

PLEASE VOTE FOR

JEREMY

SMITHIES

FOR THE VALE



I have lived in the Vale since 1998 having previously lived in St Peter Port from 1964 until 1978 when I left Guernsey to pursue my career as an Aerospace Engineer, with Rolls-Royce plc. at Filton, Bristol. Prior to leaving the Island I was employed in Banking and Transport; firstly with Lloyds Bank, then with British Island Airways and finally with Condor and Onesimus Dorey Ltd. as Operations Assistant to the Managing Director.

When I met and married Jane, a Vale girl, I returned to Guernsey and worked initially in test engineering and was subsequently Finance Director of a new-start engineering and design company. In 2001 I commenced 10 years teaching: firstly at Elizabeth College and then at Blanchelande Girls' College.

I was elected to the Vale Douzaine in 2003 and continue to serve as a Douzainier representing the Parish on the Guernsey Douzaine Council and at the Guernsey Douzaine Forum. I have also been elected to serve on the Baubigny Schools Committee (St Sampson's High and Le Murier).

Last year I was elected as the Vale Parish People's Churchwarden.

My manifesto

Borrowing

Much has been written and said about the States of Guernsey Bond and its implications for future taxpayers. I am generally opposed to borrowing but I can see the arguments for financing revenue-producing projects through short-term loans. There is one big proviso – the projects must be thoroughly researched with realistic business plans and short payback periods.

Education

The recent decisions taken by the States do not mean the end of the discussion about secondary education. The number of amendments placed during the States debate shows that consensus has not been reached. The outcome of the debate is that the Education Department's policy letter and proposals were not fully accepted and the detailed implementation of the proposed changes will need to be carefully rethought. Drawing on my experience in teaching, I would give my support to any future proposals that I considered were genuinely in the best interests of the pupils.

Taxation

It is a matter of great concern for the Bailiwick that our deficit continues to grow: increasing since the last States election, by a further £3m to £23m. Strong control of expenditure is fundamental to the continuing prosperity and independence of the community. It is not, however, the sole consideration and social costs must be factored in. Any attempt to introduce GST would have a profound effect on the less well off and I would strongly resist any such move.

The deficit has brought about the need to raise revenue by imposing a series of tax increases and by the introduction of new forms of tax. Apart from the need to look carefully at the cost-benefit of some of the new taxes, now might be the time to review zero-ten to see if it is still fair and equitable and whether the conditions which brought about its introduction have changed sufficiently to justify changes.

Transport

One of the most urgent priorities of the next States will be to try to sort out the mess in which our external transport links now find themselves. Until quite recently we enjoyed reliable, frequent and relatively cheap air and ferry services to a variety of destinations but in recent years matters have deteriorated and communications have become expensive, more limited and less frequent. Reliable communication links between the Bailiwick and the UK and Europe are vital and I would support any sensible means of improving them.

Health

The HSSD budget seems to rise inexorably as demands for improved healthcare increase. There is not much room for manoeuvre when faced with high costs for equipment but it is high time we set about recruiting and training some of our highly competent and caring local people to be nurses. The money spent recruiting overseas and paying agency nurses would go some considerable way towards improving salaries and providing training.

It was unfortunate that the States felt unable to agree to try to negotiate the reintroduction of the reciprocal health agreement with the NHS. It is curious that Guernsey can contribute an average of £2.7 million per annum in overseas aid but is reluctant to find £500,000 a year to fund a reciprocal health agreement to benefit its own population and tourism.

Housing

Guernsey is losing young active workers because of the difficulties in finding suitable, affordable housing. The incentives given to overseas professionals, particularly teachers and nurses, who are given housing subsidies not available to locals, do not provide a level playing field. If housing or rent subsidies are available to some they should be available to all to ensure that a qualified local is able to apply on equal terms. Let us use the talent already here without importing more people to fill the available accommodation and drive house prices up further.

Population

The recent suggestion that an increase of up to 10,000 in the population might be encouraged seems to me to be completely wrong. Guernsey's infrastructure and resources are stretched – housing, schools and healthcare are all under pressure. The argument that an ageing population needs more workers to contribute through their taxes to pay their costs seems naïve. Many employees now approaching retirement have made sufficient provision through work and private pensions to sustain them in their old age. If it is now forecast that there will be increasing numbers unable to manage in retirement then that must be seen as a failure of government to make sufficient provision and a lack of will and foresight to tackle the need to encourage more private pensions and to put in place reform of the state pension. To solve this long-term problem by increasing the number of future dependents seems perverse.

Future business

We have around our coast an enormous resource that could grant us future security of energy supply. Guernsey Electricity is already exploring the exploitation of tidal power and should be urged to step up this programme. Tidal currents in the Bailiwick's waters should be harnessed and the cable currently importing energy from France should have the switch reversed to export surplus energy into a vast market in Europe. This is an example of a project with a potential short-time payback and long-term benefits. The French have been generating tidal electricity at St Malo for 50 years.

Great hopes seem to rest on e-commerce and digital markets. My view is that these are greatly overrated and more effort should be devoted to planning other ways to protect revenue streams if finance goes the way of quarrying and fruit exporting. The Guernsey-man has a tremendous track-record, going back centuries, for surviving against the odds by innovation. A positive attitude from politicians and bureaucrats towards innovation and entrepreneurship must be engendered. Light industry has not been sufficiently encouraged and suitable incentives such as tax-breaks and a sensible approach to planning should be introduced.

External Affairs

Whichever way the UK referendum goes on 23rd June, the Bailiwick's relationship with the UK and the EU will be a continuing matter of concern. Increasing amounts of time and effort are being demanded of local politicians to deal with matters that have previously been left for Whitehall to negotiate on our behalf. I am only too aware of the difficulties in dealing with UK and European counterparts as for many years I was involved in contract negotiations with UK, German, Italian and Spanish aerospace manufacturers and was in charge of a company office in France for two years.

Qualifications

In addition to the qualifications and experience mentioned in the introduction, I am a Chartered Engineer and a Qualified Teacher and have spent 10 years in secondary education, teaching mathematics and business studies.

In 1982 I graduated with a 1st Class Honours degree in Mechanical Engineering and subsequently went on to gain a BA in Systems and Organisational Management and a Diploma in Systems Management. Later, in 1992, I was awarded an MBA from Bristol Business School and in 2001 I received a Post Graduate Certificate in Education.

Early political experience

I have had a long association with local politics and first stood as a People's Deputy in St Peter Port in 1976. I was involved as a committee member in the Nuclear Action Group in 1978 and appeared on BBC national television alongside Jacques Cousteau in campaigning to ensure rigorous safeguards were put in place at Flamanville and Cap de la Hague to protect the Bailiwick from dangers of radiation pollution.

I was for some years a representative on the Negotiating Committee for Teachers & Lecturers in Guernsey (NCTLG).

Local involvement

Member of: -

National Trust of Guernsey, since 1974. Treasurer 2000-4, Vice President 2004-2005
Channel Islands Occupation Society, since 1974. Committee member 1976-8
Channel Island Group of Professional Engineers. Committee member 2005
Corresponding Member in Guernsey for the Institute of Mechanical Engineers, since 2010
Royal Channel Islands Yacht Club, since 2002. Board member 2013
Guernsey Chamber of Commerce, private member since 2000
Guernsey branch of the Institute of Directors, since 2000
Royal Commonwealth Society, since 2000. President 2004-5
Friends of Vale Commons, Treasurer 2016
Friends of Priaulx Library
La Société Guernesaise.

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