



News from Gilbert House

11/03/2019
Volume 1 Issue 6

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Message from the Chair— MLA Barry Elsby	1
MLA Leona Roberts	2
MLA Roger Spink	3
MLA Stacy Bragger	3
Picture of the Month	4
MLA Mark Pollard	4
MLA Roger Edwards	5
MLA Ian Hansen	5
MLA Teslyn Barkman	6
Key Dates & Contacts	6

Message from the Chair

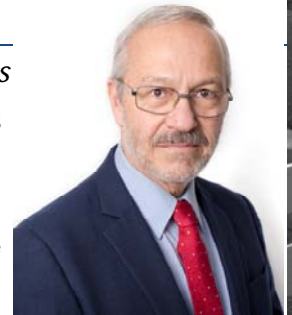
MLA Barry Elsby— Development & Commercial Services

This last week has seen a significant number of Uruguayans visit the Falklands.

As an Assembly we invited 4 Members of the Uruguayan parliament to visit the Islands to see for themselves the modern Falklands.

Our Agriculture department had also invited nine Uruguayan farmers to see the huge changes that have taken place here over the years with the intention of building links and probably organising a return visit from our farmers to Uruguay.

The Uruguayan parliamentarians had a busy programme of visits to government departments as well as SAERI, Falklands Conservation, the museum and, perhaps more importantly, meeting Islanders over drinks or dinner, both in town and in camp.



The Uruguay people are strong supporters of the Falkland Islands and our right to self-determination, as shown by various independent surveys in the country. It is more difficult for their Government to align themselves publically as Argentina is a huge part of their economy.

The 4 members were from a number of parties and were clearly very impressed by what they saw here, how our economy is so strong and our plans for further development, with or without oil. They were very supportive of our having a Falklands stand at the Prado every year, a huge agricultural show in Montevideo, as it brings the Islands to the attention of hundreds of thousands of Uruguayans each year. They were also very supportive of the exchanges we have had with the British School in Montevideo and with the AFS organisation who arranged an exchange for Darby Newman last year.

On other matters, the Budget process continues, with long days spent looking at requests from departments for more staff or money to develop services. Whilst we want to be as helpful as possible, we will be unable to agree to all posts, especially if they are to be recruited from overseas and need a house. We are continuing to build houses as quickly as we can, with FIC soon to start work on 18 on phase 5 of Sapper Hill and plans now in the final stage for the development of phase 6.



MLAs meet with the Uruguayan Parliamentarians

L-R: Andrés Carrasco, MLA Bragger, Jorge Pozzi, Elisabeth Arrieta, MLA Elsby, MLA Roberts, MLA Spink, Nibia Reisch and Antonio Manzi.



I am firmly of the mind that one of the strengths of our little country is its diversity. We are far from being the entirely Anglo Saxon implanted population that some would have the world believe - instead, we have grown our nation in a perfectly natural way, with people drifting to our shores from a great many countries. Happily, this is a tradition that continues.

One small part of my responsibilities within the Public Protection portfolio is to attend the Government House ceremony at which Falkland Islands Status is officially bestowed upon individuals who have completed that process.

Although anyone who knows me will appreciate that I'm not the greatest fan of receptions, this is one that I rather enjoy - it really is a privilege to be included in these quite intimate gatherings with the families and friends of these 'new' Islanders.

What always strikes me, however, is just how much these people have already contributed to the country and how much a part of the community they invariably are, so it's very pleasing that they are prepared to take those final steps to become fully-fledged Falkland Islanders.

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that they and their children, and likely generations to come, will continue to contribute to the development of our Islands long after we are all gone. (As the daughter of a Chilean labourer who initially came the Islands short-term, then met and married a member of the well-established Falklands' Biggs family, I would like to think that I can vouch for that concept...)

Our population is growing and will almost certainly continue to do so, and I think that there is an important conversation to be had on this subject - including to what degree we try to manage that growth. Work is ongoing in the Policy Section and I hope that the community will get involved with workshops and discussions as this progresses.

We must of course safeguard our national identity and make sure that we uphold our values and the traditions that we hold dear - so there is undoubtedly a balance to be struck - but we shouldn't overlook the diversity that has already shaped the community we are.

Members of the Legislative Assembly met with Members of the Armed Forces Parliamentary Group on 19th February.

