



GARFF COMMISSIONERS

Newsletter June 2017

DELIVERING LOCAL AUTHORITY SERVICES

LAXEY

LONAN

MAUGHOLD

RATES & the NEW GARFF AUTHORITY

How Much will the rates be in the new Garff Authority for Year End 2018?

Rates across Garff as a whole will be frozen for the Financial Year 1st April 2017 to March 31st 2018.

We are in our first year without the benefit of audit completion so it would be premature to announce any detailed financial changes brought about by the amalgamation. The Commissioners are very confident that there will be savings, but although these are predictable to some extent, they are not fully detailed until the audit process has completed later in the year.

As a consequence, and despite the prevailing 6.4% RPI figure, the Commissioners rate across Garff has been frozen, albeit with the introduction of the four year sliding scale which will mean, depending on the rateable value of your property, a small annual increase of several pounds in the Lonan and Maughold Wards with a commensurate reduction in Laxey Ward.

As you may be aware the most significant element of your domestic rates demand is for the water and sewage services provided

by Manx Utilities. Unfortunately in these two areas there will be significant rises in the order of 6% in each case. Although the rises arrive on the domestic rate demand, the Commissioners have no influence on the decision to impose these increases.

The New Garff Authority – How's it working?

The amalgamation of the three authorities was always seen as a good fit as all three operated on a similar model; being one with very few directly employed staff, delivering the majority of services through the use of professional private contractors.

Other local authorities to north and south of Garff are modelled on a system of delivering services primarily through a much larger directly employed workforce. Laxey, Lonan and Maughold had always found that the use of contractors provided the most efficient and cost-effective method of delivering our services and the Commissioners feel that, in the interest of the ratepayer, this model should be continued into the future.



Refuse Collection & Other Services

Already Refuse Collection Services have benefitted from the closer amalgamation in terms of streamlining collection rounds and office-based administration.

Additionally, Hedge-Cutting, Gulley Cleaning, and Street Sweeping contracts and arrangements have also been amalgamated across the Sheading bringing efficiencies without losing tight control over the day to day running of the services.

Over the next few years the Commissioners will be examining options to amalgamate the varied contracts operated by Laxey, Lonan and Maughold in terms of grass cutting in public areas, toilet and facility cleaning. This will be done where the resultant service is more cost-effective and maintains at least the previous efficiency and quality.



Staffing at Garff Commissioners

As the first operating year of the new Garff Authority draws to a close it is becoming easier to predict some areas where the new authority can make savings. Staffing costs were perhaps the most difficult to predict, but, it is becoming apparent that the office can be maintained without engaging additional office staff to the two currently employed on a 37 hour basis. The separate offices of Laxey, Lonan and Maughold previously employed almost three Members of staff equivalent to 2.7, which indicates a reduction in staffing numbers of over 25%.

The authority also directly employs one full time and one part-time maintenance operative who undertake a wide range of roles around the Sheading from grass cutting and other public area maintenance to building and facility maintenance on the Authority's various properties, play areas as well as at Cooil Roi. The camp site in Laxey has a part-time warden. However, the staffing and running costs of the site are funded by its commercial operation and do not negatively affect the rates.

A diverse range of professional private contractors are also engaged to provide essential services such as refuse collection, gully cleaning, road sweeping and hedge-cutting. Other contractors are used on a one-off basis to undertake tree surgery, plumbing, etc.

The former Cooil Roi Sheltered Housing Authority employed four members of staff, one full-time and three part-time; these staffing levels remain the same and are not expected to change in the foreseeable future. Although now an integral part of the new Garff Authority, the staffing and operational costs of Cooil Roi are met by the residents' rent income and the government's housing deficiency scheme.

Consequently, the operation costs of the facility do not impact on the domestic rates at all.

Other services?

The new administration in Tynwald is still finding its feet, but it's likely that other services may be devolved to local authorities in the coming years.

As a principle, Garff Commissioners would be very interested in taking responsibility for a range of services, particularly first stage planning and public right of way maintenance for example. Any such transfers would have to be carefully considered and any possible financial impact measured and evaluated.

As with most things, your views on these matters would be very much welcomed.

Public Sector Housing - Shared waiting Lists

In future residents of Garff seeking public housing will be able to choose to go on either a Northern or Eastern Area waiting list.

The Northern list will provide access to the houses at the Corran in Maughold, as well as giving the option to be housed in Ramsey or at any public housing location across the north of the Island.

Inclusion on the Eastern Area List will provide access to public housing in Laxey, Lonan and Braddan.

It is hoped that Onchan will join the Eastern List at some point in the future which will bring further possibilities.

It is the view of the Commissioners that this arrangement will provide residents with improved flexibility when applying for social housing, giving wider choice options and enhanced opportunities.

