

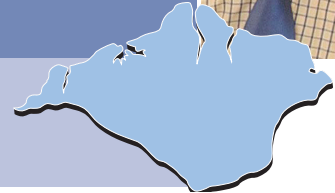
Andrew Turner

Islandwide with your MP

Summer 2007

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- Fairer ferry fares?
- IW Blind lobby their MP
- Foreign Office "must do better"
- You've put the Island WHERE?



Island keeps control of its fire service

MP welcomes decision

The decision that the Island should keep control of its own Fire and Rescue Service has been welcomed by Andrew Turner.

In March, the IW Council voted unanimously to retain the Island's own fire authority, ruling out any merger with Hampshire. "Absolutely the right decision," said Andrew afterwards.

Over the past two years the Island's fire service has been dramatically improved, and widespread public consultation demonstrated that an overwhelming majority of those who gave their opinions wanted to keep the Island's own fire authority.

The consultation involved public meetings, stakeholder input, focus groups and questionnaires. "It was the Government

who wanted and then paid for this survey on whether our fire service should be merged with Hampshire," said Andrew. "Two years ago, the IW service was rated as poor, but since then it has moved forward to modernisation, thanks to the hard work of Acting Chief Fire Officer Paul Street and all his team and support staff."

As part of the consultation feedback, Andrew put in a detailed submission of the reasons why the Island should keep control of its fire service. "The Fire Brigades Union fought a spirited campaign and I was very pleased to give them my support. The council's decision confirms our faith in firefighters and their support staff. This is an excellent example of the Island community pulling together and getting the right result."



Andrew Turner with some members of the team who cared for him in St Mary's Stroke Unit
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A personal message from your MP, Andrew Turner

As many of you will know, I suffered a stroke just before Christmas – which was not what I had in mind for the holiday season but, if nothing else, it has given me a new insight into the NHS. The dedication and skill of the team on the Stroke Unit at St Mary's was quite exceptional, and I am enormously grateful to all the staff.

Carole and I would also like to send our sincere thanks to the hundreds of people who sent good wishes, and offered understanding and support.

I am making a good and steady recovery, and continue to advance

towards full health, but doctors have advised me that I should not return to full-time work for another few months. However, my excellent team in the constituency office have been superb in dealing with all the work while I have been away. If you need help on any matter, please contact them. I am very grateful to everyone in the office – Kath, Vikki, Laura, our volunteer, Rio, and, of course, Carole.

After medical tests, I am told by the experts that I should have no further problems after my recovery. I appreciate how lucky I am, and now I look forward to returning to work in sensible stages and to seeing people as I get out and about.

New-Look Website

There's a new look to Andrew Turner's website, the result of an overhaul aimed at making it more informative and easy to navigate.

During his convalescence, Andrew has been fine-tuning the redesigned site (which can be found at www.islandmp.org)

and it now contains a number of new links, with an extensive picture gallery, information about his role as the Island's MP and full contact details.

"I am grateful to Liam Thom of Island Webservices for his hard work on redesigning the site," says Andrew.



The New Website

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.com

Cut the cost of crossing the water

MP welcomes cross-party campaign

Islanders want a better deal on their ferry fares, and Andrew Turner is determined to help them. After a meeting last year with Vincent Smith, head of competition at the Office of Fair Trading (OFT), our MP said: "There are three main ways to pursue fairer prices on the ferries. We believe that a case can be made with the OFT by showing that one company has a dominant market position. We also need to show how hard it is for passengers to use another service rather than the one they normally use.

"Thirdly, we must prove that prices have changed adversely and that the increased charges are not justified on the basis of the companies' own cost structure. But for all of these claims, we need hard evidence." And when the two ferry companies are frequently changing hands, the matter becomes even more crucial.

Andrew stresses that the battle to get a fairer deal for Islanders is a non-political one. "It is crucial that all parties

work together and we already have significant cross-party support from other MPs on the mainland."

The next planned move will be to persuade the OFT and the Competition Commission to carry out an investigation into cross-Solent fares. That could open up the routes to other operators or they could make other recommendations relating to the services or fares. Whilst Andrew is recuperating from his stroke he will be working with others on producing a submission to the OFT which Islanders will then be encouraged to support.

Many people have already contacted Andrew with useful evidence but any further information you think may be useful in supporting an investigation, or indeed anything that relates to cross-Solent operators and their fares, can be sent to Andrew at 24 The Mall, Carisbrooke Road, Newport, IW, PO30 1BW. You can also use Andrew's website to get your comments to him at www.IslandMP.com or on the website set up by a group of ferry users at www.competition4iowferries.blogspot.com.

"Bed Tax wrong" says MP

A bed tax, raised on the tourist trade in order to put money into local authorities, was strongly opposed by Andrew Turner, following an official inquiry into council funding.

