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Welcome to the second of our joint newsletters from the West of the Island. We had hoped to produce one every six months but with so much interaction now taking place through social media Facebook, Twitter etc. we have decided that an annual overview for those of you that don't have access to social media will hopefully give you a broad-brush of what's happened during the year.



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## Programme for Government —one year on



**OUR ISLAND:  
A SPECIAL PLACE  
TO LIVE AND WORK**

**PROGRAMME FOR  
GOVERNMENT  
2016-2021**

GD No: 2017/0002

Having a Programme for Government has been a great help both for us in Government as well as for Parliament as a whole, providing a road map for the five years of this administration.

We are now some 18 months in and have just gone through a fairly comprehensive review of where we are in terms of delivery. The programme itself is available on [www.gov.im/media/1354707/programme-for-government-2016-2021.pdf](http://www.gov.im/media/1354707/programme-for-government-2016-2021.pdf) Following consultation with all members some amendments are being made for the coming year. This is after all a living document.

In terms of what's being delivered, our individual items will detail what we have done as Ministers in DEFA and DOI, and it's fair to say in general terms we are delivering on the commitments our respective Departments have made.

We are always interested in feedback so if you have any please feel free to let us know.

In the meantime, the budget delivered in February underlines the actions within the Programme for Government. The budget was a positive one both for the island and our locality. It gives enhanced tax allowances and puts more cash in people's pockets. At the same time the large debt of £95 million carried by the MUA has been absorbed by central government which means MUAs sewage and water prices will be frozen for another year and electricity will go up by less than inflation. More money has also been allocated for road maintenance as well as capital programmes. Positive moves were made on pension freedoms. This means that anyone working can save towards a flexible pension. Pre-school credits increased to 20 hours per week which is the equivalent of £3,420 per child per annum. At long last there has been an acknowledgement that more money is required to maintain our natural assets such as the glens and uplands that we all cherish.

We also jointly welcome the appointment of David Ashford as the new Heath Minister, who is supporting our local community with a commitment to start on the Peel Surgery extension, a facility which is much needed to provide local services.

## Geoffrey Boot

It is now 18 months since I became Minister of the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture. I don't think I have ever been quite as busy in my life, that's not a complaint it's just a statement of fact. I only hope that you as constituents are satisfied with the level of interaction and action whenever you require my help, as I have tried very hard not to compromise that side of my MHK duties.

There have long been complaints that the Departments work in silos, from my perspective I have worked very closely with my co MHK Ray Harmer Minister of Department of Infrastructure and we certainly work across Departments and cooperate wherever possible. This is particularly important as DOI has responsibility for Infrastructure which affects us all, but they also crossover with us with Green Roads, Rights of Way over the large areas of upland and plantation that we manage with increasing public access.

The new members of the Keys have settled in and as always as an administration matures some diverge from the majority. With a parliament that works on consensus rather than delineated by party politics, as can be expected there are some individuals who see themselves as opposition. From my perspective that is not a problem, I think all of government should be subject to scrutiny and sometimes this exposes weaknesses that we don't see working close to things on an everyday basis. However, over scrutiny particularly when things are set in motion and in this respect I refer to the Peel Sewage Plant, it is not always welcome and more of this later.



Particularly relevant to Peel, the largest fishing community on the Island, I have been working very hard behind the scenes to ensure that we have a sustainable fishing industry going into the future, particularly with regard to our scallop stocks. I introduced emergency measures over a year ago when we had a race to fish at the beginning of King Scallop season and put together a new combined Scallop Board with an independent Chair and cross jurisdiction representation. This is now advising, based on science from Bangor University, scientifically calculated total allowable catches and daily limits for both scallop fisheries. This seems to be working but we have had well publicised problems with enforcement. We have now adopted a policy of licence suspension on reasonable suspicion of rule breaches. We were accused of backing down in the face of Scottish

opposition to the requirement for vessels to report to a Manx port before leaving our waters when we issued the licence suspension policy. This policy is working well and by the time you read this newsletter six licences will have been suspended. Sometimes at the time what seems weak can be strong and the new policy is far less resource hungry. At the end of the day fishermen should not be penalised for doing an honest day's work but those that break the rules should pay.

