



News from Gilbert House

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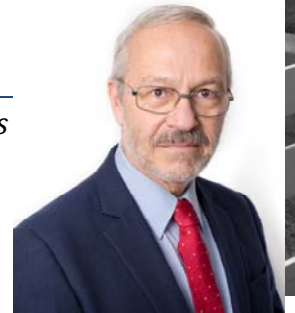
Message from the Chair

MLA Barry Elsby— Development & Commercial Services

At the last meeting of our Legislative Assembly I talked about the message we send out to visitors in relation to our Government buildings. A number of people have contacted me so I will reproduce what I said here.

The number of tourists visiting our Islands is increasing steadily and the new second flight to Sao Paulo will add to that growth.

We are seeing a growing number of senior politicians come to the Islands to meet with our Government. People will remember the visit by Senator Sensenbrenner from the United States and his being invited to address this House. We see UK politicians as well as a growing number of influential people from countries within South America.



I mention this because I was stopped outside Gilbert House the other day by a tourist heading for the museum. He wanted to know what Gilbert House was and I explained it was the base for the elected members of the Islands government. His response made me stop and think. He said I must be wrong as he had just had his picture taken standing outside the front of Government House and, pointing to Gilbert House, he asked how any building that shabby could possibly be the seat of government - and, you know, he has a point.

As our country develops we should not be blind to the image the disparity between the well maintained building and gardens of Government House and our somewhat rundown and poorly maintained Gilbert House presents to visiting politicians and tourists alike.

Mr Speaker, some Overseas Territories call the Governor's residence and offices "Government House" but not all do. Saint Helena calls it Plantation House, in the Turks and Caicos it is Waterloo House but my favourite is Gibraltar where it is called The Convent.

I think over time we should consider if the name "Government House" sends the right message to the world as to who governs the Falkland Islands, especially at a time when we are reviewing our constitution. Perhaps it might be simply called the Residence and Offices of the Governor of the Falkland Islands.

Whatever we think of the name "Government House", we need to address the external appearance of Gilbert House and I will be raising this with colleagues as we enter the Budget Process.



So January has been and gone in a flash. I hope that you have been more successful at keeping your New Year's resolutions than I have been.

On Wednesday 6th February from 6pm in the Town Hall the Education Department will be hosting a public session to discuss the future requirements for educational accommodation in the Islands. The meeting forms part of the feasibility study into our education facilities being carried out by our consultants Atkins. I believe that this is a crucial piece of work and I really hope that we see a great deal of engagement from the public on the subject. We are all well aware of the limitations that our current facilities have and I hope that this study will be the first step in Government addressing the issue with a long-term vision.

I was pleased to have the opportunity recently to talk to Year 10 students about the role of MLA. They gave me a bit of a grilling and I found it to be an interesting and enjoyable discussion.

An initial meeting has been held to look at organising the 2019 Multicultural Day. The organisers of the first two events attended and some initial ideas were discussed which have got the ball rolling. We'll be inviting community members to come forward and contribute with ideas and to help with the planning of the event. It is currently envisaged that the event will take place on Saturday the 26th October. The increasingly diverse nature of the Falklands is something we are proud of as a community and I am really looking forward to us hosting another fantastic event to celebrate this. If you want to contribute then do please get in touch with me at SBragger@sec.gov.fk

We will be having our first meeting of the Budget Select Committee shortly and I think that we all recognise that we will need to be cautious when we consider our future recurrent expenditure. That said, there are areas that I would like us to look at and potentially invest in but as always these will need to be considered as part of the bigger picture. All MLAs will have their own areas of interest that they will be pushing for so it will be interesting to see what the final outcome is.

MLA Roger Edwards

Public Works

On several occasions one concerned member of the public has raised the threat of tsunamis affecting the Falkland Islands and is wondering about the preparedness of the Falkland Islands Government (FIG).

Basically the FIG has an all-encompassing Major Incident Plan which outlines our response to any major incident. The plan includes the definition of emergency which is far reaching and would include natural disasters such as a tsunami.

Historically, there has never been a tsunami of any significant size in the SW Atlantic but we have seen and felt the results of such phenomena from elsewhere.

The Indonesian tsunami of Boxing Day 2004 is one of a small number known to have been felt around the world and it was recorded here in Stanley harbour around 22 hours after the event. Sea level rose by some 9cm at just before 2300 UTC, fell by 24cm just after 2300 and rose again some 19cm around midnight UTC. Oscillations were observed for at least two days.

Stanley has a 'B gauge' recorder operated under the Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory, (POL), Liverpool. Other sea-level stations are at Ascension, St Helena, Tristan da Cunha, South Georgia, Signy, Vernadsky and Rothera. There are many others operated by Argentina, Brazil and all down the West coast of Africa.

