



News from Gilbert House

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Message from the Chair

MLA Mark Pollard – Trade and Industry

We recently had a series of events in the UK and whilst the meetings with politicians, civil service and the oil related discussions were all incredibly enlightening and fruitful. I would like to take the opportunity to talk about one of the most enjoyable and rewarding experiences of my term as an MLA.

I'm talking of course of our visit to Portsmouth where we presented a ceremonial Falkland Islands flag to the Lord Mayor. The Falklands flag will now fly every day in Portsmouth at the Square Tower.

The ceremony was well attended and it gave us a fantastic opportunity to meet and thank some of our veterans. It was being in the company of these veterans and



hearing their stories of 1982 and how it affected their lives then and for many it still does now. We had a chance at a reception after the ceremony to talk to many individuals and even enjoyed a few pints afterwards with some in a nearby pub. (see picture right)

We are concerned sometimes as an Assembly that as memories of the invasion in 1982 fade away or are replaced by a younger generation. We will see perhaps a lack of support for our Islands. But meeting the people present at the ceremony in Portsmouth has reassured me about the steadfast support we do have. I won't let myself become complacent about this though.

On the off chance that anyone that was present is reading this. I would like to say thank you very much for welcoming us. We appreciate all you have done and all that you continue to do to support the right to self-determination for your far flung British Falklands family.



This year marks the 37th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Falkland Islands. MLAs would like to thank veterans of 1982 for their service, some of whom gave the ultimate sacrifice, and those who continue to support the Islands' right to self-determination.



Another month has gone by, and despite having only MLA Bragger and myself in the Islands for a fair part of May, there does not appear to have been a too detrimental effect to the running of Government. Indeed, rumours of us plotting each others demise in the hope of gaining total power were some what exaggerated.

Our colleagues had a very busy schedule overseas in UK, Channel Islands and Chile. Apart from having seemingly mislaid our Chief Executive, all went very well, as I am sure those who were away will be updating everyone in their effort of this months news letter.

The budget process has concluded in the last week. This is the 14th I have been fortunate (or perhaps unfortunate?) to have taken part in. I don't believe it has been anywhere near as controversial as some that I have attended in the past, which is testament to good revenue of late and good economic practices by our treasury team over the years. We will never please everyone, but such is the nature of budget setting world wide.

This time of each year is of course the lead up to one of the (if not the) most special day in our Islands history. The 14th of June will celebrate and commemorate 37 years since our freedom was given back to us at a great cost by our armed forces. I have had the honour and privilege of representing Members of the Legislative Assembly and laying wreaths on our, and the people of the Falklands behalf, at both Landing Day at Blue Beach on the 21st May and at Goose Green for their Liberation on the 29th.

I will also be fortunate enough to attend Fox Bay on the 15th of this month for a memorial service. Most people incarcerated during the war outside of Stanley and apart from Goose Green, were officially liberated on that day. I was one of over twenty people who remember the 15th June 1982 as our liberation day, on Pebble Island. Two days to reflect and remember those who are no longer with us.

MLA Roger Spink

Government Services

The Budget for 2019/20 comprised a budgeted operating expenditure and pension fund transfer of £76.4m. The total income budgeted for 2019/20 is £83.2m. This means that there is a budgeted surplus in the operating budget. This will be used for continued investment in capital projects and maintaining a reasonable level of reserves.

It was pleasing for me that despite the rising level of demand for services putting further financial demands on FIG, that because of the current strength of the economy we felt able to give employees in FIG a 3% rise which is just ahead of inflation and with the 2% rise paid last year and increments for service means our hard working employees will see some real benefits. Private sector employers helped by the buoyant economy should also be able to accommodate these rises in employment costs.

The increase of the minimum wage to £7.03 from 1/1/2020 brings it up to the level of the freshly calculated living wage. Combined with family allowance increases, welfare rises and retirement pension increases this will help the less well off in our community.

Rises of most charges in line with inflation at 3% was felt necessary this year after having frozen most increases last year. The recovery of costs would fall too far behind and then large jumps are needed in years when budgets are more constrained. Freezing of Leisure Centre charges was agreed to assist the public health campaign and encourage sporting activity.

The unpopular rise in the cost of electricity was felt necessary after several months of a deficit in 2019 which will not be recovered i.e. was subsidised by FIG. The Electricity calculation will be available publicly as will the quarry pricing. We are investing heavily in electricity generation and also in the quarry and will be working on how to minimise any rises to consumer prices because of these costs and this will be done in a transparent manner.

