

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ELECTION, THURSDAY, 5TH MAY 2016.



The Corncrake contacted Argyll and Bute Council's Election Office early in April and were given contact details for the Conservative, Labour, Liberal and SNP candidates in the election. We wrote to all four, requesting the Election Statements of their candidate; please read below the three responses which we have received. The Election Statements are ordered alphabetically by the surname of the candidate.

Donald Cameron, Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party candidate.



By way of brief introduction, I am from Achnacarry near Spean Bridge. My family have a farming and holiday business which I help manage. In my professional life, I am a practising Advocate, with a particular interest in crofting and agricultural law. I am married with three young children.

If I am elected as your MSP in May, I will fight for a better deal for our islanders on places like Colonsay. We have to help island business and enterprise so we retain our young people and provide the jobs and security to allow them to live and thrive on the island. I am aware that on Colonsay the new fish-farm has helped increase employment but we must continue to attract investment. Coming from a farming background, and with a keen interest in crofting, I am also acutely aware of the challenges facing our crofters and farmers, with issues of volatile prices, poor weather over the last few years, and the Scottish Government's recent CAP farm payment fiasco.

I also know that the need for affordable housing is a major issue on Colonsay. So I was delighted when Ruth Davidson launched the Scottish Conservative manifesto that we have pledged 100,000 new homes in the next parliament about half of which would be 'affordable'. We have also called for £1 billion of funding to go towards meeting a target for every home to have an energy efficiency rating of "C" or better by the end of the decade, so homes are both warm and energy-efficient.

Like a lot of islands in Argyll, Colonsay needs better mobile phone coverage and internet connections. As your MSP, I will campaign for 4G mobile coverage across the whole constituency but in particular for our more remote communities. Improving connectivity is absolutely critical for

residents and businesses. Many essential services and industries on Colonsay (such as nursing, tourism, and fish-farming) all depend on better mobile phone coverage.

An increasing problem in much of Argyll and Bute is the number of ferry cancellations as a result of poor weather. Communities on islands like Colonsay must have a reliable, robust and affordable transport connection for both passengers and freight, and I will fight tirelessly to ensure that ferry operators provide this.

On a national level, Ruth Davidson and the Scottish Conservatives are the only party who can speak up for the 2 million people who rejected independence. The SNP have promised a new initiative for independence starting this summer. We mustn't let the SNP take us back to the bitter divisions of that debate. We must say "no" to a second referendum.

Ruth Davidson and the Scottish Conservatives will be a strong opposition, standing up to the SNP and holding them to account, and ensuring they focus on running the country and on the issues that matter here on Colonsay.

In short, I will make it my priority to work hard for all our islanders, so that young and old enjoy a better quality of life.

Alan Reid, Scottish Liberal Democrats candidate.



Argyll & Bute voters have a crucial choice. You can elect a Liberal Democrat MSP who will concentrate on delivering better services for his constituents or you can elect an SNP MSP whose main aim will be to get another Referendum and take Scotland out of the UK. No other candidate can win.

I was the local MP for fourteen years. I increased my vote last year, but due to the collapse of the Tory and Labour votes, the SNP leapfrogged above me into first place.

I want to stay in the UK, putting the Independence Referendum behind us, and use my experience to concentrate on running an efficient Scottish Government and delivering for Argyll & Bute.

Scottish education used to be the best in the world, but not now. Liberal Democrats want to make it the best again. We will give extra funding to our schools, massively expand free nursery education, and reverse the cuts the SNP made in college and Council Education budgets.

There is already a shortage of GPs in rural practices. If nothing is done urgently, we will soon have a crisis on our hands. Many GPs are nearing retirement and not enough GPs are being trained to replace them. A big effort must be made to invest far more in training GPs and recruiting them to rural practices.

Farming and crofting are vitally important to the whole rural economy. The shambles of the Scottish Government's failed computer system must never happen again. The Scottish Government's failure to pay farmers and crofters the money they owe them has caused severe cash flow problems. Farmers and crofters must be compensated for interest and bank charges incurred due to this.

Many parts of Argyll & Bute are still in a digital dark age. The Scottish Government must put in the investment needed to provide superfast broadband to every home and business and at least 4G mobile coverage everywhere.

More investment is needed to our ferries to improve capacity, booking facilities, reliability, the age of the fleet, and the pier infrastructure.

Ferry fares for commercial vehicles are far too high. The recent Scottish Government decision to remove commercial vehicles from RET must be reversed.

The lack of affordable housing in the right places is a barrier to economic growth and population retention. The Scottish Government must make more money available for this and work with the Council and Housing Associations to build more affordable houses and bring empty houses back into use.

The public sector should do all that it can to award contracts to local, small businesses.

I want to play my part in delivering a liberal, prosperous Scotland within the UK.

Let's have no more Independence Referendums. This could easily become a 'Neverendum'. I'm the only candidate in this election who can contribute to stopping the 'Neverendum' by taking the seat from the SNP and then focussing like a laser on running an efficient Government and delivering for Argyll & Bute.

Michael Russell, Scottish National Party candidate.



When I was elected as the MSP for Argyll & Bute in 2011 it was on the basis of the SNP record, team and vision.

I am standing again on that basis, fully aware not just of what the SNP Government has achieved but also what it has still to achieve.

We have delivered for local people and across the country with investment in schools and hospitals, more jobs and houses, the council tax frozen and the Scottish living wage delivered.

The strong SNP team has got stronger. Nicola Sturgeon has been an inspirational First Minister and her vision, shared by her party, is of a more equal, more just, fairer Scotland.

But achieving more is what this election is all about and that is why over 2000 local SNP members have been taking the message of this campaign to every corner of Argyll & Bute.

We need to keep improving education and close the attainment gap. We must ensure that our precious NHS continues to be well funded and well staffed. Our islands need to be properly supported and whilst introducing RET has been very important, and has stabilised prices, the difficulties with ferries that Colonsay experiences from time to time need to be ended by the building of more vessels, which is now underway. Land reform needs to move forward and our telecommunications links need more investment. The SNP is promising 100% fast broadband connection and that has to be delivered to every part of Argyll & Bute, supporting better mobile services too.

I am keen to carry on with the job of ensuring those things - and many others - happen.

As your MSP I have held regular surgeries throughout Argyll and Bute, including on Colonsay, and of course I have lived in the constituency for 25 years.

The job of the local MSP is to help constituents, stand up for them in Parliament and legislate on their behalf. I have done all three and I promise that I will continue to do so with commitment and enthusiasm if re-elected on the 5th May.

Whichever of the candidates you favour, the Corncrake urges you to exercise your democratic rights in this important election and go and cast your vote the Village Hall today.