

## Mark Pollard – My Manifesto 2021

I am a husband and father of two girls who are both 7<sup>th</sup> Generation Falkland Islanders. If elected this would be my second term in office. I am still the same person who stood four years ago. I love the Falklands and will do my best for all people in our Islands.

I strongly believe over the last four years we have laid the foundations with policies, strategies and investment in capacity. Now is the time to get on with the work. This is a critical time in our story and I now have experience to add to my enthusiasm.

### **If elected again I will continue to:**

- Keep an open mind, listen to reason and engage with the community.
- Always look for the right solutions, not just the easiest.
- Work hard to represent you as best as I can.
- Be accountable for my decisions and actions.

**Environment** – Our environment is our home. It is our responsibility to be custodians of our air, land and sea and pass it on to the next generation in a better condition than we found it. Creating the Falklands first Environment Strategy and Department is a good step, but it will require a lot of resourcing. Our health, education, economy and livelihood rely on the Environment around us. We need to make firm commitments supported by targets, actions and monitoring to ensure protection.

Climate change is real, our land is becoming drier, erosion is an ever-increasing threat. We must ensure there is more investment for habitat restoration to protect homes for our wildlife and to feed our livestock. We need to commit to achieving carbon net-zero. Carbon off-setting has the potential to help us do this and bring economic gain. Renewable energy is a spend to save investment for our Islands. We need to help facilitate and actively install more renewable energy in our Islands. We also need to find ways to reduce our consumption. Government has to be leading the way or at least keeping up with the rest of the Islands.

The Environment Trust was a great idea to invest more in our environment if and when oil happens. FIG should contribute annually to the trust to get the ball rolling and work done regardless of Hydrocarbon development or not. There is no reason why we cannot encourage others to contribute as well.

We need to invest in and enforce simple controls in biosecurity. Earwigs, Thistles and Calafate will cost us a small fortune to control (if we can). Again, this surely has to be a spend to save measure.

We need to continue to work with industry and scientists to make our waters as sustainable as possible. Safeguarding our marine environment and economy. I do not support large scale non-native aquaculture in our Islands (Salmon farming), but I do support investing money to legislate and regulate for sustainable environmentally friendly aquaculture as we must for any other industry with large scale environmental impact.

**Health** – We must seek to address issues before we have to cure them. The public health and mental health work need constant attention and in many areas strengthening. Mental health has to be on the same level and complimentary to physical health.

Further invest in historical maintenance issues at the hospital as well as investing in progressive upgrades. One of those upgrades is the orthodontic suite, which needs faster progress than we have had. We must always be looking at other early detection upgrades to complement existing recent upgrades such as the mammography and CT scanning capability.

Our vulnerable people should never be living in our hospital as a default for not having anywhere else to put them. Tussac House materials are due to be arriving anytime now and it needs to be built promptly.

**Education** – We must always look to be improving the education provision we have from early years through to adult provision. The SHIELD program has been a fantastic success, but needs to be better funded in the future. The workshop at the college needs to be completed as well, it is long overdue. We need to understand what the current blockers are to using the CDS budget. This has to be linked to better understanding the demand in the community for skills and meeting that demand.

We have also been awaiting work on the education facilities and their capacity. It is not good enough to have a placeholder in the long-term capital budget for these. We need to understand what is needed as soon as possible and make sure it is in our program to be done.

Work had begun on the education ordinance and we need to enshrine the duty for Government to provide education at secondary school level as well. Currently it is only for primary education. We also need a fair and clear camp education policy to ensure all understand what they are entitled to.

**Sovereignty** – Argentina still want to bully us into becoming a colony of theirs. We must continue to robustly rebut this as we did at the C24 earlier this year. Our goal needs to be widespread international support and Argentina dropping its claim. No matter how difficult this will be to achieve. Even if we only gain an inch, this has to be our direction of travel. The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year will be a hard time for many in the Islands, but we must use this time when we get the coverage to get our message out as strongly and coherently as possible.

**Economy** – Our economy continues to grow, although it does face threats. We need to engage with businesses wherever we can to understand their concerns. Getting on and building the new port will help to secure our economy for generations to come. We must also commit to telling our story and looking to add value to our exports.

The greatest threat to fishing comes with the migratory Illex. In what has been termed the “Blue Hole” on the high seas has seen over five hundred vessels hammering the stock. This is not only an economic threat to us but also an environmental disaster that could end up with the extinction of a species. We have been and must continue to push for a regional agreement to prevent this overfishing.

