



Falkland Islands  
**Chamber of Commerce**

# General Election 2021



## BUSINESS PRIORITIES

What our business community needs to succeed

1<sup>st</sup> October 2021

Dear prospective candidates,

The Falkland Islands Chamber of Commerce and other business representative groups welcome candidates who have joined the election process and wish you all well in your campaign. The purpose of this document is to help you understand what the business community will be looking for in candidates and the issues we hope to see reflected in election manifestos and your commitments in the future.

Our responsibility is to ensure those considering standing for election appreciate just how critical the continued success of the business community is to our way of life. In that context, it is only fitting that we set out our vision for what we expect the next government to achieve and question how they will continue to encourage the sustainable development of our economy.

The Chamber is concerned that the role and importance of private sector business in the economy of the Falkland Islands has not been fully understood by elected officials recently. To a large extent, it has been taken for granted. Candidates will need to understand the structure of our business community, and that we have many small and developing businesses with few large ones. Small companies will grow with encouragement and sound policy decisions, but their development is fragile and far from certain. The government needs to take the time to carefully consider decisions and understand the consequences of their actions on businesses. We are happy to share the issues we will consider important in assessing candidates for election in November.

We will be looking for those candidates with a clear understanding of the Constitutional structure of the Islands, who demonstrate that they understand the differing roles and responsibilities between the three pillars of Government; Legislative, Executive and Judicial. In particular, we will be seeking assurance from candidates of a clear understanding of the difference between Legislative and Executive branches and the representative responsibilities of elected members to their constituents, including businesses. MLAs are not elected to represent the interests of the public service exclusively, but all interests in society.

It is essential that candidates are able to show an understanding of the economy, how it works, and the pivotal role of the business community in creating the wealth of the country. Not all candidates will be expected to have a complete understanding of the fishing, tourism, agriculture, retail, construction and services sectors, but we will be looking for a willingness to listen and learn, and to take proper account of the views of those who create the country's wealth.

In particular, we will be interested in candidates' views on support for sustainable development and diversification of sources of income to the Islands, their analysis of what they think this means, and how it will be achieved. This requires an open mind and a willingness to properly consider and weigh any new developments' economic, social, and environmental impacts. Aquaculture is just one current example, and we are eager to hear how candidates inform their decision making before making up their minds.

The smooth and efficient delivery of Government services is critical to the effective and efficient working of all elements of the private sector. We will be looking for candidates who clearly understand this, and who we believe will have the capability to hold the executive to account for the quality of service delivery. This also extends to education & training, ensuring that the system we have in place is appropriate for the Falkland Islands.

The business community will be looking for candidates who can analyse expenditure and adopt a balanced and realistic approach to both capital and operating expenditure. The effects of over-heating are all too evident, causing considerable disruption to resource supply and service delivery.

Adequate labour supply, underpinned by a balanced and appropriate immigration strategy and workforce development strategy, will be at the core of our future ability to deliver continued economic success. This economic success enables us, as a community, to provide the levels of service to which we have become accustomed. We will be looking for candidates who clearly understand the critical priorities in maintaining a thriving business community and, therefore, a prosperous economy.

All countries and communities require regulation and protection for the most vulnerable in society. We will be assessing candidates for election on their ability to take a balanced view on future regulation and who properly understand the effects of excessive regulation on the ability of businesses to perform.

The rest of this document sets out some - but not all - of the areas our members have highlighted as being a priority to them, and we hope you find it helpful. We thank you for your time in considering our views, and would welcome a discussion at any time to clarify or expand on any matters.

Sincerely,

The Falkland Islands Chamber of Commerce Board,  
on behalf of our membership.



# Workforce & Immigration

## A Long-Term Labour Strategy

The last assembly failed to deliver on the Islands Plan objective to create a long-term labour force strategy for the Islands, which is sorely lacking. The new government needs to quickly understand the issues surrounding the labour capacity of the Islands, develop a strategy, and commit to action in a short time frame.

## Removal of Barriers to Import Labour

Employers in the Falklands, right now, lack enough employees to deliver their core services and invest in future innovations. If we want our economy to continue to prosper, we will need more people to work within it. If we also expect to achieve the government's capital programme outputs, we will need even more.

We want to see candidates commit to making this process easier for both employers and employees.



# Education & Training

## Linking Education & Our Labour Force

The Skills Assessment Council maintains a "Workforce Shortage List" that identifies where we have more demand than the ability to provide specific skilled and unskilled labour. In recent years this has only grown.

Candidates will need to understand the Islands current and future skills needs and commit to linking the work of the Education Department to ensure the skills we need in the future will be readily available.



# Housing & Land

## Encouraging Supply to Meet Demand

The Islands needs more housing than it currently has, resulting in rents rising swiftly. The government has a broad strategy for dealing with this lack of supply, but we want to see candidates committing to prioritising actions that will directly increase this supply rather than implementing additional regulations that are likely to disincentivise development.