Eastern Area Plan

The Commissioners have submitted their response to the Government's Consultation on the Eastern Area Plan. A display of mapping and of the proposals in the Commissioners' Office proved popular and was visited by many residents during April and May of this year. The response of the Commissioners was influenced by the comments made and covered the need for the provision of affordable housing, public sector housing and sheltered housing. The submission also commented on the individual areas of land that had been identified as potential locations for

development in the future. The response included general comment protecting the visual amenity and character of the Garff landscape, as well as aspects of infrastructure such as sewerage, the road network and cycle routes. It is anticipated that government will report back on the consultation in the coming months.

Response to the December 2015 Floods

The Commissioners continue to press for works to Repair and Improve the Sheading's Infrastructure.

Nearly 18 months on from the significant flooding experienced across the sheading of Garff the Department of Infrastructure (DOI) and Manx Utilities Authority (MUA) are continuing to carry out works to repair damage and improve drainage provision across the sheading.

While there are still areas that need addressing, significant inroads have been made to repair and improve ageing surface water drainage and other infrastructure. In Laxey both Rencell Hill and Baldhoon Road have seen improvements made to surface water drainage and of course construction of the replacement Old Laxey Bridge. In Lonan works have been carried out to repair blocked culverts in the Moaney Quill area, and in Maughold the DOI has undertaken work to address the flooding issue at the Hibernia crossroads. While the MUA continue with works river wall repair works in Laxey Glen and at the Fire Station and the Manx Electric Railway has carried out substantial works to repair and improve drainage and protect properties affected on Mines Road.

The Local Authority has also played its part and continues to provide road sweeping and gully cleaning services on the secondary roads in the Sheading. In carrying out this work a number of problems with the drainage infrastructure have been identified and reported to the DOI.

Moving forward Garff Commissioners are committed to working closely with the DOI, MUA and our newly elected MHK's, **Daphne Caine** and **Martyn Perkins**, to ensure that further improvements to surface water drainage and proposed flood elevation schemes are implemented.

Sewerage Improvements for Laxey and Garwick.



The Government's Bathing Water Charts indicate a mixed bag for Garff's beaches - but the future is brighter!

Maughold's beaches have benefited in recent years from new sewerage treatment facilities at Port Lewaigue, Maughold Village, Booilushag, Corony and Glen Mona. The close partnership with Manx Utilities continues and the focus has now turned to beaches further south with the Commissioners being very pleased with the very positive response from Manx Utilities in regard to providing sewerage treatment in Laxey Bay and Garwick Bay. It's the early stages of a long process of investigation and planning, but the ball has begun to roll with our two MHK's Daphne Caine and Martyn Perkins giving full support.

Road Safety



The Commissioners work very closely with both Highways and the Roads Policing Unit, and lobby the Department regularly about particular areas of concern such as around Ard Reart Junction in Laxey and Main Road, Baldrine. The Commissioners own and operate the Speed Indicator signs deployed at the entrances to Glen Mona. The latter are very popular with residents and it further use of speed indicator signage is being discussed with Highways for deployment at Ard Rearyt, Baldrine and other locations of concern.

Share the Space in Garff

A further initiative that Garff Commissioners support is Safe Cycling IOM's call for an emphasis on road safety initiatives for cyclists and other vulnerable road users. The Commissioners are keen to support the minimum safe passing distance initiative because it will not only benefit cyclists, but will also benefit, runners, walkers and pedestrians throughout the Sheading by encouraging all road users to 'Share the Space'.



Play Equipment in Lonan?

Play equipment for young people in Lonan? The Commissioners are preparing final proposals for the provision of play equipment at Church Close and on All Saints Park for the young people of Lonan. Initial consultation has taken place and has been used to influence the plans being prepared. The plans can be viewed at any time and will be made available to anyone who wishes to view them. Contact the Commissioners' Clerk on 861241 or via garff@manx.net.

Sports Facilities on Glen Road, Laxey.



The Commissioners are also in discussion with representatives from local sports groups regarding proposals to enhance the sports and leisure areas on Glen Road in Laxey. It is hoped that more details about these proposals as they develop over the coming year.

The Future of Lonan Church?



The Commissioners have begun investigations with the Church Authorities into the possibility of taking over administration of the Lonan Parish Church Building which has been closed for several years. It's very early days yet but the initial idea is to test the viability of the building being used as a 'Festival Church' and also utilise it for community events or as a community centre. Your thoughts, ideas and suggestions on this proposal would be very much appreciated.

Contact 861241 or garff@manx.net.

The Future of the Dhoon Church Field?