L-R: Vernon Coaker MP, Ian Hansen MLA, Rachael Maclean MP, Leona Roberts MLA, Teslyn Barkman MLA, Luke Pollard MP, Mark Pollard MLA, Roger Spink MLA, Alex Chalk MP, Stacy Bragger MLA, Steve Double MP, Julia Lopez MP, Damien Moore MP and Nick Dakin MP



MLA Roger Spink

Government Services

We have recently been given by Diane Simsovic and Maeve Daly from the Policy Unit some excellent analysis of the current welfare system that is being developed to we hope ensure simpler administration in the future and ensure people that have fallen through the cracks in the current system are looked after in the future. It allowed us all to see what level of support is provided to various sections of the community, what categories have not been supported and will enable us to make the political decisions based on sound facts and figures. Hopefully to the benefit of those less fortunate in our community who require such assistance.



This has brought home to me why data analysis is so important to government. Whether we want to arrive at what we should charge for Fisheries licence fees, set electricity prices or fine-tune the Welfare system, data analysis is the key to getting a real understanding of problems and opportunities for change. Once we have that and overlay the representations and concerns of those affected by our actions we are in a better position to make decisions.

Analysis has to be done in a thorough manner if we wish to make soundly evidence based decisions.

Evidence based decisions stand up to criticism from those in our community seeking to undermine them for their own benefit. They also provide many of the facts when debating the merits of a particular course of action.

Merely analysing data isn't sufficient from the point of view of making a decision. How we interpret from the analysed data is more important. Thus, data analysis is not a decision making system, but decision supporting system.

As we run through the budget round careful analysis should assist us to make better informed decisions as I have no doubt this year we will have some difficult choices to make from all the competing bids. The support we receive from the Policy unit in this regard is vital.

MLA Stacy Bragger

Education and Community



The theme of my article this month is the current level of political discourse, a thrilling subject I'm sure for everyone. In the vague hope that at least one person has decided to continue reading my thoughts and not leapt quickly to the next MLA article let me begin.

I feel that the current level of political debate in places like the UK and the US that we see on the TV and hear on the radio has deteriorated significantly in recent years. I am an unashamed political anorak and I try to watch, listen and read as much as I can. Yes, I should get out more. The level of political debate in the UK in particular has been on the decline for many years but what I have observed is a noticeable drop with the discussion around Brexit which has led to ever greater depths of tribalism. The tone of the debate and the language used about the issue I think has been appalling.

I believe generally that it is best when people of opposing views compromise and find common ground somewhere in the middle. What we see these days is politicians becoming more and more entrenched and seemingly little progress being made on anything. Wouldn't it be incredible for a Minister when responding to a point from the opposition to say "I hadn't thought of that. Thanks for raising that with me, I will go away and consider it further." Instead what we usually see is that the point is instantly dismissed and then a counter-attack is launched.

What does all this have to do with the Falklands? Well not a great deal but what I would say is that I think here we generally do a pretty good job of keeping a discussion civil even when we strongly disagree on a particular issue. I think it's important we keep it that way.

For those who aren't aware, MLAs are required to be in the office from Monday lunchtime to Thursday evening with Fridays being our constituency day. I do not believe that we use Fridays as well as we could or should do. Fridays are usually taken up with normal meetings like the rest of the week and I would like to do more constituency work to better inform the discussions that happen in Gilbert House. To that end, I intend to begin hosting forum sessions on Fridays with members of the public. I see the sessions as very informal opportunities to have discussions on matters of interest. If you would be interested in taking part please get in touch with me.

Commonwealth Day—Monday 11th March

The raising of the Falkland Islands and the Commonwealth flags took place at 9am at Victory Green on Commonwealth Day with the children of the Infant & Junior School in attendance. MLA Stacy Bragger gave an introduction to the Commonwealth before Speaker of the House, Keith Biles, read the Commonwealth Affirmation.

The Deputy Governor, Alex Mitham, read the Commonwealth message from Her Majesty The Queen at the Falkland Islands Community School.



MLA Mark Pollard

Trade and Industry



Constituency Visits:

One of the recommendations of MLAs becoming full time was that we spend 1.5 days a week (a half day Monday and all day Friday) doing constituent visits. Much like the MPs do in the UK. They spend the Monday and Friday in their constituency and spend Tuesday to Thursday in Westminster.

In practice though I find that business doesn't stop on Mondays or Fridays and people still want to plan meetings on those days. That combined with the lack of constituents wanting to arrange appointments has led me to just try and book as much as I can into my diary as I can.

That does not mean however that I am too busy to make time for you to come to Gilbert House or for me to come to you. I made an open invitation on Facebook to businesses, given my portfolio being Trade and Industry. But I would like to extend that invitation to anyone else in the community. Even those who can't or didn't vote for me.

It is the role of your MLAs to represent you as the people of the Falklands and if you have ideas, suggestions, problems or just need some advice then I will do all I can to listen to you. If you can't see us in person I would urge you to email, phone, send a message etc.

