but would we be prepared to introduce new laws governing this special mode of transport in order it would be available to all?

To start with maybe it could fly pre-arranged routes under the control of computer software or a pilot on the ground but true freedom comes from relaxation of all rules governing Urban Air Mobility.

Urban Air Mobility is here with the BlackFly and many, many more are close behind.

Maybe we will see hydrogen fuel cells, far more efficient and considerably cleaner than batteries, pushing the boundaries even further.

Who will be the first to own this personalised transport system?



MLA Barry Elsby

Development and Commercial Services

Last week we announced that Bam Nuttall Ltd is to be our preferred partner to design and build the desperately needed new port for the Falkland Islands.

The process that led to their appointment started when we issued Intention To Tender documents on the 31st May last year. We advertised internationally and had a lot of interest, resulting in a number of formal tenders being received.

When we put the project out to tender MLAs decided not to specify where the new port was to be built, but left it open to tenderers to put forward their proposals.

People will be aware that a few years ago, much work was undertaken regarding the possibility of building a new port in Port William. The results of that work were made available to all interested parties.

People have asked for details of Bam Nuttall. Their web site <https://www.bamnuttall.co.uk> lists some of their major capital projects, including in Antarctica for BAS

This decision, taken unanimously by EXCO, represents the largest capital project ever undertaken by the Falkland Islands Government and will be absolutely key in helping our economy to develop, with or without oil. FIPASS has served us well for many years but it is well past its sell by date, is hugely costly to maintain and lately seems to have become a magnet for ships.

We expect the contract to be signed by the end of March and the company will visit the islands soon after to start wide consultation and other work leading to the development of a Concept design. They will also hold public meetings.

Finally, next month we will see the referendum on the single constituency question. The referendum is not something that only affects Camp, this decision affects us all and it is vitally important that as many people as possible turn out to vote. I started this process convinced that a single constituency was the obvious way forward but after visiting the West and speaking to lots of Campers there and on the phone, I am not so sure!



MLA Stacy Bragger

Education and Community



A highlight of the last month for me was attending the Early Years Conference that was held on the 2nd February at the Infant and Junior School. The event saw over sixty people involved in teaching and early years provision attending and was led by the keynote speaker Kym Scott. I thought Kym delivered excellent sessions on the importance of early years provision. There were several workshops delivered also by some of our own extremely knowledgeable professionals who again I was very impressed by. Even though I am not involved in delivering childcare provision I found the sessions very thought-provoking and a reminder of why this is such a crucial subject. I think the conference gave a lot of food for thought for those attending and I'd like to thank everyone involved for making it a success.

On the subject of conferences, we have been delighted to host the British Islands and Mediterranean Region Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Conference. The opportunity to host their important discussions, to highlight the achievements of Falklands women and to show the visiting delegates our Islands has been a wonderful opportunity. Congratulations to Cherie, Leona and Teslyn for pulling it all together.

Also visiting the Islands next month will be the Executive Committee of the International Island Games Association. Having been involved with the Falklands attendance at the Island Games for a few years, I really welcome having our IIGA friends visit our Islands for the first time. This will probably sound trite but it's true, the Island Games is a special family and to have the Committee make the long journey to the South Atlantic shows that the smaller Island members are as important as the largest.

We had a very enjoyable trip to the West recently for a meeting of the Legislative Assembly and public meetings at Hill Cove and Fox Bay where the upcoming referendum on whether the Islands should have a single constituency was discussed extensively. As I stated while on the West, I support a move to a single constituency as I feel the Camp would be better represented this way. However, I totally appreciate and understand the counter view and I look forward to the various discussions and debates on the subject in the coming weeks.

The office has been a much quieter place the last couple of weeks with Roger Spink not being around. Everyone at Gilbert House was very worried about Roger during his recent health scare so it has been great to see that he is well on the road to recovery. I look forward to having him back at work when he's ready.

MLA Ian Hansen

Health and Social Services

At the end of January we held the monthly Legislative Assembly meeting in Camp, this time at Hill Cove one of the most picturesque places in the Falkland Islands. (I have to admit I am slightly biased on that opinion). After the assembly meeting ended we held a public meeting and then moved onto Fox Bay for another.

Apart from the usual and valid concerns around communications, road, ferry etc, the main theme of these meetings centred around discussion on the single or two constituency referendum. It was very interesting to listen peoples thoughts, and to hear the questions they posed on the pros and cons of each scenario. There were some folk definitely for a single constituency and some people definitely against, but I believe the conversations had and the opinions expressed gave those who are undecided much food for thought.

My own opinion? I would very much like to be able to vote for a maximum of eight people at the next general election. Is a single constituency the only way to achieve this is the big question. Since the position of being an elected MLA has become full time, I can totally understand why many people living in Camp are not prepared or cannot be away from their businesses for five or sometimes six days every week.

If the status quo remains of two constituencies after the referendum result, we have to do everything possible to encourage anyone with an interest in the Camp, regardless where they live, to stand as camp representatives.

If the referendum indicates there should be a single constituency, then I believe the next Assembly should seriously consider having a portfolio position where one or two elected members have to concentrate on rural issues alone.

Finally I feel obliged to congratulate our Falkland team in Brazil, who stood up with great spirit against the Argentine pressure to have them removed from the tournament. Sadly this looks as though it is going to be indicative of things to come with the new Argentine Government, but we have been in this position before and will not be bullied or harassed.



MLA Mark Pollard

Trade and Industry

One or Two Constituencies?

Next month we are going to have a referendum on whether to change to a single constituency or whether to remain as two separate ones.

I strongly believe that all assembly members being held to account by all of the eligible voters can only lead to a stronger democracy. That every voter having eight votes each and a say in all of the MLAs rather than five or three will result in every voter having that little bit more power in the say of who is running their country.

I believe we are one country with a huge variety of issues. Not just Camp and Stanley issues. Our current system of portfolios already transcends the divide and I would hope that you feel that all MLAs in Gilbert House are there to serve you. I believe that having this split between

Camp and Stanley reinforces the divide and serves only to separate us.

I have heard many say that going to a referendum is the easy option or that we have been too lazy to look at other solutions. Yet I am not seeing any clear changes being suggested by those criticising the referendum. I am keen to hear what these other options are and am more than happy to pursue these to see what can work for us. However the reason we are calling a referendum is because the number of constituencies is the only thing that requires a referendum to change according to our constitution and electoral ordinance.

I am already committed to doing work to identify what barriers stop people standing and feel we should be addressing how we encourage more campers to stand, more women to stand, more young people, more people in general.

Regardless of the result I personally will try to represent all people in the Islands whether they can vote for me and hold me to account or not. I will try to represent people in Stanley, people in Camp, people who have lived here all their lives, those who have just arrived and all those in between. What I would hate to see more than anything is a decision made by a small number of the population, so please vote one way or the other.



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.

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:

Tuesday 25 th February 2020	17:00-18:30	Court & Assembly Chamber	MLAs (broadcast live)
Friday 28 th February 2020	16:30-18:00	Goose Green Social Club	MLAs

FITV will have a Talking Point session with Richard Cockwell hosting.

Members of the public are also welcome and encouraged to post questions on the MLA Q&A Page on Facebook.

Key Dates & Contacts

Next sitting of ExCo	Wednesday 26th February 2020
Next sitting of Legislative Assembly	Thursday 27th February 2020, Court and Assembly Chamber, Stanley

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