Our capital programme is starting to get going and the coming year should see much more activity on the ground hopefully generating business and work opportunities within the community.





The Government's 2019/20 budget was recently announced and if you'll indulge me I'd like to focus in this piece on the Education departmental budget.

I think the story of this year's budget is the continued investment in our education service. I was pleased that new teaching posts have been approved in both schools. This follows the investment made in the last budget and the recent approval of the new education structure which will lead to more effective leadership for the schools and greater capacity for Camp Education.

Other positive steps taken in this year's budget are greater capacity internet packages for the schools and an additional £100 in the monthly allowance for higher education students.

During my time as a MLA I have had parents say to me that they struggle to pay childcare costs. This financial pressure is largely felt by lower income households and single parent families. In the last year FIG has introduced a subsidy to assist childcare providers with the additional cost of raising their standards of care and help improve the viability of the sector. The subsidy allowed for charges to be kept at the same level prior to the introduction of the legislation. Affordability for parents remains an issue though and I am pleased that as part of this budget we have approved giving further assistance for lower income earners. The Policy Directorate will now work with the Treasury on how this support will be implemented.

Gilbert House was a very quiet place in recent weeks with the majority of my colleagues away pushing the Falklands case in the UK. During the trip they met with Ministers, key Labour Party figures, the MoD and the oil industry. From the feedback I've heard it was a very positive trip and had an impact with a great deal of support for the Falklands.

Shortly we will be commemorating and celebrating on Liberation Day. I recently had the opportunity to have a tour of Stanley by air with Falklands Helicopter Services and looking down at where some of the 1982 battles were fought made me reflect again on what an extraordinary achievement it was for the Task Force to defeat the Argentines. The sacrifices made so that we could have a future will never be forgotten.

MLA Barry Elsby

Development & Commercial Services

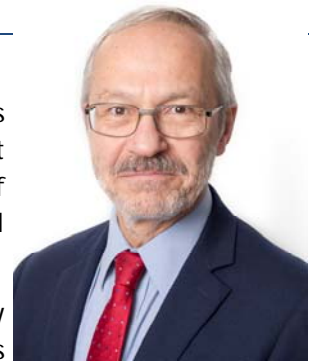
Last Saturday I had the privilege of laying 4 wreaths at the Fitzroy memorials. The weather was perfect with hardly a breath of wind and even a dolphin playing in the cove; so very different from that day in 1982 when so many people died or suffered horrendous injuries. The turnout of both civilians and the military is always good, as is the hot stew and other food in the hall afterwards.

Leona Roberts, Cherie Clifford and I recently attended the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Regional meeting in Guernsey. MPs from all Parliaments in the UK attend, as well as from Saint Helena, Gibraltar, Isle of Man, Cyprus and Malta. These countries, but especially Gibraltar, have been hugely supportive of the Falkland Islands over many years.

Brexit was a frequent subject of conversations over coffee, as was who is likely to be the new Prime Minister. It was clear from chatting to MPs from outside of the UK, just how much this Brexit stalemate has harmed the reputation of the UK Government.

On the way to the UK I spent a few days in Santiago, meeting with politicians and with Chile's largest construction company. They built the new air terminal in Punta Arenas as well as the new hospital and are keen to be involved with our capital programme. I also met with the head of the exchange organisation, AFS. They were the organisation which previously offered a scholarship for one of our students to spend 8 weeks with a family in Uruguay; Darby Newman was selected and had a tremendous time there. The organisation wants to maintain the links between Uruguay and the Islands and have asked if we might sponsor a Uruguayan student to spend time with a family here and attend the community school.

Finally, during my 2 days in Chile, the Falkland Islands Representative for Uruguay and Chile attended all my meetings. People were clearly impressed that the Falklands had such a person based there and it does help to counter the Argentine propaganda that we want nothing to do with countries in the region.





MLA Teslyn Barkman

Natural Resources

Over two weeks in the UK was very well spent. A delegation of Roger S, Mark, the Chief Executive, FIGO representative Sukey Cameron, future FIGO representative Richard Hyslop, and myself spent the first week in London meeting with UK MPs, Ministry of Defence, and the Department for Environmental, Rural and Food Affairs (DEFRA).

The next week we joined Premier to visit facilities and contractors in Aberdeen alongside the chair of the FI Chamber of Commerce, and General Manager of FIDC. The whole trip was incredibly useful. Topics were varied but the theme was the same; the future of the modern Falklands and the great work we do.