Tourism has been hit incredibly hard and even with the successful TRIP scheme, the industry continues to suffer. Tourism will continue to need our support into the future. TRIP2 should certainly help but ultimately allowing tourists back into the Islands and keeping businesses here alive so that they are ready to go when visitors start stepping through the door again is a must.

Farming depends mostly on wool and I support the investment in a new wool warehouse. FIMCo also offers much needed additional revenue. We must continue to support this in order to minimise direct subsidies and to ensure a quality convenient product remains on our shelves. But we must always strive for more efficiency.

We must ensure that local people and companies get the chance to contribute to projects wherever they can. Local content policies need to be in place on projects but also in the awarding of operational work. We must also continue to push for local involvement at MOD sites.

The State of the Falkland Islands Economy 2020 told a good story. It did however highlight the issue of income inequality. I'm not sure extensive measures are needed to address this. I accept we were in exceptional circumstances we could and probably should have put the pensions up last year. I would be in favour of this forming a considerable part of the upcoming actuarial review and budget discussions. We must also take another look at the minimum personal tax threshold and what it would cost us to raise it. Minimum and living wages need to remain on a par and it must be based on current data.

**Housing/Accommodation** – We need to deliver the actions in the new housing strategy. Continuing to develop land for FIG and others to build houses. Selling off the older FIG accommodation to existing tenants in a rent to buy scheme or similar. Owners of empty or derelict properties need encouragement to get them back on the market. More social houses are needed in the local pool until supply reaches demand.

We need to help those renting in the private sector by offering rent rebate to those in need as well. We will also need to ensure that we understand what it costs to buy and build and ensure we continue to support people into home ownership.

**Communications** – Digital connectivity is essential in order to support economic and social development. Not just capacity, but also quality and cost. We need to understand what the current operator intends to do to improve its services. A proper timeline and strategy for continuous improvement. Whether that is embracing low earth-orbit satellites, cable or some other technology, we need to understand how and when these improvements will take place.

**Infrastructure** – The port is essential for our economic future. Power station resilience is also essential, whether an expansion to the existing site or a complete rebuild. It must incorporate more renewable energy. The MPA road has to be approaching completion during the next Assembly. Our infrastructure in places is in dire need of investment. A complete picture of this along with future demand is vital to ensure we prioritise correctly.

We must have a clear understanding of the current state of our infrastructure with a clear list of priorities to address any issues. We have pushed long and hard for an asset management register to understand the current issues, this work must progress to inform the budget discussions on future priorities.

**Jobs** – Importing our workforce must be what we do when we have explored everything else first. Training and retaining Falkland Islanders, then how we encourage Falkland Islanders overseas to return. Thirdly, how we retain the work permit holders we already have here and encourage them to become Falkland Islanders. Then lastly at how we attract workers from overseas.

**Culture, History and Heritage** – We need to get better at protecting all of these things. Understanding what we want to protect is the first important step. Physical buildings such as the Lighthouse need restoring before it's too late.

**Transparency** – Too many decisions still take place behind closed doors. We must continue to push to try and bring many of these out into the public domain. Whether that is ExCo, Budget select or others. A public document outlining what policy is to be considered and when will allow more engagement. More engagement is a good thing.

**COVID-19** – Whilst we are not in the emergency period, we can't be complacent. We do need to keep looking at how we can open up and increase our connectivity with the outside world, but we must always think of our people's health first. With vaccinations, quarantine, isolation, testing, proper fit for purpose emergency plans and the expertise and dedication of our medical and emergency services, we must be constantly looking to reduce restrictions, but only when safe to do so.

It is essential to understand and commit to the issues and work identified in the COVID-19 recovery sessions. Some issues were identified that been around for decades but only came to light in a global pandemic. Some are quick fixes such as the Government having a single point of contact. Others will require a lot of work and careful handling such as tenant/landlord protections and combating loneliness in the isolated members of our community.

As a community we did a fantastic job all working together to keep it out. The community spirit at the time made me prouder than I ever have to call myself a Falkland Islander. Part of the lessons learnt from this period need to look at how we can capture and reinforce that spirit of all of us all working together for the good of our Islands.

**Representation** – I feel I have the energy, commitment, desire, experience, leadership and ability to make a difference. I want to represent you and make fair, transparent and justifiable decisions. We already live in an amazing place. With your help, we can make it even better.

If you wish to find out more about me and my views then please contact me;

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