

STEWART BLACKMORE

My name is Stewart Blackmore and I have lived on the Island since 1977. I am a hospitality and tourism professional on the Island and know first-hand how important tourism is to our Island economy. I also have working experience of further education, having been a senior lecturer in hospitality teaching BTEC and HND students. I am a town councillor in Ventnor (serving on the Public Buildings advisory group), where I have lived for over 28 years. I am Chair of the local Ventnor British Legion and am a Vice President of Ventnor Rugby Football Club. I stood as a Labour candidate in last May's County Council elections where I had a very creditable vote in a previously Tory ward.

I am married, to Margaret, and have two grown up children. Margaret is senior care worker who deals daily with many who are disadvantaged and have special needs. She has to deal with the reality of this government's savage welfare cuts upon those who can least afford it, and those who find it impossible to look after themselves.

If you were not a Labour supporter, you might think that the Isle of Wight is floating in a sea of economic success. The Isle of Wight has had a Conservative Member of Parliament since 2001 and you must surely believe, as I fervently do, that it's time for a change. I do not believe that the majority of islanders are as right-wing as the MP who has been (mis)representing us for the past 13 years.

They, and you, deserve better – much better if the interests of Islanders are to be addressed and I believe that I am the person to take on this challenge and make the Isle of Wight and its voters my paramount and ongoing priority.

The cost of living is rising rapidly and wages are stagnant or falling. Quality housing is unaffordable for more and more families. The ferry operators have a metaphorical gun to Islanders (and tourists) heads; they charge what they want, tell you when you can and cannot travel, and are answerable to nobody. Andrew Turner pays lip service but, in effect, does nothing.

I am ready, and more than willing, to take the fight to the Tories; why shouldn't the Island have a Labour MP who will put you, the people, first?

I am a lifelong Labour Party member and my family is steeped in Labour tradition, having fought many campaigns in the West of Scotland. My father was on the Scottish Labour Party National Executive and on the Executive of the Scottish NUM, while my mother served as Secretary of South Ayrshire CLP. We helped many local Councillors and at least four Labour MPs get elected.

If selected, I promise a campaign full of energy which will take the Tories on and expose them for what they haven't done for Islanders. I will wholeheartedly embrace all members and supporters who give offers of help, no matter how large or small the commitment. A good local election campaign is an absolute priority, especially in rural areas

The emphasis must be on forming a team which can expose the Tories savage cuts in all of the Island's services – libraries, public toilets, public open spaces and parks, public services, young and adult social services and care.... the list goes on. The general election is only 16 months away and we have much to do, friends.

We must not, however, ignore the devastation which the Tories have caused nationally with the so-called austerity measures which are punishing those who can least afford to suffer these agonising cuts. We must also say more about our support for the European Union by exposing the mistruths and downright lies perpetrated by UKIP and the Tories

I believe that the next election campaign should start here. If selected, I intend to make this a largely local campaign by explaining that the cuts at County Hall are a direct and inevitable result of this government's savage austerity measures, all supported by Andrew Turner, which mean that the poor and disadvantaged are expected to bear the brunt of paying down debts which were the direct and inevitable result of the criminal mismanagement of the economy by the banks and international financial institutions. Surely our Isle of Wight deserves better.