Brexit is a continual challenge and a moving target. At present we have identified over 90 pieces of legislation that require amendment when we leave the European Union and that is just in our department.

There are great challenges for agriculture as well as fisheries, in terms of market access and ongoing regulations. This also applies to waste disposal, health and safety and other aspects of my department's work.

The Meat Plant has continued to attract a lot of publicity and whilst we have now effectively taken control of the same with a new board, there is still much work to be done. We have been able to introduce an extra million pounds into the farming sector through what is in essence equivalency with the UK in terms of price paid for finished animals.

I am sure everyone is aware of our UNESCO Biosphere status, the only whole nation state to have the same. Whilst this looks at all aspects of our culture, heritage and environment, the way the Island looks is a result of generations of farmers. Looking to the future farmers will continue to deliver this landscape environmental benefit but only if they are able to maintain profitability. We will strive, whilst reviewing agricultural support, to ensure ongoing environmental benefits as well as keeping our farmers in business.

There is a great appetite for our premium produce, whether it be from the Creamery or Meat Plant, much of which has been supported by my department. This all helps with our image of becoming a foody destination but that requires local produce.

Finally as this goes to process Tynwald has voted to purchase the Steam Packet company which I am confident will prove to be a good long term decision that will secure a strategic service into the future.





# Ray Harmer

In the West, much has happened over the last year including the completion of the Foxdale road works and the regeneration scheme in Market Place. There have been some wonderful changes to our community, thanks to the hard work and commitment of many. The Hub has opened in Dalby providing a beautiful location for hire as well as a community shop. Defibrillators have been installed in old telephone kiosks in Dalby and Patrick. Plans for the Knockaloe Heritage Centre are coming to fruition. Work is being done with the help of Peel Heritage Trust to create a heritage trail around Peel.

The Western Live @ Home are looking to create a Men In Sheds in Peel and the scouts are looking for a new scouts hut which is hoped will take shape this year.

## Department of Infrastructure

It has been a busy year and some very important milestones have been achieved.

Within the Infrastructure Department we recently have said a fond farewell to David Anderson who has now retired and we are grateful for his many years of service. We have welcomed Kate Lord-Breenan to the Department, who will take on David's delegation for highways.

It was vital to the department to have the right infrastructure strategy in place and this was unanimously approved in Tynwald in July. The strategy identifies gaps and what future work needs to be done e.g. a sewage plant in Peel and Laxey. The subsequent focus will be on harbours, waste, footpaths and finally active travel.

## Douglas Promenade Regeneration

Work to develop and regenerate the promenade will begin this September, now that planning permission and finances have been agreed by Tynwald. This has been long awaited as the promenade takes over 6 million vehicle movements a year and substantial in depth repairs have not been carried out since the early 1930s. The horse tram stables have been purchased from Douglas Council and there are plans to renew the Strathallan Tram shed. This puts the horse trams on a firm footing going forward.

Plans to renovate Lord Street have moved a significant step forward. This proposed development has a hotel, cinemas, restaurants, car parking, and bus facilities. We are also looking to progress development of the former Summerland site.



## Sea Services & Harbour Strategy

Following the approval of the sea services strategy last year, much work is being done to secure our sea services, in particular purchasing the Steam Packet as an arms length company.

This also includes the planning for the Liverpool Landing Stage which needs to be in place for the Spring/Summer of 2020. It is hoped to get planning permission this August.



The harbours strategy identifies the work needed to maintain and seize the potential of our harbours. By digging out the rock and deepening the harbour, Victoria Pier will be able to take all kinds of ships including floating hotels and three quarters of the current cruise ships of up to 240 metres. Calls for a larger £80 million cruise terminal for ships up to 450 meters were rejected. To maximise the benefits for the island there are plans to build a marina as well as

catering for working vessels within the Irish Sea. Critical to the strategy is to ensure the continuing operation of the Peel and Douglas Harbours.

