



# News from Gilbert House

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## Message from the Chair

*MLA Mark Pollard — Trade and Industry*

St Helena Conference on Natural Capital Assessment:

I have recently returned from my trip to St Helena, where my main purpose was to attend and speak at the SAERI conference there. I also had another motive which was to see as much of what is happening in St Helena as I could in my short week there and find out what scope there would be for the future sharing of information and experiences.

The conference itself was a real eye opener for me. There was a fantastic mix of speakers ranging from scientists, economists, councillors, environmentalists and even school children. They even let me take the stage for a short time to deliver an Introduction to the Falkland Islands.



The main things I took away from the conference itself are the huge range of work being done by SAERI themselves which I think we can rightly be very proud of. They are held in very high regard by people from all over the world and for good reason. I was also inspired by the approach to how science can help us with better decision making.

I was fortunate to be invited to the Commonwealth Day celebrations and was given the task of closing the event. It was interesting to see a variety of presentations on where Islanders perceive St Helena to currently be and what the direction they wish to head in is.

During my time on the Island I met with the Councillors as a group and several times as individuals, attended their Legislative Council, visited their waste management facilities, had a tour of the airport, the museum, the college, met with the Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise St Helena, attended a reception at Plantation House and had plenty of conversations with as many individuals as I could including representatives from SHAPE, tourism and students from both the schools and those doing A-levels as well.

I think as Overseas Territories we are guilty of all trying to solve problems individually when often we are working on the same things. Whilst there is no one size fits all legislation or policy for all of the OT's, I feel it would be worthwhile at least finding out how others are solving some of the issues that we are currently working on. I saw some fantastic things happening in St Helena that we can definitely learn from, and some not so good that we could probably help them with. Facilitating peer to peer relationships would be a good start in my opinion.



On the 19th of March, Executive Council approved a formal procurement process for the development of a new port. It approved an Invitation to Tender to the global construction market, a step that follows on from the 'soft market testing' conducted last year. This is an important step for the prosperity of the Falklands and one development in particular we are excited to progress.

Following this procurement process, a preferred development partner for the design, construction, and potentially the operation, of a new port facility will be chosen. The tender will also invite bidders to submit funding options for the development.

We are reminded often of how long overdue this decision is. The 'interim' port, FIPASS was commissioned in 1984 and has long outlived its purpose. A recent trip to view the degradation of the North West barge, which remains closed to commercial activity, shows how necessary this investment is. Our export based economy would struggle to capture revenue from transshipments of fishery products, and our wool clip would effectively be grounded. A new port will bring opportunity to develop in a way we simply haven't experienced.

As a result, our 2017 - 2021 Assembly has made the port a priority in the current Islands Plan. It recognises the significant and vital investment needed for our world class products to continue to get to international markets, and for catch verifications and transshipments in fisheries products to take place.

The procurement route will initiate an 'Early Contractor Involvement' process. This approach will ensure contractor involvement from the outset, and that industry best practice and cost planning are factored into the design. Gateway decisions will be brought to Executive Council along the way providing oversight to this significant project.

We are on our way to ensuring the well-rusted, overly floating interim port is consigned to history in the next few years.

Picture of the Month – Stanley at Night taken by Guy Wenborne



## MLA Roger Spink

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### *Government Services*

A trio of significant decisions were taken this month that will have long term beneficial effects on the Falklands economy.

The first was the decision to split the £16m Tussac House project into three distinct phases covering Enabling and Ground Works, Building Construction and Finishing and Landscaping and Planting under the direct management of PWD. This decision was brought about by the main contractors decision to withdraw from the tender and negotiation process. It does however open

up a new way to achieve Capital projects which have been traditionally difficult to get underway and to get real competitive interest in doing them. The lack of interest is a factor of our remote location and the high costs of bringing in labour so this route using a higher local labour content should reduce the costs for the project. It will also have a knock on effect for the rest of our economy driving growth in many areas. The work will be an exciting challenge for the local PWD team but I am sure they can rise to take it on with the backing of our technical consultants from Ramboll.

Second was the decision to initiate a competitive Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) procurement process to choose a partner to deliver a new port facility. The new port is critical in an economy such as ours dependent on the Fishing industry and is the main driver of economic growth in the Islands. It will be vital that we push on with this project if we wish to continue to enjoy our current standard of living. The construction of the facility will in itself create economic growth as will the Tussac House project.

Third was the land deal in support of Diamond Jubilee Road and Phase six Housing Infrastructure, this development should make it possible for first time buyers to continue to obtain housing at reasonable costs and together with private developments such as the Argos Development and others should ease the pressure on the housing market.

This level of economic growth should allow us to keep improving the living standards for everyone in the Islands.



## MLA Stacy Bragger

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### *Education and Community*

I have been pleased to see recently the growing recognition in our community of the importance of mental health issues. Whilst the subject does not fall under my portfolio it is something that I feel passionately about.