## Streamlining Access to Serviced Land

The government has done well to develop additional housing in the last few years across Sappers Hill. However, there needs to be a method for the private sector to develop serviced plots on their own land, at rates comparable to those FIG are able to provide them. This will further encourage swift development and help reduce pressure on existing housing stock.

A formalised commercial land sales policy is just as essential to our developing economy and has been sorely lacking. Developing this could incentivise development by making clear the costs of land at a glance.



# Banking & Finance

## Committing to Modernisation

Whilst the private sector has started to transition away from paper and cash transactions, the government isn't yet joining us on this journey. As one of the largest organisations in the Islands, the government must actively encourage eCommerce within the Islands and modernise its own systems and processes to incorporate online invoicing and payments.

We also need to see candidates actively work to ensure that banking services available are fit for purpose, not just for the present but also in the future.

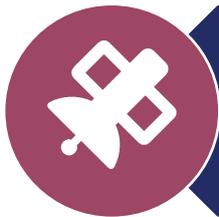


# Taxation Policy

## A Full Review of Taxation

Taxation is a powerful tool and, if used correctly, would generate revenues for the government to provide health and social services to the community whilst encouraging innovative and progressive forms of economic activity. If misused, it will stifle our economy.

We want to see candidates committing to a full review of the Islands current taxation policy to develop a framework that will benefit our society whilst encouraging inward investment.



# Telecoms

## Continuous Improvements to Service

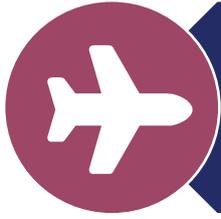
The Falkland Islands last experienced a significant increase in broadband capacity in 2019. Whilst that bandwidth wasn't fully utilised initially, businesses and individuals have since changed their behaviours. They now find themselves in a position where they once again need service improvements to innovate.

There needs to be an agreement to continually measure use and deliver incremental improvements as required, rather than spurts.

## Access to Innovative Technology

We want to see the government actively assisting businesses and individuals access new and innovative technologies. Even if not initially available to all, we need to have the option to trial these technologies in the Islands to understand how effective they may or may not be.

This will become ever more important during the next assembly as there is a global move toward 24/7 connectivity and cloud-based software and hardware solutions.



# Air Links

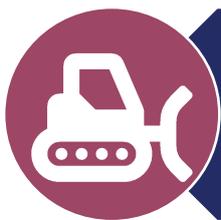
## Active Management of Our Air Links

Our air links are essential to access the wider world. However, current limitations mean that we can only utilise one of two southbound MoD flights. We want to see the future government actively engaging with the MoD to manage this link per the terms of the agreed “joint statement”, to return capacity to normal levels and ensure service levels are fit for purpose.

## A Plan to Safely Resume Flights to South America

For both businesses and employees, our links to South America are vital. Since suspension in 2020, we have asked the government to clarify what conditions are needed for these links to resume. We understand that plans need to be flexible and are dependant on external factors, but a plan is required.

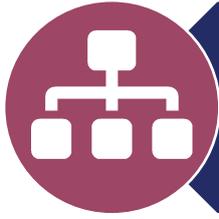
With COVID-19 now a part of life globally, for the foreseeable future, we need a plan for the Islands reopening to the rest of the world in a safe, controlled and managed way.



# Capital Programme

## A Local Approach

There are a significant number of Capital projects planned, all of which should bring long-term benefits to our economy. However, local businesses must be involved in these projects to ensure that the Islands can make the most of the advantages these projects will bring. A local-content policy would support this objective, and we hope that candidates share our view.



# FIG Bureaucracy

## Open & Honest Government

Often promised and rarely delivered, any government must remember that they are elected to represent all sectors of their community and can only effectively achieve this by being open. Taking the time to discuss ideas and consult individuals and businesses before decisions are made, or reports are presented to ExCo, is vital to ensure you represent those who elected you. This takes dedicated effort, and we want to see candidates actively work towards open communication, sharing ideas, and understanding concerns.

## A Continual Review of Operational Structure

Over the life of the last assembly, the size of the government has increased. This fact is indisputable, and the increase in operating expenditure reflects that increase in size. We want candidates to commit to reviewing the structure of FIG, taking a pragmatic view of what is necessary for our economy to succeed.

Similarly, there are several departments within the government offering services that are prime candidates for privatisation. Previous assemblies have allowed the privatisation of services, and we believe this trend should continue.

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## A Final Reminder

This is only a brief summary of some of the higher-level issues affecting our business community and doesn't detail many other areas of importance to businesses and their employees. Areas such as our environment and sustainability, health and social care, the role of FIDC, and your own vision of how you see the Falkland Islands progressing as a nation in the future. We haven't mentioned these specifically to keep this document focused, and they have the potential to affect many of the other areas we've noted as priorities. We look forward to discussing these in more detail in the future.

We hope that you will take the time to talk with members of our business community during your election campaign to understand their hopes for the future of our Islands.





# Falkland Islands **Chamber of Commerce**

West Hillside, Stanley

Falkland Islands



[manager@commerce.co.fk](mailto:manager@commerce.co.fk)



[www.commerce.co.fk](http://www.commerce.co.fk)



+500 22264

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