It is always good to counter misconceptions but to be able to inform people about the opportunities we are exploring is purposeful and rewarding work. Sharing the preparations for hydrocarbons, and the large menu of marine and biodiversity work we undertake for our industry and environment is gratefully received. It proves what a small administration can achieve with the rich resources and focus we have.

As some Assembly members remarked at the Budget Legislative Assembly, it can be difficult to wrap your head around all the figures and spreadsheets associated with establishing an annual budget for operating the Government, and ensuring the right level of investment in Capital Works. We need to sustain a budget without deficit while providing the essential services and projects that continue to deliver a steady amount of prosperity and security for the country.

The overlying themes in policy and ambitions for the budget are clear; health of the people, economy and environment.

Even before the budget was finalised our minds wandered to what we will need over the year which is still not pinned down. Some of the biggest questions still await a final vision in the next few months - what will be the incineration services for our waste management strategy? What are the results and recommendations of the ramps and jetties review? And of course, what will the options be from the recent tendering for an early contractor involvement in the Port? These have indicative costings for the next phases in the budget, or in mind.

There will be a set of policy work too, to best understand some of the principles around the finance bill. It is hoped that this will scrutinise the structures used to annually set the fees and charges.

Whatever the future, we are invested in it and there is a plan for as much as we can plan.

MLA Roger Edwards

Public Works



What next for future UK PM. If you want to put your name forward to be the next UK Prime Minister you are too late. Names, supported by at least eight other MP's, had to be submitted by 5PM on the 10th June.

If you have the support of eight MP's then you will face two days of hustings hosted by the 1922 Committee, the ruling body of the Conservative Party, and grilled by other Tory MP's. This covers the 11th and 12th June.

Tory MP's cast their first votes on Thursday the 13th June. This is a very private affair with no phones, special coloured ballot papers and all have to show their parliamentary passes to prove who they are. The MP candidate with the lowest number of votes will be eliminated.

On Sunday the 16th June Channel 4 will host the first publicly televised leadership hustings.

On Monday 17th remaining candidates will face another round of questioning from MP's.

On Tuesday the 18th June all remaining candidates have been invited to attend a live BBC hustings. By now each candidate has to have at least 32 backers which probably mean several more will have been eliminated.

Over the course of Wednesday and Thursday, 19th and 20th June, more rounds of voting takes place where the candidate with the least amount of votes is eliminated. This goes on until only two candidates remain.

On Saturday 22nd of June the two finalists will begin hustings around the country seeking support and to win over the party's grassroots members. These hustings will continue for a whole month, until 22nd July, and then the Tory officials will tally all the votes cast by party members and the candidate with the most votes will be declared Leader of the Conservative and Unionist Party and will become the next Prime Minister.

Or will we have to wait until after the summer recess?



Next year's Government budget is now signed off and in the public domain and so coming under a great deal of scrutiny as is to be expected. Although it is inevitable that there will be disappointments, and I don't think that any MLAs got everything that they wanted, it is another positive and ambitious budget which builds on last year's determination to progress with critical infrastructure improvements.

I get frustrated sometimes by what can feel like slow progress with projects and policies, but recognise that it is vital that we get the groundwork right to ensure that the projects of the future are successful. I have to keep reminding myself that this is only the beginning of the second budget year for this Assembly and we have already achieved quite a lot, so we need to keep the proverbial pedal down.

There are some significant steps in this budget towards helping the less well off as well as people right across the community - students, families and pensioners - and hopefully those measures, along with the increase in the minimum wage, will make a real difference to those who need it most.

On a different subject - the recent flag handover ceremony at Portsmouth was the highlight of my time away. Well attended by veterans and supporters as well as a few Falklands families in the area, it was a very special occasion. The specific flag donated to Portsmouth Council, which was blessed by the Bishop, will be held at the Lord Mayor's office and will fly on special commemorative days, but it was wonderful to hear that a flagpole will be installed at the historic Square Tower to fly the Falklands flag year-round.

It's a meaningful way to celebrate the links between the Falklands and Portsmouth and, in fact, that whole region, and I hope that Islanders visiting the area will go to see it once the installation is complete.

This is always a poignant time of year for us in the Falklands as we mark the anniversaries leading up to our liberation from Argentine occupation in 1982. Our veterans and families are on our minds, as are those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom and, of course, the men and women of the British Forces who continue to defend us.

Next Public Meeting on 2019/20 Budget Monday 17th June, Court & Assembly Chambers, 17:00

Next sitting of ExCo Wednesday 26th June

Next sitting of Legislative Assembly Thursday 25th July 2019

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