

Good morning Graham,

Thank you very much for your email and attachment showing an overview of the questions you would wish to base the short 30 minute interview round and how you will then publish your summary blog reflecting the views given by candidates.

I have absolutely no problem in answering your questions at all but it does not sit well with me that your proposition means my full answers will not be available to voters. I want the voters of Ayre and Michael to have access to my full answers. With this in mind I have given my responses in written form below;

1. Values Based Question

- What personal experiences have shaped your view of the natural environment in the Isle of Man?

Answer

Many things have shaped my view of the natural environment on the Isle of Man. Watching and taking note of the dragon flies, frogs, ducks and other flora and fauna when I walk in the countryside opens my eyes to the rich and diverse natural environment. The lavender hedge we have planted to help the bees opens up my mind to the other insects that are attracted to it. On a few occasions last year I noticed a hummingbird hawk moth, something I hadn't seen before, feeding from the nectar from the lavender. It gives a positive feeling to have done something to help wildlife. More recently I have seen leaf cutting bees living in a railway sleeper in my yard. It is a pleasure to take time and watch them. The caterpillar of the ragwort moth has made me appreciate how beautiful the ragwort flower is and the importance to the ecosystem of a plant that is considered an agricultural weed. Yet ragwort clearly has an important place with the natural world for pollinators.

Wallabies have taught me a lot in regard to the desires of one group causing issues to another group. We have to all work together to find level ground. Wallabies are now on the Ayres Nature Reserve. We had a family friend come on holiday specifically to see them in the wild yet the destruction they can do to crops means that others consider them vermin and want them culling. Wallabies are just an example of how nature and wildlife can make for polar opposite reactions from humans.

I drive some of the largest vehicles on the Isle of Man. Overhanging trees on the road often damage my vehicles. If there has been heavy rain when trees are in leaf the additional weight of the water causes the branches to hang lower and causes more damage. Currently the only managed trimming of tree branches overhanging our roads gets done

by the large vehicles themselves. Trees, for me, really highlight the fact that nature needs management.

The wonders of nature never cease to amaze me yet I see the destruction humans can cause. I regularly pick up the remnants of helium balloons on land and when out at sea regularly collect discarded helium balloons floating in the sea. It is sad to think about the pollution and suffering humans cause to our natural environment.

2. Quick Headline Questions (Yes or No)

1. Are you interested in environmental issues in the Isle of Man?

Answer

Yes, but I am interested in many issues concerning the Isle of Man. We cannot take any one issue in isolation.

2. Would you be happy for the Isle of Man to be one hundred percent reliant on fossil fuels for its electricity generation?

Answer

This is a deeper question than a yes no answer can provide. The world demand for fossil fuel is outpacing supply. We have to adapt to ensure the Island has a secure and sustainable energy supply. When anything is 100% reliable on one source it makes for an inherent weakness. As they say never put all your eggs in one basket.

3. Do you support the Isle of Man's legally binding net zero target of 2050?

Answer

In principle the idea of binding net zero target by 2050 is admirable. Of course I support everyone doing their bit to progress towards net zero by 2050.

I do add the caveat that I do not support legally binding net zero due to the potential of substantial costs to government if net zero is not achieved by 2050. The costs if net zero is not achieved and legal action is taken have to be considered and prepared for. A legally binding net zero target brings about its own problems. An example being; Our Government would need to address the issue of the fact that 10% of the territorial waters (6 to 12 mile limit) will, if it goes ahead, be taken up with the Mooir Vannin Offshore Wind Farm. Yet all the carbon saving from that will be taken off the UK's net zero target. If we

have a legally binding net zero target we cannot let the carbon footprint of an area as huge as 10% of our territorial waters be taken away from our net zero calculations.

4. Should the Island increase or reduce the amount of land and sea managed for nature?

Answer

Again, nothing can be viewed in isolation. Consideration has to be given to the impact caused by the ripple effect on other areas that increasing or reducing the amount of land and sea managed for nature.

3. Core Strategy Questions

A. Space for Nature

Background: Only 20% of the Island's land and 11% of our territorial waters are managed primarily for nature, and many species and habitats remain in decline.

Question: How would you create more space for nature in the Isle of Man's territorial land and waters?

