



2021 Election, Getting the Green Vote

Falklands Conservation's ideas for a green election

The 2021 Elections offer an opportunity to put a commitment to the environment at the heart of the next Assembly. Here we present our ideas for green ambition for Candidates.

The Falkland Islands have an abundance of bird and marine life that attracts tourists and wildlife enthusiasts and creates the foundation for our farming and fishing industries. The recent recognition of our waters as a 'Key Biodiversity Area' for endangered Sei Whales shows our global standing. A healthy natural environment underpins fishing income which makes up 60% of GDP.

Environmental commitments under the 2018-2021 Islands Plan remain partially or largely unfulfilled. Only a more proactive, Greener minded Assembly, will address the environmental concerns and aspirations of the local community.

Key Manifesto items:

- 1) Restore native Habitats for our climate, economic sustainability and wildlife

Election Vision: a commitment to ambitious restoration of our damaged or vanishing habitats.

Healthy habitats create homes for our wildlife. But they also safeguard our soils from erosion, help store polluting carbon dioxide and improve water storage. Well-managed they can also help feed livestock in many circumstances. Without preservation or restoration, thousands of years of accumulated soils can erode until they no longer support the productivity they once did.

- 2) Adopt a Green Economy

Election Vision: adopt a cross Government policy to better identify and support future green projects while greening the business plans of FIG Directorates much better.

The Falkland Islands are well-placed to adopt a 'Green Economy'. This is an economy that supports sustainable developments and industries without degrading the environment, where we can have a strong economy and a healthy environment. There has been success in several countries that have adopted a Green Economy approach e.g. New Zealand's 2020 Budget targets 11,000 new green jobs. The development of a carbon credits scheme will need active support.

- 3) Secure our Islands with biosecurity

Election Vision: fulfil promises to improve Falklands security from outside invaders.

Earwigs! Earwigs are a great example of what happens if we don't tighten our borders against animals, plants and diseases that are brought into our islands. Likewise, it is critical that we take some care when traveling or moving goods between our islands. Diseases, such as Penguin Pox, and economically damaging plants such as thistles and calafate can spread without a little effort and less than 1% of our islands are rodent free. FIG has committed to improving biosecurity policy and legislation but this has been very slow.

- 4) Prevent damage to the Marine Environment

Election Vision: strong, sustainable and credible marine management that is on par with global standards

The Falklands biggest industries rely on a healthy marine environment. About 60% of our GDP comes from fishing. Six of the 15 major fisheries, such as Loligo Squid, rely on a clean inshore marine environment, making up about 36% of total licence revenues. Our tourism industry, also reliant on this environment, is growing long-term. To ensure that our waters remain healthy we need strong, sustainable and credible management that is on par with global standards. We need to ensure that management techniques are not allowed to weaken and allow out-dated damaging practices such as open-pen industrial salmon farming.

5) Combat Climate Crisis

Election Vision: commit to a Net Zero carbon goal and build a climate-friendly environment for businesses trying to lower their carbon emissions.

As a nation we produce more polluting carbon dioxide per person than Saudi Arabia. The climate crisis is becoming increasingly serious and it would be a mistake to think that we will not be affected by it. Water shortages across camp land are impacting some farming and increasing erosion. Some Penguins appear to be seriously affected and there is concern that some commercial fish stocks may move away. We need to act now to do our bit in reducing our impact on the climate and mitigate the effects climate change will have on the Falkland Islands. Opportunities such as carbon offset schemes and money-saving renewable energy projects also exist. We have the potential opportunity to become one of the few carbon negative societies.

NB: as a charity, Falklands Conservation is strictly politically impartial and we do not have a view on which Candidates people should vote for. However, we do have an interest in what all Candidates have to say on nature and the environment, and that these issues are part of our national conversation. We urge Candidates to be as positive, imaginative and ambitious as possible on nature and the environment for the 2021-2025 Legislative Assembly.