## Roads

An investment of over £80 million is needed for our roads which have further deteriorated following the storms and rain over the winter. We are currently creating strategies (with local Commissioners) across the island for towns and villages on a 15 year plan. It is good news that an additional £1.1 million per year has been provided in the budget which will support our roads and footpaths.

Work on residential streets is planned to begin this year and aims to bring improvements for estates. Finance is limited but 2 schemes are in place for each part of the island.

Improvements are to be made in Peel and initial plans are being drawn up to improve the lanes in the centre of Peel and the connection between the Promenade and centre of Peel.

## Housing

We now have regional housing lists working successfully across the island by pooling resources, allowing those in need to be housed sooner. The aim is to extend the allocation in Peel to a joint waiting list or committee for the entire west.

## Buses

We are awaiting the outcome from RTLIC to create a demand responsive transport service, which would mean a more flexible bus service based on need, so reducing the number of buses with only a few passengers and supporting local communities.

## Credit Union Bill Completes Passage

The Credit Union Bill completes its final passage through Legislative Council and House of Keys and will now go for Royal Assent. This is great news and puts the legislation on a sure footing. Credit Unions help those in need to avoid payday loans or loan sharks.

## Active Travel

The strategy for active travel had an excellent response from the consultation. Support from the budget will allow us to create safe routes, so more people can choose walking and cycling to get around.

# Local News

## Peel and St Johns Sewage update

The proposed site for Peel Sewage Plant has been identified as Glenfaba House, Glenfaba Road, Raggatt. This is an excellent step towards the goal of stopping raw sewage being pumped into Peel Bay. Funding to pump the Raggatt leachate into the future Peel sewage works has also been confirmed. This will allow the leachate to be treated in the sewage plant rather than going untreated into the sewage system.

The proposed location outside Peel means there will be minimal visual impact. It will be clear of the Isle of Man Food Park and the power station as well avoiding one of suggested sites at Knockaloe. The next step is for planning approval before works can commence. This approach is supported by Peel Commissioners, Friends of the Earth as well by an independent review. Beach Buddies have confirmed that the regional sewage plant in the north has 'totally transformed' the local coastline near Ramsey and is the most cost effective.

The sewage construction will also be timed with the reconstruction of the highway on East Quay in Peel, which will transform the highway and footways which have been in urgent need of repair.



## Peel Harbour

Last year tests were carried out on the silt and unfortunately we are no longer able to put it out to sea. Therefore we are now looking at environmentally sustainable solutions such as silt traps and using the silt to improve land. Progress is being made with the aim of dredging in 2019. Peel Harbour will also see a much needed replacement of the bridge planned for September.



## Peel Food Park

Significant work is planned to make improvements desperately needed since the Food Park began. This includes better drainage and a new power substation. A lot will depend on working closely with the tenants. We are also looking into the possibility of an industrial regeneration fund to assist with start-ups and new businesses.

## Schools in Peel & the West

There was good news in the budget for the QEII School, which gave the go ahead for the STEM (Science Technology Engineering & Maths) Block. This has been much needed and will be of huge benefit.

## Footpaths & Heritage Railway Line from Peel to Douglas

Footpaths are an important asset but resources are stretched. This year sees 50 years since the closure of the train line from Douglas and Ramsey.

In the budget this year, finance has been set aside to improve the Heritage Trail, making it more accessible to everyone. Work has already begun at the Peel end. The aim is to provide a trail accessible for all by improving gates, removing flooding and uneven surfaces.

There is also more money for our Glens. Beach Buddies have generously come on board to help with clearing and tidying the footpaths, co-ordinating work across the island.

## Constituency Issues

Being MHKs and in particular Ministers comes with a heavy constituency workload. However we both endeavour to deal with queries within 48 hours, or at least acknowledge the same, and we hope to keep this up.

## Joint Surgeries

Peel Town Commissioners kindly make the Town Hall available for joint surgeries on the second Saturday of every month (11am to 12pm), attended by us and a Commissioner. This is being used more widely by constituents as an opportunity to meet.