Answer

Island's land;

Do we really have the land available to create more space for nature on the Isle of Man? If 20% is already managed primarily for nature and, by your figures below, 70% is agriculture then that leaves 10% for humans. If out of that 10% you take out industrial land and land that cannot be developed, we have very little left for housing. Maybe a more desirable approach would be to try and educate communities so that blocks of land are not removed for nature but people individually help where they can by, for example, planting lavender hedges in gardens and managing gardens and green areas in a way that supports nature.

Island's Coastal and Territorial Waters;

The Isle of Man is already the best example in the world and a world leader in corporate co management of our sea. Eleven marine conservation areas covering 51% of the 0 to 3 mile limit area are currently protected. Approximately 6% of the territorial waters (6 to 12 mile limit) are closed off. Based on in depth surveys the relevant stakeholders know exactly what is where. Numerous areas get temporarily closed off as and when required. For example, if an area is high in juvenile scallops the area gets closed off. In 2017 the east coast fishing grounds became an industry experimental research area and that continues to this day. Blue Carbon Management plays a large role in monitoring our seas.

There are large areas of muddy sea bed off the west coast in the 4 to 12 mile limit which if left undisturbed are a good carbon capture. Muddy sea bed is the ideal habitat for prawns. The proactive approach taken by our Island stakeholders means these areas are closed to trawlers as their fishing technique disturbs the mud and releases carbon. Only pots are allowed to be used for fishing prawns in Manx waters. One must remember that if an area is closed off it puts pressure on another area. The fishing that was undertaken in the now close off area moves to open areas putting additional strain on that area. Closing off an area is not something that can be undertaken in isolation. It is not about blanket closure of an area it is about corporate co management and all stakeholders being considerate of the displacement and impacts on other stakeholders that a blanket closure would have.

B. Nature Based Solutions

Background: Nature based Solutions can reduce flood risk, capture carbon, improve water quality and support people's physical and mental wellbeing.

Question: How would you support the development and mainstreaming of Nature based Solutions across the Island?

Answer

Nature based solutions have positives and like you say can reduce flood risk, capture carbon etc. However, there are also limitations and trade-offs. They can take time to develop so are not necessarily the correct solution for more time urgent situation. They can conflict with other users of the land and sea so consideration has to be given to any impact on others. These areas require on-going maintenance so future continued support and funding needs to be taken into account. We do not want to end up with projects that have lost support and become an over grown eyesore. The two areas of land on the Old Castletown Road at Kewaigue being an example. When the houses were demolished and the fencing put up we were told they were going to become a wild flower sanctuary for wildlife. I drive past them daily and they just appear to be an overgrown, unkempt area of land. Whilst I am not opposed to the idea of nature based solutions they have to be properly planned, maintained and managed to ensure they remain effective over time. There must be procedures put in place to ensure corporate co management and cooperation with all stakeholders prior to implementation of the projects to ensure they are the best solution and so not cause problems for other stakeholders. There must be measures put in place to ensure the primary stakeholder of any nature based solution project remains responsible for the future funding, maintenance and upkeep. Education of the public has to progress alongside the design process to ensure the public are also fully engaged.

C. People and Nature

Background: Most residents spend less time in nature than previous generations, which affects wellbeing and can reduce support for environmental action.

Question: How would you strengthen the relationship between people in the Isle of Man and the natural world?

Answer

Put quite simply you need to either remove technology or work with technology to try and encourage people into nature. I would suggest the latter is the more appropriate. It would be wonderful if consideration was given to a virtual interactive Isle of Man adventure. I am sure there is the technological know how on the Isle of Man for an entrepreneur to develop an interactive adventure where people can get out into the countryside to find virtual items. Include sites of interest where the historical or nature can be virtually discussed, places of interest and facts on the TT course for example. So, an all in one virtual Island nature, places of interest and history trail to get people out into nature. An Island specific location-based augmented reality and GPS nature trail. I believe Manx Wildlife Trust are in an excellent position to look to put together a business case and feasibility study to pursue such an adventure. I would certainly be giving cost effective progressive initiatives such as this my full support.

D. Agriculture and Land Use

Background: Farming covers around 70 percent of the Island's land area.

Question: How would you support farmers to deliver food production alongside stronger nature and climate outcomes?

Answer

Introduction of corporate co management to implement functional and cost-effective schemes. Consideration to the feasibility of modern changes based on old fashioned farming principles such as land rotation (crop, livestock, land resting, planting nitrogen rich crops). If practicable, develop modern methods from the principles of farming used prior to when intensive farming methods took over. This progression can only be done with corporate co management taking into account the considerations of all stakeholders. The management of our coastal and territorial waters are a prime example as to how everyone working together for the pursuit of a worthy ideal has positive outcomes.