We should get warnings of a tsunami - but tsunamis travel at a great speed at around 450 - 700 mph.

Where is our tsunami threat coming from?

South Sandwich Islands have around 8 active Volcanoes but most earthquakes generated by them are quite shallow and only about 4 or 5 on the Richter scale whereas tsunamis tend to be triggered by much larger earthquakes of over 7.5.

Our greatest tsunami threat is probably from Fogo Island in the Cape Verde Group (where we stop on the Airbridge). Scientists believe it last had a major collapse about 73,000 years ago and created a tsunami estimated at 270 metres high despite seas at the time being some 50 metres lower than they are now. The Fogo Island volcano has small eruptions about every twenty years but is believed to be back up to the threat levels of 73,000 years ago and would reach here in about 10 hours (the same as the Airbridge).



MLA Roger Spink

Government Services



We are busy looking into the next steps as regards telecommunications for the Islands particularly the size of the “pipe” and method of connecting us to the rest of the world. With that in mind it is essential to quantify demand. There will be a focused Communications week, during which time stakeholder workshops will take place for each sector to drill down further, with the assistance of experts in the field, to map broadband demand. There is scope for making significant advances in both speed and the volume of data transmitted and we need to be as well informed as possible to make the right choices for the future.

In addition we await the reports from Sure and the Regulator on the 4G and 2G mobile networks. Under the licence Sure will be providing a detailed coverage map and guidance for residents highlighting coverage in each location and advice of receiving reception this will be published on the Regulators Website.

Quality of service issues particularly with the camp fixed line service but also with mobile and internet also need to be addressed. Under the Licence Sure on the direction of the Regulator should publish comparable, adequate and up to date information for End-Users on the quality of its carriage services. I and others will look forward to this information and the detail on the quality of service parameters.

Long term FIG will need to consider how the Communications Ordinance 2017 is working, and whether changes need to be made to ensure that interests of consumers are being protected and arrangements are fit for purpose.

We start the budget process shortly and there will need to be a more conservative view on expenditure if we are going to be able to undertake the major capital projects that are needed such as the Port, Air Terminal upgrade and Power Station. These major projects are engines for growth of our economy and therefore we need to get them underway to safeguard our future prosperity.

We are gradually seeing the results of our capital program set last year once items such as the new asphalt plant are used we may be able to speed up certain parts of the plan. The hard work and dedication of everyone has got us so far we should shortly start seeing the results of all that work.

MLA Teslyn Barkman

Natural Resources

As we gear up for the first 7.5 hour budget meeting next week it’s not surprising that economic security has been the basis of most conversations in Gilbert House these past few weeks.

There are a few uncertainties in the air. It is easy to be consumed by trying to unpick how Britain will eventually leave the EU with all its limbs attached and an impossible list of contradicting requirements. With a ‘no deal’ a fraction less likely than last month I am reassured we can navigate our new relationship with the vital EU market. We have a unique amount to offer the EU, not only in trade of resources but as a gateway for environmental science, research and tourism.



Within our direct control, few developments will have the profound effect on our prosperity quite like the ongoing review of ITQ, and securing the progress of a new port development. It is great to report there is renewed enthusiasm for a port development to gather pace with the hard tender process to begin shortly. We need to plan now how to approach the costings of such a vital hub for sustaining and growing multiple industries.

This month I have also had the pleasure of a few short trips around Camp. Unfortunately the same concerns on connectivity and infrastructure in Camp are still recounted. Our spectacular agriculture and tourism industries, and our communities, rely on telecoms and the arterial service of our road network and inter island ferry. Like the rest of the Assembly I shall continue to pursue these issues and update when we can.

Whilst it’s important to note that new broadband developments were credited, it is a great shame that simple phone line technology continues to be the problem across the islands. The annual report of the Regulator Susannah Nightingale, www.regulatorfi.org.fk should be available to the public soon and there is a public meeting planned for March to update on communications work too.

Not completely without irony, at the next public meeting we will be inviting people in Stanley and Camp to call-in or text any questions during the live broadcast. Hopefully it all goes smoothly.

Given the predicted rising number of cruise ship passengers and the upcoming 2nd flight, I thought it may be helpful to tell the electorate what FIG is planning to invest in to help the tourism industry cope.

There is the investment into subvention bodies such as the Falkland Islands Tourist Board and the Falkland Islands Development Corporation to enable them to work on strategy, grants, loans and advice on how to improve the tourism offering. We will help to make sure that the money is available for those developing the tourism offering Island wide.



The biggest project will undoubtedly be the new port. We have done some soft market testing and are currently awaiting an ExCo paper outlining the next steps. It is going to be a huge project this one and whilst I'd like to see work beginning as soon as possible, we do have to make sure we get it right. We are committed in the Island Plan delivering modern port facilities.

