

Andrew Turner

Islandwide with your MP

Spring 2008

reports

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Ferry Fares Fair? – Latest

Andrew's campaign to secure an investigation into cross-Solent ferry services by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) continues to gain support across the Island and will go the OFT shortly.

Every Islander knows the ferry services are an essential lifeline. We need them to get to the mainland to see family and friends and for employment, higher education and specialised healthcare. High fares hit the most vulnerable in our community. Those who are least able to afford the fares often have to make heartbreaking choices about what they can and cannot do. Many Island pensioners fear losing contact with their families as the ferry fares rise faster than their pensions.

The last proper investigation into the cross-Solent ferry market was in 1991.

The Secretary of State for Transport has confirmed that these matters should be raised with the OFT.

It is widely believed that fares have risen faster than inflation and this should be investigated.

There is no access to Island berthing facilities for any new

operators as they are effectively controlled by the existing companies, stifling competition.

The services have never been investigated under current legislation (the Competition Act 1998 and the Enterprise Act 2002).

Andrew said, "We have received fantastic support from town and parish councils. I believe this, together with the comments from thousands of businesses, Islanders and mainlanders, will influence the OFT when it considers the submission."

Four mainland MPs with constituencies bordering The Solent are also backing the campaign. They include a LibDem and a Labour MP.

Andrew added: "I would like to thank the members of the Island's Women's Institutes and Townswomen's Guilds for their sterling work in circulating 30,000 questionnaires. Without their help we wouldn't have been able to spread the message so effectively across the whole of the Island."

You can read Andrew's submission in full and comment online at www.islandmp.org.



Protest march about closure of primary schools from Totland Recreation Ground to Stroud Green. Island MP Andrew Turner talking to concerned parents.

Standards essential

The Island's MP Andrew Turner, says he is keen to hear how the recent decision to change the education system on the Island will affect individual schools.

He was giving his reaction to the decision of the Isle of Wight Council at a meeting on March 19 to move to a two-tier education system. The Council voted by a majority of 27 to 17 for a last minute '5th option' taking account of the presumption that rural primary schools should remain open. The new school structure will be based on primary schools (age range 4-11) and secondary schools organised into lower and upper sections (11-14 and 14-19).

Andrew, a former teacher and education consultant said: "I am glad that the final decision took account of the presumption against closure of rural primary schools. Officers had told me that they believed the original proposals met that requirement. I disagreed. We

must now wait to find out exactly how individual schools will be affected. We need to improve standards – on that we are all agreed. I look forward to hearing from the Council how these changes are going to achieve that."

During the consultation period Andrew made public his view that he could not support any of the three original options as he believed that such seismic change leading to closure of at least half of the Island's primary schools would adversely affect standards.

However, he made clear that, although Islanders were entitled to know his personal view, the decision was for the members of the Island's council.

Detailed proposals are currently being developed by Council officers to outline exactly which schools will close and how others will be affected. Formal consultation on the proposals is planned to take place during June and July.



Saying it with flowers. Andrew says thank you to representatives of the Island's Women's Institutes and Townswomen's Guilds for their help in distributing Ferry Fares Fair? leaflets. From left: Denise Parker, vice-chairman of the IW Federation of TGs; Joyce Swaney TG Federation secretary; Andrew; Joan Kirby, WI county chairman and Doreen Kent, WI Federation secretary. Picture courtesy of Isle of Wight County Press

Andrew Turner can be contacted in writing, by telephone or by e-mail at:

24 The Mall, Carisbrooke Road, Newport, IW, PO30 1BW. Telephone 530808 or House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA. E-mail mail@IslandMP.org

Post Offices consultations 'a sham' says MP

In the face of recent post office closures, the Island's MP has taken the issue to the highest level.

Andrew said: "In recent weeks the Island has seen the closure of several sub-post offices despite people wanting to retain the service. Hard evidence was given during the public consultation why branches should remain open, which was ignored by Post Office Ltd."

Following meetings with Post Office executives Andrew believes the consultation was a sham. The fight continues, however, to safeguard the rest of the Island's Post Office network.

Your MP has tabled Parliamentary Questions on the

closure programme over recent weeks. In one answer, the Government revealed that the Post Office network could shrink to only 7,500 offices across the UK and still meet their access criteria.