Another initiative being investigated with the Church Authorities is the use of the field beside the Dhoon Church for the Glen Mona and wider community. Initial suggestions are for the provision of children's play equipment, and a ball sports area. It is felt that a portion of the field should be retained to enable staging of the Bonfire every November and that car parking facilities could be incorporated for public and church use. Monies for this project had been set aside by Maughold Commissioners and remain available to use for the benefit of the community. Once again, your views would be much appreciated on the types of facility that could be provided.

Laxey & Lonan Heritage Trust Needs You!

L&LHT have been instrumental in ensuring that the areas heritage is presented in the most accessible and informative ways; facilities such as the Great Laxey Mine Railway and the Lady Eveline water wheel have greatly enhanced the profile of the village's attractions.

If you are able to volunteer your time to any aspect of the Trust's exciting and varied activities please call into the Heritage Shop on Mines Road, Laxey, or call 862007.



New Facilities in the Sheading

A range of new facilities are being commissioned or refurbished this year. These include:

- A new shower block at the Laxey Camp Site which is ready and in use this season.



- Refurbishment of the Laxey Promenade Children's Play Area.
- Refurbishment of the Glen Road BMX Track.
- Resurfacing of the pathway into Laxey Valley Gardens to facilitate access to the railway run by Laxey & Lonan Heritage Trust.
- New toilet facilities in Maughold Village Car Park are due to be open in mid-June of this year.



- It is hoped that children's play facilities can be installed in areas of Lonan in this financial year.



Political Surgeries - First Saturday of each month.

The political Surgeries run jointly by our two MHKs and the Commissioners are proving both highly effective and very popular. Martyn Perkins, Daphne Caine and a Commissioner are in attendance to discuss any issues or concerns you wish to bring. They usually take place on the first Saturday of each month from 10.00 am at the Commissioners' Offices, 35 New Road, Laxey. Please contact us for full details.

Refuse & Recycling Information

A quick reminder that only general household waste should be deposited in your wheelie bin (as a rule of thumb, only materials that are easily and safely combustible. This will increase our recycling rates and improve the efficiency of the Energy from Waste plant in Braddan.

The following items can be taken to a **Civic Amenity Site** (Middle River, Douglas or Balladoole, Lezayre):

- Batteries, Building rubble, Car and Motorcycle parts, Garden Green Waste, Fluorescent Light Tubes, Metals, Oil, Soil/Garden Stones, TV Sets/Electronic Goods/Phones, White electrical Goods, Large Tree Trunks/Branches

The following items can be recycled at Bring Banks and the CA Sites:

- Cans, Glass, Paper, (cardboard, and plastic can also be recycled at Glen Rd, Laxey)

For the following items you must seek specialist advice:

- Asbestos, Clinical Waste, Gas Cylinders, Medicines, Paint, Tyres.

Civic Amenity Sites

The Commissioners are part of the committee recently set up to operate the Northern Civic Amenity Site at Balladoole, north of Ramsey. The site was previously operated by DOI, but is now under the direct control of the local authorities. Residents in the north of the Sheading who have used the site for several years will probably notice very little difference in the site's operation. Arrangements for residents in Laxey and Lonan remain the same with the Eastern CA Site at Middle River being run by the Eastern local authorities including Garff.

Garff is Dementia Friendly

Businesses in Laxey recently benefitted from training sessions on understanding the condition of dementia that were organised by Julie Peel from the Cooil Roi Housing Complex. The training was designed to help those working in businesses identify and assist vulnerable people. The initiative was a great success and provided a great insight into the condition for local businesses.

Cooil Roi celebrates its 50th Birthday!



On the 29th July this year, Cooil Roi will be celebrating its 50th Birthday; events will include a garden party with entertainments and plenty of refreshment! Everyone from the Sheading is invited to come and join in the celebrations.

Although primarily for retired people it can also be a place of safety for people who need a bit of extra help to live independently. Please contact Julie on 862307 if you would like more information about applying for a flat at Cooil Roi.

Contacting the Commissioners.

The Commissioners very much welcome the expression of views and comments. If you have a query, a complaint, or think we can assist, please do not hesitate to contact Peter Burgess or Martin Royle at the Commissioners' Office.

Peter and Martin can be contacted by email garff@manx.net, or by telephoning 861241.

The postal address of the office facility is: Commissioners' Office, 35 New Road, Laxey, Isle of Man, IM4 7BG

The Commissioners also have Facebook and Twitter accounts which can be found by searching 'Garff Commissioners'

If your query is in relation to the Cooil Roi Sheltered Housing Complex, please contact Julie Peel on 862307.

Your Garff MHKs can also be contacted:

Martyn Perkins MHK tel: 651518
martyn.perkins@gov.im

Daphne Caine MHK tel: 651519
daphne.caine@gov.im