The Falkland Islands Government is looking to increase awareness and support for mental health issues in the Islands. We have seen a range of different initiatives in the last few months. The Infant and Junior School and Camp Education supported World Mental Health Day. It is incredibly important that our children are aware of mental health issues and that we support them in their emotional and mental health needs. The KEMH and the Training Centre are shortly going to be providing mental health first aid. The courses are designed to help those taking part recognise the signs of mental health issues. I believe that there has been a good take-up of these courses which is pleasing. At the Health and Medical Services Committee in March, it was stated that new funding has been allocated for the development of mental health services. A consultative mental health group is also being established. The community group Team Tranquil have done tremendous work in raising awareness of mental health issues in recent years and we must also continue to support them.

Speaking personally, I have gone through two periods of depression. During my first experience of depression I found it very difficult to acknowledge to myself that I was suffering from depression when clearly I was. I was afraid that people would find out and judge me so I bottled it up. The cloud eventually lifted but it was a mistake not to tell anyone. The second time, a number of years later, I came out the other side after a number of months of complete misery thanks to family and friends, an understanding employer and superb professional help. Like many people I still lie awake at night occasionally with, as one writer recently wrote, 'a washing machine of worries on spin cycle' but I feel I am better now at recognising the symptoms of my own mental health issues.

We are taking many positive steps as a Government and a community but we must continue to try and remove the stigma surrounding mental health issues and make sure that we are doing all we can to assist those who are suffering.

# Falkland Islands Government Special Advisor Opportunity



Members of the Legislative Assembly, The Hon. Roger Edwards and The Hon Roger Spink will be attending the Special Committee on Decolonization (C-24).

Members are keen to take two representatives from the Falkland Islands with them, please note we are no longer using the previous Special Advisor list that was created, each event will be advertised.

## The Trip:

The trip from the Falkland Islands will be from 18- 30 June (travel will be via the UK) with flights on to New York 21-26 June. The successful Special Advisors/Political Aides would need to be available for the entire period.

You will travel to New York for meetings with Permanent Representatives to the UN (Ambassadors to the UN) followed by your attendance at the annual C-24 meeting at UN HQ.

## What we will provide:

FIG will pay for your flights, accommodation and internal travel. We will arrange your ESTA to enter the States, and we will reimburse you for any expenses (meals, travel, etc) that you might incur. You will also be eligible to claim £100 per day as a tax-deductible allowance for Special Advisors/Political Aide in addition to your expenses and if required there is a £100 clothing allowance.

You must have at least 6 months left on your passport after the 30 May 2019, or we won't be able to get your visa!

## Interested?:

If you think you'd like to put yourself forward, please send a brief covering letter to Cherie Clifford, [clerkofassembly@sec.gov.fk](mailto:clerkofassembly@sec.gov.fk) explaining why you'd like the opportunity, and what unique things about you will make you a great addition to the delegation. Expressions of interest must be received by Tuesday 30 April 2019 to allow us enough time to make the necessary arrangements for travel.

We look forward to hearing from you.



## MLA Roger Edwards

*Public Works*

The C24 - The UN Special Committee on Decolonisation

Every year Falkland Islands Assembly Members attend the Special Committee on Decolonisation which is held at the United Nations building in New York usually around the middle of June.

There is a second meeting, the Pre C24, held about a month earlier which alternates annually between a venue in the Pacific Region or in the Caribbean. Recently there has been difficulty in finding a country in the Pacific Region to host this meeting and so, for the past few years, the meeting has been held in the Caribbean or Central America. This year, for the fourth time, the meeting is being hosted by Grenada, formerly a British Territory until it gained independence in 1974. (People may well remember that following a coup by Marxist 'New Jewel Movement' Grenada was invaded by the United States in October 1983.)

This year it is planned for the 'Two Rogers' to attend the C24 and I will attend the Pre C24.

The C24 was established by the UN General Assembly in 1961, to oversee implementation of the 1960 UN "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples". Currently the C24 has 29 Members made up of diverse countries such as Bolivia, India, Russia and China. None of the four remaining 'Administering Powers', (parent or sovereign states are known as Administering powers by the UN) UK, France, New Zealand and the United States, are Members.

The C24 hears oral "petitions" from individuals or groups from the Territories and, in the case of the Falkland Islands, from Argentine 'petitioners' because the UN recognises that 'a dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)'. Our administering power does not accept that there is a dispute.

The C24 then adopts resolutions on each territory and in the case of the Falkland Islands the resolution is forwarded to the Fourth Committee which debates and adopts the consensus decision.

Over the last few months a number of Argentine visitors have behaved in a totally unacceptable way, flying defaced Argentine flags claiming our country and singing nationalistic songs. One group was witnessed and filmed doing such things in the Argentine cemetery and a formal complaint was made to the police. The police acted rapidly and interviewed the group at length over a 2 day period. It was determined that they could not be prosecuted on this occasion but the fact that the police acted will, I hope, deter others.