Last year's Lyons report recommended that a tourism tax might be levied by local authorities, a proposal which brought a swift rejoinder from the Island's MP. "A bed tax of ten per cent could raise the cost of a typical Island break by up to £100 per family," he said. "It would have a disastrous effect on our tourism industry, price hotels and guest houses out of the market and lose millions of pounds in revenue for our holiday trade. It is a particularly insane idea at a time when the nation is planning for the Olympics and the Island will be hosting the Island Games".

Although in the face of strong opposition the idea has been shelved for the moment Mr Turner warned that this was a scheme that may resurface. He said; "Many local businesses have told me how damaging this would be for them and should a similar proposal come up again in the future I shall certainly oppose it vigorously."

Caught on Camera - Andrew at work



Doing his bit at the Hospice shop



Our MP the graffiti artist at White Air Extreme Sports Festival



School Breakfast Club at Downsidge



Meeting Suez Veterans at their medal ceremony



Fund-raising evening for Marie Curie Cancer Care at Pizza Express



Opening the new Seasafe building at Somerton, with managing director, Jeremy Dale

Andrew Turner

Islanders take fight to Westminster

When an important lobby of Parliament took place last December, Andrew Turner was there to meet 11 Islanders who had joined the campaign to increase mobility benefits for the blind.

Over 1,200 people took part in a rally and march on Parliament and then met with MPs to put forward their case. They argue that people with serious sight loss should receive extra help from the Disability Living Allowance. At present they can claim £16.50 a week, but the higher rate would be worth £43.45 a week and would put them on equal terms with those

who, for instance, have to use a wheelchair.

After meeting his Island constituents, Andrew said: "They have told me what a huge difference this would make in terms of getting out and about, being able to afford taxis and enjoying leisure time. I have asked Ministers to justify the present benefit criteria. While I would have liked to have promised my unqualified support, it is possible that the reason blind people receive less than other groups is that it is all based on assessment of their physical capabilities – but I shall examine the Government's position very carefully."



Andrew meets IW blind delegates at Westminster

“Prisoners in their own country” says MP

Andrew Turner came out fighting strongly against injustice after two Island men were finally released after being imprisoned abroad.

Yacht delivery crewmen John Packwood and Henry Stableford, both from Cowes, were imprisoned on drugs charges of which they were entirely innocent. John Packwood had spent over a year in prisons in Spain and Morocco and Henry Stableford was arrested in Italy last year and it was six weeks before he was released. A boat they delivered to Morocco in 1997 had later been used for drug smuggling – weeks after they had returned to the UK. The case highlighted the massive flaws of international arrest warrants (IAWs) and the plight in which British citizens may find themselves, even after release.

"Despite being innocent and there being no evidence against them, my constituents are no longer able to work or travel abroad," said the Island's MP. "They are prisoners in their own country." Following a Commons debate in

which he spoke of the numerous injustices faced by travellers who have IAWs against them, he expressed his disappointment at "the old Foreign Office formula" used in response to address the situation of prisoners abroad.

During his speech in the Commons, Andrew made points that included the facts that travellers cannot check whether there is a IAW against them; they can be arrested abroad for crimes committed by subsequent users of hire cars, boats or hotel rooms and it is very difficult and incredibly expensive to obtain legal advice in these cases.

Andrew called for an independent body that could act on behalf of British people who find themselves in difficulties abroad. "The Foreign Office is ill-placed to intervene to support Britons imprisoned overseas," he said. "Until it either extends its consular ambitions or finds someone who will do that, innocent citizens will face potentially serious problems if they travel overseas."

Strangled by red tape

Island events suffer from complex regulations

The Island knows how to put on a good show, but organisers of community events such as the Chale Show and the Garlic Festival and, more prominently, the IW Festival and the Festival are finding it increasingly difficult to comply with the complex regulations involved.

Andrew Turner is well aware that the Island faces a particular problem when it comes to red tape, and he raised the matter in a parliamentary question to Shaun Woodward, Minister at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

The Licensing Act, which came into force in 2005, has already proved a nightmare of bureaucracy and expense for event promoters. To make matters worse, the Isle of Wight Act (which was originally brought in after the 1970 Afton festival and still applies exclusively to the Island) causes even further problems.

"Island promoters are having to leap through two sets of hoops and incurring lots of additional expenditure. It is more expensive to put on big events on the Island than it is on the mainland. If that is allowed to continue we could lose the music festivals and the character of our community events may be changed," said Andrew.

In the Commons, he asked: "Why do certain activities on the Isle of Wight ... find themselves regulated both under the Licensing Act and under the IW County Council Act 1971, despite my having been told ... before the Licensing Bill became law that it would impliedly repeal parts of the IW Act? Which sections have been repealed?"