E. Planning and Development

Background: The planning system significantly affects habitats, land use and community wellbeing.

Question: How should the planning system balance development needs with the protection and restoration of nature?

Answer

Like with the Island fishing Industry and the management of our coastal and territorial waters I believe our Construction Industry and Planning are on board with ensuring our planning system balances development needs with the protection and restoration of nature. We have the UNESCO Biosphere status which puts measures in place to protect nature and the environment during planning applications. The Island Plan balances nature protection and planning development. New construction projects have to create or enhance habitats. Developers have to follow biodiversity net gain standards. A fine balance between protection of nature and the environment and development has to be taken. We have a real housing shortage on the Isle of Man. Young families are leaving because they cannot find affordable homes. We must be very mindful of the fact one ideology does not overburden another industry.

F. Funding for Nature

Background: Nature recovery needs long term, stable funding.

Question: How would you ensure sustainable funding for nature conservation and environmental enhancement over the next five years?

Answer

My belief is that our Government has committed hundreds of millions of pounds to long-term environmental and economic strategies. The Climate Change Act 2021 and Our Island Plan support and are the drivers of this commitment.

The 2026 Budget Pink book shows the current balance of the Climate Change Fund at £24,660 million. This fund supports emission reduction and nature restoration.

Again the Pink book shows the 2026/2027 combined gross spend for climate change and environmental policy at just over £4,000 million.

On top of this there is £5,000 million held by the Climate Change Board for climate change mitigation initiatives.

£4,900 million held in the Department of Infrastructure Climate Change Adaption fund.

£5,000 million in the Treasury Climate Change Mitigation Initiatives.

These funds support various nature conservation efforts, including native tree planting, peatland restoration, and the extensive Manx Blue Carbon Project

The 2026 Budget Pink book evidences available funds of at least £43,560 million. I feel that the current trajectory of Government support is substantial and, if financial pressures allowed, I would continue to support funding at this level. Of course, if elected I would be open to any well-structured and justified pitches to Government for additional funds.

G. Legislation and Governance

Background: Some environmental legislation is outdated, including the 1990 Wildlife Act.

Question: Are there any environmental laws, policies or governance structures you believe should be improved or updated?

Answer

We need to do our bit to help protect endangered species. The Island is in a unique situation for this. For example the red squirrel is endangered the National Trust in the UK have the Formby Red Squirrels and Pinewoods. This is one of the last strong holds for the native red squirrel. When I was there a few months ago talking to the volunteers red squirrels had not been seen for a number of years. We need to look into the feasibility of introducing a policy that makes our Government undertake introducing for example, red squirrels into our plantations, so that we are doing our part to protect an endangered species. This could progress to management of them by catching them and returning them to native areas in the UK such as Formby Red Squirrel and Pinewoods. I am sure as well, if the number of people looking for red squirrels in Formby and my friend travelling to the Isle of Man to see the wallabies are anything to go by, it would have a positive impact on tourism. However, this is a radical change in direction and it is imperative that all stakeholders concerns are taken into account before any final decision is made.

4. Future Looking Question

- If elected, what is the single most important environmental action you would aim to progress during your first year as an MHK?

Answer

I applaud your organizations enthusiasm to peruse its objectives with your questionnaire. However, this is probably the last chance where Tynwald has the headroom to get the Isle of Man back on some sort of level footing. There are some predictions the National Insurance fund will be depleted by 2034 if we continue to raid it at the current rate.

Looking at the figures quoted above and put aside by the Government I feel the financial support already pledged by Government is considerable. The support for the environment and nature given by other organisations, such as the incredible job our fishing industry are doing working alongside the Manx Wildlife Trust, is magnificent. It shows the power of all stakeholders working together. We must not forget the management of our territorial waters for sustainability is the best in the world and so the world leader. I therefore believe that in the first year there are far too many more pressing matters needing the attention of Tynwald.

Of course I am a fan of all your efforts to protect nature and the environment and I wish you well. I will continue to play my small part to helping the environment and nature by planting more lavender and trees. I will be publishing my response in full on my Facebook page. I request that you publish my response in full on your blog.

With very best wishes

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