Our most recent public meeting discussed Brexit and its effect on the Islands, but there was also a very heated discussion regarding the unacceptable behaviour of some Argentine visitors. I raised

the possibility of needing to apply in person for a permit to fly a foreign flag here, as is the case in Denmark - a member of the EU. The permitting process would take a few weeks and has the advantage of taking such behaviour out of the criminal law and treating it as, say, a parking offence. I believe we could use fixed penalty notices i.e. "on the spot fines" of a few hundred pounds per person for those abusing the permit system.

At the most recent meeting of our Legislative Assembly I asked a "Question Without Notice" of the Attorney General i.e. an urgent question, about the law around flag flying. This developed into a full debate and the Attorney General was asked to consider the introduction of a permit system and report back to MLAs with options. I have had a meeting with him since and he is progressing matters.

On a totally different matter, I am pleased to see the EXCO approval for the tender process to identify a preferred company to build the new port. We expect the tender documents to be released towards the end of May with proposals to be submitted within 90 days.

MLAs agree that a new port is vital if we are to develop our country, increase shipping movements and encourage the fishing sector to do more catch verification here and tranship frozen product into SAAS containers for onward shipping.



## MLA Leona Roberts

*Environment and Public Protection*



It was a real pleasure to attend this year's Careers Fair at the Community School. I had never been before and was very pleasantly surprised as the scale of the event. With stands promoting Government departments, the private sector, NGOs and even the military, I was struck by the range of options out there for young people.

When I was approaching school-leaving age (100+ years ago), careers advice was little more than a plastic box full of cards, setting out the basics of various professions, some idea of qualifications necessary and an occasionally humorous suggestion of the personality type required. It was all a bit hit-and-miss, and the choices certainly seemed fewer back then.

Happily, the advice and help available to our young people is now, by all accounts, absolutely excellent - with support extending to the college and uni years as well as to those who choose a different route and stay in the Islands. All those officers responsible for that change really are to be congratulated.

But now, as then, settling on a career path can be difficult unless you are one of those lucky individuals with a real 'calling'. Many of us take years to find a job that really fulfils us and change direction several times; then, there are those who hated school but suddenly discovered a love of learning in their 40s...

The availability of a broad range of training courses for post-16 and adults is really important to allow our community to grow and develop, both personally and professionally, so I am really pleased that work has now begun on the new Training Centre - henceforth to be known as the Falklands College.

Funding is available to help individuals to undertake courses, regardless of age, and I would encourage anyone to make use of that - there are guidelines and some restrictions, but there's a good chance of being able to access funding.

So, even if it doesn't lead to a change of career or pay grade, a course is very likely to bring you some gratification and often a boost in confidence - and that alone is never a bad thing - and I'm sure that FIG's investment in the Falklands College will continue to bring benefits for years to come.

# MLA Ian Hansen

## Health and Social Services

My theme this month is very much focussed on agriculture and Camp.

Although I have been away from hands on farming for a few years now, after 40 plus years in that particular (sometimes difficult and stressful) business, I still follow wool prices, meat prices, the cost of wool packs, the cost of contract shearers - the list is almost endless.



I am fortunate to still be involved at the sharp end, to a certain extent, as Chair of Falkland Landholdings. To listen to the enthusiastic ideas from our Farm Managers and the General Manager over the last ten years I have been in this position, only fills me with hope and confidence we are in the right place going forward. We are very fortunate, that while losing an excellent General Manager, there are several very good candidates that have been short listed for the job.

Agricultural success anywhere in the world relies on rainfall, realistic stocking rates and dare I say it-perhaps even Global warming, as the dryer and warmer it gets more obvious that land will, and does, blow away never to be recovered.

On that subject, it was very disturbing to hear of a fire that is still raging on Port Howard land. I remember the devastation done to Hill Cove land back in 1985 and more recently in 2014 when thousands of acres of good grazing land was destroyed. Since then there have been fires that have equally destroyed land forever throughout the Falklands.

Finally, I would like to address intimidation and stress in the workplace. In Gilbert House stress is mostly this time of the month when we MLAs are under pressure to produce our report/update to this forum. Our staff in Gilbert House probably do not get the recognition they deserve, and I would lay a bet that is the case in most FIG Departments.'

**Next Public Meeting** Meetings are being planned for both Stanley and Camp and will be advertised in due course.

**Next sitting of ExCo** Wednesday 24th April

**Next sitting of Legislative Assembly** Thursday 25th March in the Court and Assembly Chamber

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Add yourself to our new Facebook group [Falkland Islands MLA Discussion Group](#).

This is a group for residents of the Falkland Islands to contact MLAs with matters of concern or queries. Your question will either be answered by MLAs or, if more appropriate, passed on to the relevant FIG department (you will be notified of this).