



Phil Matthews
Newly elected Commissioner for the
Parish of Patrick



August 2021

Dear Residents,

Please note this letter is not connected with the national election campaigning that is underway across the Island and it is not an official message from the Board of Patrick Commissioners.

It is just an opportunity to introduce myself because the recent election was uncontested. When I put myself forward as a member of the Isle of Man Green Party I believed there would be an election and residents would have had the opportunity to learn more about the candidates, why they were standing and what they could offer to the people they represent. Unfortunately this didn't happen in 14 out of the 21 Local Authorities.

As a result, you did not receive any information from me - although a page did appear on the Green Party website, along with a couple of press releases and some social media posts. I realise not everyone will have seen these, so I am contacting all residents at the start of my term of office to let you know a little bit about myself, why I stood as a Green Party candidate and what I am hoping to contribute to the work and activities of Patrick Commissioners.

I have lived in Foxdale for the past 31 years. A retired schoolteacher, I am currently Chair of Governors at Foxdale School and a Trustee of Foxdale Heritage Centre. I was a founding member of the Isle of Man Green Party and I also work with several Island-based charities and environmental organisations. I am also the co-founder and a Director of the One World Centre which is based in St. John's, Coordinator of the Amnesty International IOM Group, Membership Secretary for IOM Friends of the Earth and a member of the Fairtrade IOM Steering Group and the Climate Change Coalition Steering Group.

We are fortunate to live in an area of outstanding natural beauty with villages that have maintained a strong sense of identity and community spirit. However, in recent years there has been a decline in the provision of essential services and I will endeavour to encourage and support opportunities for increased local employment, improved social provision and public transport links, and the continued growth of ecotourism and rural leisure attractions - ensuring that any new developments contribute towards a healthier and more sustainable environment for everyone. Also, let's not forget that the majority of our land area is agriculture, forestry and open moorland. The Isle of Man's climate action plan should provide exciting opportunities for increased local food production, small scale organic and regenerative farming methods, renewable energy schemes and, hopefully, more rural employment and apprenticeships.

I wish to develop more effective links with our MHKs and government departments on issues that are outside the responsibility of the Commissioners. I already have good working relationships with some government officials through my work with other organisations and I also have the support of 3 experienced IOM Green Party councillors and commissioners who were successfully re-elected in other authorities.

We no longer have a single MHK who represents the rural areas of what is now the constituency of Peel and Glenfaba and I feel that our needs and concerns have become secondary to those of Peel where the vast majority of the electorate live. This was evident at a recent public meeting in Foxdale when both of our current MHKs said they had not been aware of the existing problems we face with a poorly connected and infrequent bus service. I want to make sure that our two new MHKs are kept regularly up to date with what is needed in Patrick and that issues are dealt with more effectively.

There are many examples in other countries where Green Party policies (based on the principles of genuine sustainability, care and respect for our environment and social justice) have led to substantial improvements in the quality of life, economic opportunities and social provision for everyone plus the chance of a better future for our young people. This can be seen widely at local government level but it is also happening at a national level in countries where Green Party politicians are in government. You can find out more about the Isle of Man Green Party at <https://www.greenparty.im>

Of course, here in the Isle of Man, our local authorities do not have anywhere near the same level of responsibilities you would normally find elsewhere but the reviewing of planning applications, waste collection & recycling, social and leisure provision, etc. will play an essential role in the rapid transition to a low carbon economy that our Island has finally committed to.

In their newsletter last year, I was pleased to see that Patrick Commissioners acknowledged and supported the Government's response to the Climate and Ecological Emergency. Their opposition to the flawed proposal for a sewage treatment plant at Glenfaba House helped to save an important area of mature woodland and will hopefully result in a more ecologically sound and sustainable site being chosen that respects our UNESCO Biosphere status.

The recent "Elm Tree Tunnel" controversy would not have happened in Patrick. The Commissioners have always scrutinised and publicly shared information about planning applications in our area as soon as they appear. The Commissioners helped with the campaign to save Foxdale Post Office, they were the first authority to install defibrillators in decommissioned phone boxes and they fully supported the initiatives at the Western Civic Amenity Site that have made it the best on the Island. They already understand the importance of **local** and **sustainable** as we "build back better" after Covid.

As a member of the Board I will now be part of the collective decision making that takes place on your behalf. I will be one of five voices at that table representing your needs and concerns. I will also be abiding by the principles of the Green Party which are universal values anyway - the values of sustainable communities, social inclusion, fairness and equal access to basic services, and the benefits of a cleaner and healthier environment for everyone.

You will soon receive a newsletter introducing the new Commissioners, outlining exactly what the Board is responsible for and relevant contact details. As I mentioned earlier, not everyone is on Facebook and there are, as far as I know, only a couple of places where information about the commissioners is displayed - so I would like to see a more regular newsletter, at least once a year, that is delivered to every household. The Clerk, Mr. Ian Maule, is the official person to contact but it is sometimes easier to get in touch with one of the commissioners directly, especially if you live near them or know them personally. We now have three that live in Foxdale, one in Dalby and one in Glen Maye.

You are welcome to contact me at any time by email at pm@wm.im or by phone on 334109.

When it re-opens, I will also be at Foxdale Heritage Centre on the first Sunday of each month which conveniently falls just before the monthly Commissioners meeting.

Finally, I wish to inform you that I will be claiming the attendance allowance that commissioners are entitled to and I have personally limited this to a maximum of £600 per year. I am aware that this is not usually claimed by Patrick Commissioners but it is the right of anyone who is appointed and, although I am prepared to give up a great deal of time to my duties, it will help me recoup some of the expenses I will incur during the course of the year.

I look forward to representing the people of Patrick over the next 4 years and I will strive to ensure that your needs and concerns are listened to and met at local government level and heard and responded to at national government level.

With very best wishes,

Phil Matthews.