Andrew said: "What this effectively means is that Government could further reduce the size of the post office network, which could mean even more closures. Whilst we have been given assurances there will be no further planned closures before 2011, the message has never been clearer. If we want to protect the remainder of our post office network on the Island we must keep on using them."



Backbencher at rest: Andrew sponsored a fence for charity at the Somerton Farm, Northwood, equestrian cross-country event and the organisers used their imagination to make it look like a bench from the House of Commons. Picture courtesy John Found.

In praise of the Earl Mountbatten Hospice

Andrew took the opportunity of a recent parliamentary debate to praise the work of staff and volunteers at the Earl Mountbatten Hospice.

During the debate, fellow MP Bob Spink commented: "I know that my hon. Friend has not only fought consistently and diligently for his local hospice but has supported the hospice movement nationally, and I commend him for that."

Andrew said: "I took the opportunity to praise the work of the hospice movement and in particular the Earl

Mountbatten Hospice on the Island, because it is the Cinderella of the health service. It is a measure of how highly people regard our Island hospice, that over 5,000 people walked the Wight last year, raising over £200,000, which goes some way to meeting the £2 million raised through volunteers every year."

Andrew will again be helping to present the medals following Walk the Wight which takes place on 18th May of this year.

You can register to take part at www.walkthewight.org.uk

Visiting Westminster

Andrew is always pleased to arrange tours of the Houses of Parliament. These are free. School parties, voluntary groups and individual Islanders are very welcome to visit.

There is a special House of Commons education unit which runs programmes for school groups including a special video tour, discussion with MPs and even mock debates. Andrew always does his best to greet constituents who have travelled up to Westminster but because of work commitments this is not always possible. Please get in touch with the office on 530808 if you are interested.



Pictures: Left: Puppy love: This happy pooch receives a medal for Walking the Wight from Andrew, the Island's MP. Right: A colourful welcome greets weary walkers at the Needles Park. Pictures courtesy Isle of Wight Radio.



Some of the families who came to see their work in the Upper Waiting Hall in the House of Commons on 4th December 2007. They all took part of the 'Inside Out' exhibition of work by five Island families who live with autism.

Andrew Turner

Osborne update

Andrew recently held a meeting with Mark Pemberton of English Heritage to discuss options for the future of Osborne House. They both agreed that the views of Islanders should be taken into account before any decision is taken on such an important historical building. Andrew suggested holding a public meeting and Mark agreed.

Andrew commented: "Following the meeting with English Heritage it is clear that any development of Osborne House

will be constrained by planning consents, and financial considerations. That said, I am determined Islanders will play an integral part in deciding the future of Osborne House."

Any plans will have to meet certain criteria:-

- Putting the buildings to better use
- Reduce overall maintenance costs
- Provide all year round employment
- Attract more visitors to the Isle of Wight

If you have suggestions for the future of Osborne House please feel free to contact Andrew.



photo courtesy of Isle of Wight Tourism

MP joins Justice Select Committee

In the past month, Andrew Turner has been appointed to the prestigious Justice Select Committee.

The committee is made up from MPs of both major parties and is currently considering a wide range of issues including the protection of private data, effective sentencing guidelines and the effects of devolution – a decade on.

Members are appointed by the House of Commons to examine the administration, expenditure and policy of the Ministry of Justice

The committee also examines the work of the law officers of The Crown (the Attorney General and Solicitor General), the Serious Fraud Office and the Crown Prosecution Service.

Andrew said: "I was very pleased to be appointed to the Justice Select Committee. It carries out some vital work including examining sentencing guidelines, which is of particular interest to the Isle of Wight given our large prison population. I am looking forward to taking part in the inquiries and evidence sessions."



At the heart of things: Andrew makes a point at a meeting of the Justice Select Committee.

A week in the life of your MP

Andrew's job at Westminster is first and foremost to represent constituents' interests. It also involves scrutinising legislation and to holding the Government to account.

Around one to two hours each day is spent in the Commons chamber. Most of the work Andrew deals with takes place in his office, liaising with groups, individuals, or in Parliamentary committees.

The Justice Select Committee of which Andrew is a member meets every Tuesday afternoon to discuss a variety of issues and it recently visited Edinburgh to hold an evidence session.

The Commons convenes at 2.30pm until 10.30pm on Mondays and Tuesdays, 11.30am until 7.30pm on Wednesdays and 10.30am until 6.30pm on Thursdays. However sometimes votes can be held later on any day, depending on the business.