So please see this as an open invitation whether you are a business, charity, social group, individual or whatever else. I may not be able to meet, speak, reply straight away. But I will try my best to make myself available. In practice though I find that business doesn't stop on Mondays or Fridays and people still want to plan meetings on those days. That combined with the lack of constituents wanting to arrange appointments has led me to just try and book as much as I can into my diary as I can.



I have just returned from what could be our last attendance at an EU OCTA meeting held in the beautiful Islands of French Polynesia.

OCTA is the Overseas Countries and Territories Association made up of Overseas Territories of four of the Member States of the European Union namely France, Netherlands, Denmark and the United Kingdom.

Denmark is unique as it has only one Territory, Greenland, which was itself a Member State of the European Union (EU) before it realised it was out of its own depth and opted to leave the EU and revert to being an overseas territory of Denmark. So the United Kingdom is not the first country to leave the EU.

It was through this Association that many of the advantages enjoyed by the Falkland Islands came about. For instance numbers and nationalities of crew working aboard our fishing fleets were negotiated by the Falkland Islands being part of this group along with details of our quota and tariff free access to the European Markets. What were for many years 'derogations' to the rules of access to the markets were combined into what is known as the Overseas Association Decision (OAD) and was negotiated by members of OCTA directly with the EU.

The current OAD is due to end at the end of 2020 and it is unlikely the Falkland Islands will have any input to the new OAD as by then the UK will no longer be a Member State and we will not be a 'third country'.

I believe that continued Membership of OCTA could have many advantages for the Falkland Islands including such as Environmental inputs and possible funding, studies into Climate Change and Oceans as well as political acceptance.

No one knows what the outcome of Brexit will be and what our access to the EU markets might be following on from a 'Deal' or 'no Deal' but the likelihood is we will suffer some form of tariff be it EU imposed or a World Trade Organisation, Most Favoured Nation (WTO MFN) status.

UK needs to find a deal and we need to continue our Membership.

MLA Ian Hansen

Health and Social Services

It seems as though we as an Assembly sat in Budget Select Committee only a few months ago to consider the challenges we have to face annually considering our revenue and expenditure. However, here we are again.

On the 14th of last month we heard Subvention requests, and now this week we are into the bigger requests from each of the Falkland Island Government departments, setting out their requirements and requests for the next financial year. These requirements and requests include a mixture of what is essential, what would be nice to have and (thankfully) a few that are never going to be accepted.

It is certainly a difficult decision by the Budget Select Committee to refuse new posts asked for, as Directors do have in general a very good reason for requesting these posts.

My portfolio responsibility - Health and Social Services - is always a massive budget to consider. Setting a budget for health is always going to be expensive, as costs of drugs and indeed expectation of service delivery is rising all the time. The unknown cost of Overseas treatment for patients and emergency evacuations is a huge factor. Even looking back at a general average over the last five or ten years it cannot be predicted how many MTOs may occur in any year.

On a lighter note, I am pleased to see on social media that many of my Camp constituents have been enjoying themselves over the Sports Week both on East at Goose Green and on the West at Port Howard. Sports Week is very much part of our culture, and long may it continue.



MLA Teslyn Barkman

Natural Resources



As a community we are great at planning ahead.

There is a mentality here which is the product of being faced with periods of shortages and logistical challenges.

Whether it is ordering in bulk, or buying twenty bananas to meticulously peel and freeze for a future day, we're generally good at preparing for what curveball is on the horizon.

There is something rather reliably British about that 'keep calm and carry on' attitude alongside the announcement.

Another challenge moving in from the horizon sharply is March 29th. It is very unfortunate if this is your birthday or happy anniversary, but a date has never been quite anticipated or dreaded by so many, possibly since June 23rd, 2016.

The difference March 29th has is that it feels like no one will be celebrating. Whatever happens it won't have the chance of a 'yay' or 'nay' jubilation of the UK's EU referendum choice in 2016. Whichever side of it you stand, even if you're firmly in the middle, it feels more like the UK is counting down to an apology, and we are waiting to hear how big it will be or to whom it will be.

I don't mean that critically as wherever you stand on the Brexit debate there is recognition of the impossible task set for the Prime Minister. As well as empathy with the UK public's confusion of not being sure what's on the next boat.

Articles in Penguin News will appear soon to inform some of the questions you may have on what Brexit means for us.

While we don't have a crystal ball, the Policy unit has been working hard to interrogate what effect the loss of our current relationship with the EU will have and our long term projections in different scenarios, and how we can go about rebuilding our relationship with Europe.

Key Dates & Contacts

Next Public Meeting (Open)	Monday 25th March in the Court and Assembly Chamber
Next sitting of ExCo	Wednesday 27th March
Next sitting of Legislative Assembly	Thursday 28th March in the Court and Assembly Chamber

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