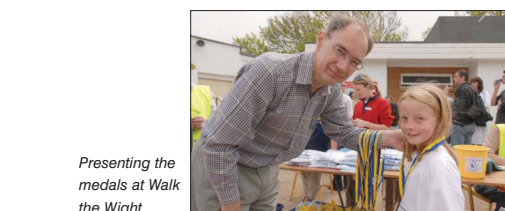
Shaun Woodward said that he had asked his officials to look into the matter and that he would be happy to meet the Island's MP "to see what we can do". In the meantime the Isle of Wight Council will be applying the regulations sensitively.



Helping raise funds at Brading for Children in Need



At Swanmore School presenting Tesco Schools Initiative computers for Brading Primary



Presenting the medals at Walk the Wight



With the new Isle of Wight High Sheriff, David Langford, and his wife Sue

Islandwide with your MP



Isle of Wight cricketers are County Champions

The British Association for Cricketers with Disabilities (BACD), which operates under the auspices of the English Cricket Board has achieved high standards on the field since it was formed in 1991, and the Isle of Wight's own squad achieved particular glory last year.

The team, comprising players with both physical and learning disabilities, won the inaugural hardball BACD county championship, beating Lancashire by seven wickets in a limited 45-over match played at Leamington Spa Cricket Club.

Was their victory anything to do with their MP's input into a pre-match training session? Probably not – but Andrew reportedly made an excellent bowling-machine operator when he visited the team at the Gurit IW Cricket Academy in Ventnor.

"I was really impressed at the very high standard of the players," he said afterwards. "And so I was not altogether surprised but I am very, very pleased that they went on to win the championship.



The victorious team celebrates

Congratulations to all of the players and their manager, David Lloyd."

David Killpack, who was also key to the success of the team, has recently moved on after eight years as Cricket Development Manager for the Island and

Andrew paid tribute to his work over that time. "David has done a great job for Island cricket and I wish him every success for the future. He has built up a strong and flourishing organisation and will be a very hard act to follow."

Dedicated to the Community

When Major-General Martin White succeeded Christopher Bland as Lord Lieutenant of the Isle of the Wight, Andrew Turner paid tribute to both men, praising Mr Bland for his years of dedicated service and congratulating General White on his appointment.

"Christopher Bland has given over a decade to the role of the Queen's official representative on the Island, carrying out those duties with immense presence and commitment but never with pomposity," he said.

Welcoming the new appointment, Andrew said that Martin White, whose post immediately before his retirement from the Army in 1998 was that of Director General of Logistic Support, "has had a splendid record of public service, but has also kept his feet firmly on the Island where he was born and brought up. I am sure he will be a very worthy successor to Christopher Bland."

C minus for DfT

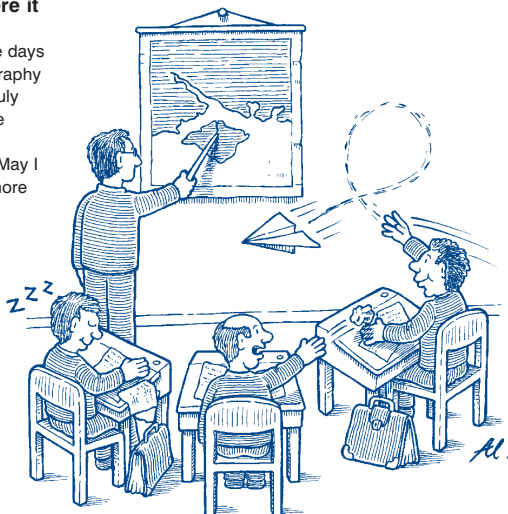
A definite C-minus for the boys and girls at the Department of Transport who were required to provide a little map to accompany their recent studies into the location of London airports. Doubtless after much head-scratching, they decided to move the Island to a point some 50 miles away from where it actually is.

It wasn't like that in the days when our MP was a geography teacher himself, and he duly rose in the House to chide those responsible for this shameful piece of work. "May I suggest we would have more confidence in the Government's policies on geography if the Department of Transport had not sited the Isle of Wight just off the south coast of Portland Bill?" he inquired witheringly.

Amid much giggling in the chamber, the Education Minister, Jim Knight, confessed that

something had gone sadly amiss. "Perhaps I will refer my friends at the Department for Transport to the new GCSE and see whether they are interested in it as well."

Following this episode, Andrew (who has always been a whizz at geography) intends to keep a very close eye on the civil servants' detention book.



Competition Winner

The competition that selects the design for our MP's Christmas card has become firmly established as a tradition. Children from the Island's primary and middle school entries submit seasonal entries and three independent judges decide the winner.

The competition was won last Christmas by six-year-old Libby Hine, of Nine Acres Primary School, Newport. Her colourful design, used for all of Andrew's 2006 cards, showed a globe, with a cheerily singing angel either side and the words "Peace On Earth" underneath.

One very stylish feature of the angels was that they both had red hair - as, indeed, does their talented young designer.



Andrew congratulates Libby watched by pupils at Nine Acres School

Andrew Turner reports