There has been and will continue to be huge investment into our internal transport network. We have and continue to invest in FIGAS and are spending millions annually on the road network. Once the newly built asphalt plant is commissioned I would hope to see an increase in the speed of the surfacing of the MPA road. We are also going to look at the ferry and whether we will need to adapt the service in any way.

Work is on-going with regards to the MPA Air Terminal improvements so that we can improve the experience of all travelling through it. I hope we can make steps to address the controversial rotor wind issue also. We have been pushing for a solution and will continue to do so.

The Waterfront Development Project seems to be coming along nicely. Morrisons did a fantastic job with the promenade and I look forward to seeing future developments.

Once we have done some modelling on expected increases in passenger numbers, we will be looking again at the Tourism Development Strategy. The original was due to last until 2023 and the fact that we seem to have outgrown it already is, to me at least, a sign of positive growth.

MLA Ian Hansen

Health and Social Services

This is our first newsletter since the Christmas recess, and it is very much back to business. Next week we have our first budget meeting to set out how we want to proceed over the next financial year with our Capital Programme and all the other issues that we will have to address.

The Budget process starts far earlier than it used to, but in my view that is not a bad thing as it gives Departmental heads and portfolio holders more time to discuss in depth budgetary concerns within those departments.

Deal or no Deal ? Brexit is very much dominating UK politics as we would expect. How it will affect us in the Falklands remains to be seen. Hopefully the next few weeks might make things clearer as to where, we, as FIG representatives need to channel our resources. A lot of work has already been done in expectation of either result.

On portfolio matters, the King Edward Memorial redevelopment programme is a couple of months behind the proposed schedule, but lost time could be made up by dovetailing certain aspects of the work soon to be underway.

Thanks to the efforts of the project manager and project board, a possible significant saving has been identified re the Theatre Unit - pending Planning approval. Similarly the VPU (Tussac House) will have decisions made on contractual issues in February.



MLA Leona Roberts

Environment and Public Protection



It is impressive to see the rate at which the blacktopping is extending on the MPA road and I commend the work being carried out by the road-gang. The difference it makes to the drive is quite amazing and I have to admit to going for a spin out to the end of the tarmac, just for the enjoyment of it, with increasing frequency (which suggests that I probably need to get out more...)

I am pleased that a safety review is about to be carried out on this road. The information delivered by that review and advice from other experts will inform a discussion about speed limits and whether these should be adjusted. This is a subject which will almost certainly bring strong views from all perspectives. My opinion - which, please be aware, lacks any

expertise at all - is that 50mph could well be considered a safe and reasonable speed on the surfaced sections of road. If that is found to be the case then I believe the law should be adjusted to allow this.

Sadly, safety cannot ever be guaranteed on roads, so no matter what individuals will need to drive responsibly and to take into account road conditions.

There are plenty of counter-arguments to increasing the speed limit, of course - I've heard it said that increasing to 50 would encourage people to drive at 60; I'm not sure that's true, but space here doesn't really allow for pros and cons, so I look forward to hearing the differing views.

Road safety around town is a longstanding issue but one which has come to the fore again in recent weeks. There seem to be some residential areas which are of particular concern and this has been discussed at some length on social media. Work is beginning to establish exactly what the problems are and to identify potential solutions - whether that is reducing speed limits or introducing traffic calming measure. Again, we will garner the thoughts of members of the public - particularly residents of the areas concerned - ahead of any decisions.

Key Dates & Contacts

Next sitting of ExCo	Wednesday 27th February
Next sitting of Legislative Assembly	There is no Legislative Assembly scheduled for February. The next sitting will be Thursday 28th March.

Gilbert House Staff	
Office Hours	Phone
08:00-1200 / 13:00-16:30	
Cherie Clifford Clerk of the Legislative Assembly clerkofassembly@sec.gov.fk	(00500) 27451
Imogen Didlick PA to the Legislative Assembly paassembly@sec.gov.fk	
Meghan Law Administration Assistant assemblyadmin@sec.gov.fk	
	Address
	Gilbert House Stanley Falkland Islands FIQQ 1ZZ

MLA Contact Details

MLA Barkman	tbarkman@sec.gov.fk (00500) 54754 / (00500) 53583
MLA Bragger	sbragger@sec.gov.fk (00500) 55144 / (00500) 54391
MLA Edwards	redwards@sec.gov.fk (00500) 55140 / (00500) 52044
MLA Elsby	belsby@sec.gov.fk (00500) 53240
MLA Hansen	ihansen@sec.gov.fk (00500) 55142 / (00500) 52929
MLA Pollard	mpollard@sec.gov.fk (00500) 55888
MLA Roberts	lroberts@sec.gov.fk (00500) 54753
MLA Spink	rspink@sec.gov.fk (00500) 51680 / (00500) 51128