When not in Westminster Andrew has a busy schedule on the Island. On Fridays and weekends his diary is usually full of various constituency activities. This can involve anything from going out meeting Islanders with local councillors knocking on doors, attending a variety of functions and public meetings and, of course, holding his weekly advice surgery.

Having the largest number of constituents in the UK means Andrew's mailbag is never empty and assisted by his four full-time staff including his partner, Carole, he deals with more than 150 letters, e-mails and telephone calls every day.

According to Andrew: "They say variety is the spice of life and being the Island's MP certainly means every day is different. It is an honour and a privilege to be the Member of Parliament for the Island and very satisfying when I can help my constituents. I can think of no other job I would rather do."

Isle of Wight MP - an example to other MPs

The Island's MP has been held up as an example of best practice by a fellow Member of Parliament Peter Bottomley, the MP for Worthing West.

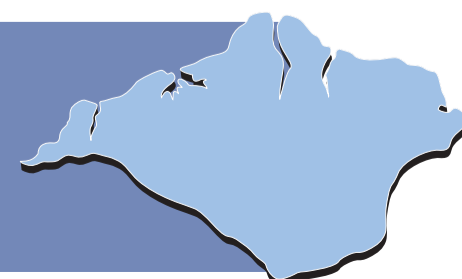
In what some may regard as 'turkeys voting for Christmas' Peter highlighted that Andrew currently represents the largest number of people in any constituency in the UK. He suggested this as an example of how to cut the costs of running Parliament.

Peter believes there could be fewer MPs all representing more constituents.

He told his local paper: "I think Parliament should be invited to vote to follow the example of Andrew Turner and be more competent in our work. If Andrew can do it, so should we."

The average constituency has 74,000 voters whereas the Isle of Wight has 110,000. At the last election the Island had more voters than the Welsh constituencies of Islwyn and Wrexham combined and more than five times as many voters as the Na h-Eileanan an Iar constituency, formerly the Western Isles of Scotland .

Islandwide with your MP



Christmas card competition winner

Yet again the standard of entries in the annual competition to design the Christmas card for our MP surpassed all expectations. Children from the Island's primary and middle schools submitted entries and three independent judges decided the winner. The winner last Christmas was Amy Harrison, 8, from Hunnyhill Primary School. Her winning design features a map of the Island festively decorated with Christmas stars and holly.

Island MP supporting UK farmers

The Island's MP Andrew Turner recently attended a rally in Whitehall organised by the National Pig Association which supports the British pig industry.

Andrew said: "It's not just pig farmers, but the agricultural sector as a whole which is under immense pressure. Livestock farmers are being hit hard by global rises in wheat prices and therefore feed costs. All farmers have been hit hard by the rising cost of transporting goods, including on and off the Island. The situation is now of

crisis proportions, with the result that many farmers are seriously considering leaving the industry."

He went on to say: "I am determined to fight for the farming community. Farming in this country has some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world and if we fail to support our farmers, we will be left with less choice and more imported food when we shop. If we are really serious about protecting the environment, what better way to show it than by supporting locally produced food and our farmers?"



Newport - Hunnyhill Primary, IW MP Andrew Turner presents Amy Harrison, eight, with her prize for winning his Christmas card competition 2007. Picture courtesy: Isle of Wight County Press

Out and about



Andrew presents a cheque to Simon Daughbjerg of West Wight Youth Centre on behalf of the Football Foundation. Photo: Terry Noyce



Welcome to the Island: Andrew meets children from Chernobyl at Blackgang Chine with organiser Julia Lock and other volunteers. Picture courtesy: IW County Press.



Steve Ives right, presents £1,800 to the Island's MP Andrew Turner, at the Cheverton Farm Clay Pigeon Shooting event. The money will go to Alverston Ward Orthopaedic Unit.



Cheers: Sharing a drink, Andrew with Keith Terrell at the re-opening of the White Hart Inn, Havenstreet. Picture courtesy: Isle of Wight County Press



Hearing the striking tax office staff outside their new premises, The Apex, on the St Cross Business Park. From left, Adrian Hillier, Trina Murton, Maria Quinn and Margaret Perry with Island MP Andrew Turner. Picture courtesy: Isle of Wight County Press

Andrew Turner reports

