

What is to be done?

Manifesto by Clovis Kilmartin

I'm a 34-year-old Falkland Islander standing for Stanley constituency in the General Election. My parents moved here in the 1970s for reasons unknown to me. I'm first-generation, and whether that counts as a credential, I'm not entirely sure. Like many thirty-year-olds that don't know what to do with themselves, politics seemed like the perfect career choice.

Overall, this manifesto explores ideas to strength our economy and give young Falkland Islanders every reason to stay, thrive, and build a life here on the Islands. It's also about a new level of transparency - one that's been missing in the past. I hope we can embrace progressive ideas that will help us move forward while continuing to be recognised on the global stage as a proud British Overseas Territory.

Thank you for taking your time to read and consider my manifesto.

Note: This is a very summarised version of my views. If you'd like to hear more, provide any feedback or would like to meet me to discuss further, please don't hesitate to call me on 53571 or by emailing c.s.kilmartin@outlook.com

1. Housing

Living and working in Stanley has become increasingly difficult for young people, with soaring housing costs and stagnant wages making it nearly impossible to get on the property ladder. There's a severe shortage of available and affordable homes, and rental properties are scarce. I propose the following:

- **Phase out old Government housing/flats:** Outdated government flats are costly to maintain. Phasing these out and selling them to first-time buyers can help new homeowners enter the market more fairly.
- **Housing development proposal:** We're lagging in new plot development, with over 200 first-time buyers waiting. When new plots come online, the government should prioritise social housing; the rest of the plots should be offered at cost price to first-time buyers, ensuring fair access. New government plots would not be available for second-time homeowners.
- **Address fishing companies and housing:** It's unfair that fishing companies, using profits from shared resources, are dominating the housing market and pushing locals out. This needs to be addressed to keep housing affordable for residents.
- **Government land should be sold with interest-free instalments if required.**
- **The housing points system for social housing needs to be reviewed:** People are playing the system, not because they want to, but because they have to. The only way young people can obtain housing is to make babies and get their parents to write them an eviction letter to take up to the housing officer.

- **'Bennies' first:** The housing points system currently treats locals and permanent resident permit (PRP) holders equally. I propose a merit-based overhaul that rewards long-term local contributions. Locals who have invested more time and effort into the community will earn more points than newer arrivals with PRP, ensuring fairness and recognising genuine local effort.
- **Implement a comprehensive overhaul of the housing points system:** This new system will prioritise merit, ensuring that those who have significantly contributed to the community receive greater support. At the same time, we'll ensure that individuals facing genuine hardships also receive appropriate assistance.
- **Landlords' tiered property tax system:** I propose a tiered property tax system in Stanley to keep things fair and to help fund new social housing with the appropriate rent controls in place to avoid passing costs down to tenants. Primary homes stay low-tax or tax-free, while tax rates rise progressively for owners of multiple rental properties - someone with two homes isn't the same as someone with fifteen, and the tax system should reflect this.

2. Rent Control

To ensure tenants in the Falkland Islands aren't hit with unexpected rent hikes in the private rent market (which has been happening), I would like to implement clear rules, keeping the rental market fair and predictable:

- **Freeze rent during fixed-term leases:** During a fixed-term lease, such as a one-year contract or longer, no rent increases will be allowed.
- **Limit rent hikes after lease ends:** We'll limit how much rent can increase at the end of the lease term. For example, any rent adjustment after the lease ends will be capped at a reasonable percentage, such as tying it to inflation or a set maximum increase.

3. Immigration

Immigration is vital to the Falklands. We are a small island nation built on immigration. All of Falklands' history is someone arriving on a boat and working tirelessly until things improve, and sometimes getting shot at. However, we must ensure genuine commitment to the Falklands and avoid becoming a stepping stone to British Citizenship. I propose:

- **PRP eligibility:** I propose increasing the PRP residency requirement to ensure that residents are more committed and integrated into the community. This helps maintain stability, reduces short-term migration, and strengthens community ties.
- **Cooling-off period:** Slight cooling-off period in our annual population growth, temporarily pausing non-skilled immigration. Essential skills, like healthcare and education, will remain unaffected, ensuring that our infrastructure can keep pace with growth.

- **Bad eggs:** Individuals who repeatedly break local laws will face revocation of their permits and will be barred from returning. This ensures the safety and integrity of our community.

4. Hybrid Four-Day Work Week Trial

My hybrid four-day work week proposal aims to blend reduced summer working hours with income flexibility. During summer, employees enjoy more family and leisure time, enhancing work-life balance, while those needing extra income can work overtime. In winter, the work week returns to normal, ensuring consistent productivity. This approach, proven successful in Iceland, maintains productivity and does not reduce pay. Some sectors, like healthcare and schools, may not be suited for this model.

- **Implementation:** We'll begin with a pilot program in one government department for a single summer month, gathering feedback and data. Based on results, we can expand to other departments and potentially the private sector.

