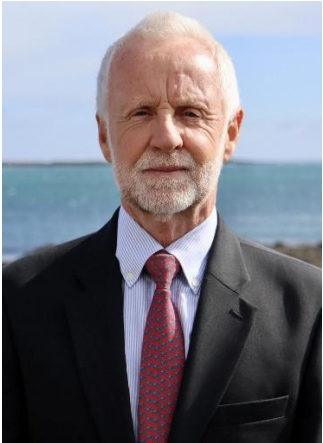


VOTE JOHN CRINGLE



Dear Voter,

My name is John Cringle and I have lived in Castletown all my life having been born in Queen Street where I still live today. I am married with two grown-up children and two grandchildren. Over the years I have tried to support Castletown and its activities, spending forty years marshalling the Southern 100, 23 years as a member of Castletown Coastguard and 8 years as a Castletown Commissioner.

As a board member I have been Vice Chairman twice and Chairman once. Along with a Board colleague we proposed creating an independent organisation to protect the town's heritage. Following a public meeting Castletown Heritage was formed and I spent over ten years on their committee.

I retired in 2020 as General Manager of Ronaldsway Aircraft Company, concluding over twenty-five years in business management. During the past four years I have heard much disquiet and concern over the direction Castletown is going with people losing trust in the Board. Standing for election was not part of my retirement plans, but I am passionate about Castletown and very concerned about its decline in recent years. I also believe the current Board lacks ideas on how to change, remaining fixated with one project to the detriment of residents and traders.

That is why I have decided to seek election, hoping to re-install pride and respect for our Town.

We have the opportunity to do this with a new Board.

It is imperative a new Board has broad experience and maturity with a focus on Castletown, its residents and all its remaining businesses and is capable of directly engaging with all levels of government on Castletown issues. We desperately need to move into the present day and adopt a professional business structure to instill confidence that the Board will make the right decisions for the town and can support business development. There needs to be far more transparency in decision-making, more community engagement, openness and honesty about how your money is being spent; you all are effectively shareholders in Castletown.

Firstly, a new Board must:

- Publish a strategic plan with financial information for the coming year with updates published quarterly.
- Publish comprehensive minutes of meetings including voting decisions.
- Install a prominent notice board in the Market Square to display information of public interest.
- Regularly update the website and Facebook page.
- Return the office to customer service with the public counter being directly accessible and open during normal office hours, five days a week.
- The Civic Hall has to be available for Castletown events and easily available for hire with a functioning kitchen.
- Engage with all the town's businesses and listen to their views on developing Castletown, ultimately re-forming a business association.

I believe a new Board should consider a business-based operating structure to accelerate rejuvenation and investment, my experience could help achieve this if elected, however this would be reliant on audited accounts.

Legislation dictates a timescale for publishing accounts and this Board is delinquent in not having met this for the years 22/23 and 23/24! A new Board must pursue this forcefully to a conclusion. For the first time a schedule of fixed costs and potential investment has been published; this is a start but long overdue. However, some fixed costs appear excessive, and whilst four investment items are listed more are needed to revitalize our town. I believe in using Government support and also strategic borrowing; I do not consider building reserves a financial target when investment is needed.

Also, I am totally opposed to the current trend of employing consultants for everything, they should only be called upon for technical advice on major capital schemes.

My view on the Market Square is that this year's experiment failed with significant impact on traders and residents **However, even though the Board knew the Minister would not support another winter closure they engaged a consultant at a cost of £8,000.00 (a 4p rate) to devise a plan to justify full year closure.** Our elected members have been unable to develop a coherent plan, instead wasting ratepayers' money. The Minister now agrees with a summer closure from March to September. In my view March is too early but it is a start for a new Board.

We currently have the fifth highest rate on the Island, and I question whether we get value for this? **I propose developing a policy where commercial users of the Square or any other asset of the town make a financial contribution that can be re-invested or used to offset future rate increases, benefiting all ratepayers.**

The Square should remain a family space with games and only a very small, licensed seating area. The installation of CCTV in the Square is timely and a new Board needs to develop a plan to extend coverage to other areas of the town.

With the inclusion of Market Square parking in winter, I believe there is adequate parking all year round if planned correctly and managed effectively. I would propose a review of existing parking areas and designate disabled, short, medium and long stay spaces as well as resident parking, the key to making this work would be the effective operational management of car parks by the Commissioners staff.

Housing is always a priority and the acceleration of Phase 2 for School Hill is urgent. It is financially short-sighted that Phase 2 did not follow contiguously from Phase 1 and I believe Castletown Commissioners, the client for this project, should have vigorously lobbied Government. It is a problem where only Castletown suffers. Also concerning is that Castletown no longer controls its own sheltered accommodation which is managed from Port St Mary by the Southern Housing Board. Control must urgently revert to Castletown. New housing will always be a very contentious area. We have had nearly 150 houses in total built or being built during the past 20 years, evolving slowly so reducing impact. The planned development in the Buchan ground is perfect being an infill project and the new Board must consider other brownfield sites within the town that may be available with Government assistance. It is critical that new development is controlled and phased, reducing the risk of our infrastructure crumbling.

As the ancient Capital of the Island, heritage sites are our biggest asset reliably drawing visitors year on year. However, it is crucial all these sites are open together and this needs review prior to the summer season. One of our most prized assets is empty due to the continued reluctance of Government to invest in bringing the historical yacht 'Peggy' home and refurbishing the Nautical Museum. This is unacceptable and an urgent plan should be made to resolve this; having a museum without its star attraction is ludicrous. The former Police Station is a building of significant importance not only locally but nationally and now at risk, so there must be engagement with Manx National Heritage over its retention as part of their heritage property portfolio.

We are very lucky to have so many clubs offering a broad spread of sporting opportunities and leisure clubs offering warm community spaces with varied activities. The Board should give full support to all these clubs and I include the Southern 100 given the significant volume of people it brings to Castletown. The Southern swimming pool status is concerning and needs very careful monitoring; it is a key asset not just for Castletown but the whole Island and should be centrally funded.

This covers the main issues, but significant other problems exist to be resolved, for instance: Anti-social behavior, dog fouling and the condition of our roads and footpaths. But I am sure a new Board with a new structure can progress all these concurrently.

Thank you for reading my manifesto. I can and will commit time to achieve these goals.

Together we will bring about the changes our town needs.

VOTE JOHN CRINGLE on April 24th

Should you wish to discuss anything my telephone number is 453595

The Polling Station is at Castletown Town Hall and open for voting from 08:00 to 20:00hrs.