5. Tax Breaks for Under 25

To attract and retain young Falkland Islanders, tax must be reduced for those aged 18 to 25 or (21-27). This will increase disposable income, encourage investment in housing and local spending, and make the Falklands more appealing. This approach aims to keep young talent at home, preventing 'brain drain'. I propose either of the following:

- **Proposal A:** A three-year 0% tax relief for young people (18 to 30) upon turning 18, this 3-year tax break could be used until 30 when it would expire.
- **Proposal B:** Higher tax thresholds for those aged 18 to 25
- **Proposal C:** Adjusting the age range to 21 to 27 for recent graduates, providing a financial head start as they begin their careers.

6. Small business tax breaks

For the first year of operation, small businesses and start-ups in the Falklands would benefit from a reduced corporate tax rate of 15%. This allows them to reinvest more of their profits back into their business, helping them overcome the challenging initial phase while boosting long-term growth and sustainability. This would ease startup costs, foster economic growth, and energise the local business environment.

7. Education

We're very fortunate with our educational opportunities, enjoying privileges that many around the world don't have. Access to free, high-level education, especially abroad, greatly benefits our community and economy.

From my apprenticeship experience at Falklands College, it's clear that the apprenticeship system needs streamlining. We also need to address space constraints in schools to ensure a quality education for future generations.

8. The 420 Act: Decriminalisation* of Marijuana in the Falkland Islands

I propose we follow the steps of our fellow British Overseas Territory, Bermuda, in decriminalising personal possession and recreational use of marijuana, treating it as minor offences which allows the police save their time and resources for serious offences.

Obama tried weed at college and turned out alright, and the biggest political party in the U.S. wants it to be legal. Over 20 U.S. states have legalised marijuana. Most of Europe is heading that way, with three countries legalising Marijuana and 12 countries having decriminalised it. Canada legalised recreational marijuana nationwide in 2018. I think even to call this progressive in 2025 would be an exaggeration.

* Decriminalisation means removing criminal penalties, so it's treated like a minor offence, while legalisation makes the activity fully lawful and regulated.

9. The Police PR Problem and State-Funded Media

We need to address the imbalance in how our local, state-funded media reports crime and public issues. Minor offences often receive disproportionate attention, while significant matters - including government misconduct or white-collar crime - are underreported. A person growing a single marijuana plant is sensationalised, yet major issues like the suspension of key public figures, are downplayed.

There is also a clear inconsistency in police public relations. Day-to-day, the messaging presents a friendly, small-town image, but when someone missteps, the tone shifts sharply into a hardline response. This sudden change feels disproportionate and erodes trust. To maintain confidence in our institutions, we need fair, balanced reporting and a policing approach that is consistent, transparent, and accountable.

10. Access to Waterways

I believe all Falkland Islanders should have the right to responsibly enjoy our natural waterways. Access to rivers encourages people to get out of Stanley, reconnect with wildlife, and enjoy activities like fishing. Waterway access is already legal - the real barriers come from private land restrictions, which we should aim to handle fairly and respectfully.

11. Bitcoin Strategic Reserve for the Falkland Islands

It's time for the Falklands to be more forward-thinking. To enhance the Falkland Islands' economic resilience, we could establish a Bitcoin Strategic Reserve by allocating a portion of national funds towards it. As we have done with HSBC and our traditional investment portfolio, we'll partner with a reputable third-party firm to ensure professional oversight and security, positioning the Falklands as both forward-thinking and adaptable.

12. Infrastructure Plan: Green Corridors

We need to balance housing development with green spaces, preserving Stanley's historical charm while reducing congestion. We'll integrate green corridors into new developments and enhance pedestrian pathways, such as adding a dual walkway and cycle lane from FIPASS to the western developments, ensuring a safe, sustainable and accessible urban environment.

13. Minimum wage

The current minimum wage of £9.19 is not enough for a comfortable living standard. The minimum wage must become a real living wage. Raising the minimum wage would improve workers' quality of life and increase productivity. Inspired by Denmark, where fair wages lead to better training and retention, we can achieve a more skilled and loyal workforce.

While raising wages is important, we must also ensure that price increases are kept in check to maintain economic stability.

14. Blue Hole

We must continue to engage with relevant governments and environmental bodies to address the Blue Hole issue, as some jigger vessels pose as leisure boats to bypass regulations. This underscores the need for better oversight in areas outside our direct fishing industry, impacting our broader economic landscape.

15. Economic 'solutions': Salmon farming & Hydrocarbons

Salmon farming should be a **last resort** because of its environmental impact and our existing environmental footprint through our trawling practices. However, if the economy truly needs it, we shouldn't rule it out entirely.

It's important to note that we are, in a sense, waiting on hydrocarbons to drive economic growth (or save us), and that comes with its own environmental risks.

It's a complex balance; while there is an anti-salmon farming movement, it's also true that we haven't always been the most environmentally cautious community - bottom trawling, for example. So, it's tough to take a hard stance against salmon farming when we have other significant environmental impacts.

16. Banking

While Standard Chartered remains a vital financial pillar in the Falklands, we need to enhance accessibility. Introducing online and mobile banking would empower residents to manage their finances in real time, improving financial literacy and quickly resolving issues.

17. VSAT License fee

It's positive that we've moved forward into the 21st century with more accessible connectivity. While the current VSAT license fee of £180 per year is set until 2027, I'd like to revisit this in the near future. I believe we can aim to make it even more affordable, especially for lower and middle-income households.