



Connected Falklands Group (Née, Starlink Petition Group)



MLA Candidate 8 Telecommunication Questions 4th December 2025

Replies received from:

Gary Webb	Clovis Kilmartin	Grant Budd	Chris Clarke
Lee Summers	Stacey Bragger	Gavin Short	Michael Goss
Roger Spink	Glenn Ross	Lewis Clifton	Dean Dent (N/R)
Cheryl Roberts	Leona Vidal	Peter Biggs	Dot Gould (N/R)
Mark Pollard	Andy Watson	Jack Ford	

Candidate's responses are listed in the date order that they were returned.

1. What is your vision for the Falklands' telecommunications after Sure SA's exclusive licence ends in 2027, and how would you help make that happen?

Gary Webb

As outlined in my Manifesto, I firmly believe that telecommunications and the selection of a new provider will be a cornerstone of progress in the next Assembly. In a region where connectivity is not just a convenience but a lifeline, we must demand excellence.

- Reliable Landline and Mobile Services across all settlements
- High-Speed Internet Access that meets modern demands
- Affordable Pricing tailored to our unique population and geography

This is not just about infrastructure—it's about people. The new provider must be customer-focused, understanding that in the Falklands, service quality is paramount. With vast land coverage and low population density, every connection matters. In some locations, telecoms are the only link to the outside world.

To ensure the right provider is chosen, I will play an active role in all discussions, advocating for:

- Transparent tendering and community input
- Performance benchmarks and accountability
- Scalable technologies that future-proof our network

We deserve a provider that treats every resident not as a number, but as a neighbour. The next Assembly must make this a priority, I'm ready to lead that charge.

Lee Summers

Falkland Islands telecoms must continue to progress to a point where they are brought into the modern age, with no restriction on services available. There must be competition and choice, but this must be done in a way which ensures continuity of service for all, resilience, and security.

Before Sure's current exclusive license expires, the Falkland Islands must develop a long-term strategic document to guide and enable us to reach this vision. Without something to aim for, I fear we'll continue to make the same mistakes as we have in the past, and we cannot allow that to happen. The Falkland Islands Government invests in other important national infrastructure that keep us all connected – FIGAS, Concordia Bay, roads – and telecoms should be no exception.

Roger Spink

Telecommunications is one of the key enablers for the Falklands economy it also has the prospect of benefits in education, health, efficiencies in the operation of Government through on line applications and registrations saving staffing time and costs along with other areas of our economy and way of life. We need to learn from the failure to allow self-provision in the last contract and ensure we have sufficient levers in place to make whatever arrangement is put in place that changes in technology can flow through to Falkland consumers.

In 2016 before I was elected I made the point to the select committee that competition was the main thing that had pushed the telecommunications monopoly to improve its service having seen the operation over the last 8 years, I have no reason to change that view in fact it has strengthened my determination that we do not enter into such a restrictive contract in the future.

Cheryl Roberts

I have no knowledge of the technology required for telecommunications. However I would wish to ensure that the SURE monopoly ends in 2027 or as soon as possible after that date as I understand they must be served with a two year notice for termination. If elected, the assembly must make decisions very ensuring that notice is given soonest.

Mark Pollard

My vision is for a competitive telecommunications market where Islanders have real choice and where reliability, affordability, Camp connectivity, resilience, and fairness are the core principles. The ownership of infrastructure matters less to me than ensuring it does not restrict innovation or keep us dependent on a single provider that may not meet modern expectations. LEO satellite systems will be essential in extending coverage and resilience, and they complement, rather than replace, options like subsea cables or terrestrial networks. Faster, more reliable services across internet, mobile, radio, TV services and others are all necessary for a thriving economy and society.

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To achieve this, we must finish the work already underway, involve the whole community, and draw on best practice from other small jurisdictions. I intend to use my 17 years of telecommunications engineering experience to help shape a system that encourages innovation, reduces costs, and keeps the Islands at the forefront of modern connectivity. Collaboration with local technical groups, including the Starlink Petition Group, will remain vital as we transition to a new market structure that finally reflects what people need.

Clovis Kilmartin

Starlink have sim cards in the works. In my view you should be able to pick any telecon provider. Its only going to get better.

Glenn Ross

I am keen to understand what options will soon present themselves. Satellite based phone services. I believe T-Mobile is a partner to Starlink in parts of US.

Stacy Bragger

My vision for telecommunications in the Falkland Islands is a digitally connected Islands where telecoms are no longer a limiting factor for people or businesses resulting in improvements in daily life and enhanced opportunities for economic growth.

The Falklands continuing with a telecommunications statutory monopoly is no longer sustainable and it must end. I would support FIG serving notice to Sure so that the Falklands can begin to move away from the exclusive licensing situation we are in now. After 2027 there should be non-exclusive licensing so that users have a choice and competition can be encouraged. I work towards implementing that.

I would support FIG continuing its current work assessing what future telecommunications models could look like, and I would make it a top priority to advance this work.

Leona Vidal

The Falklands will need an arrangement that provides basic, essential services, while allowing for continued and greater access to high-speed, low-cost internet. Technology is evolving so rapidly, I doubt any of us can be certain what the future will bring, so any new agreement will need to be flexible and adaptive.

I would not support returning to an exclusive arrangement which would see the community, businesses and government unduly restricted.

I don't think it will necessarily be easy - we need to be able to attract new partners and are still limited in our market appeal as a very small nation - the 'Future Telecoms' work that is underway is critical.

Andy Watson

If Sure are still here at the end of the exclusive license, a possible new agreement without exclusivity, but also, communication with other companies to replace, supersede Sure.

Grant Budd

We need to be sure that a new agreement is undertaken and with the new assembly to ascertain that what your group had already raised and brought to the forefront is expedited to whoever is awarded the new licence.

Gavin Short

A process is now underway to try and ascertain what interest there might be from various companies in entering the Telecoms market in the Falklands and also to try and understand what the future may look like. Given our present situation, gauging what the future may look like in the world of telecoms in a few years time can be an imperfect exercise but my vision is for a future whereby we never again allow ourselves to be hog-tied by and to any company and innovation etc be stifled and excessive profits placed before what is fair for the customer. We require a company or JV.

Lewis Clifton

First, it will be necessary to understand what the exclusive licence consists of. FIG have historically shied from indicating.

Peter Biggs

My vision of the future is an organisation that works in collaboration with the Falkland Islands Government (there could be a set profit margin) and which must be fully transparent financially to FIG. I would like freedom of choice for services, protected by law if possible. There should be clear rules for ownership of infrastructure that would evolve to FIG ownership after a set period. These basic conditions could be included in the contractual agreement.

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Jack Ford

Telecommunications in the Falklands post 2027 are likely to look very different. The work on the future telecoms arrangement is ongoing between FIG and its advisors, this work will be key in establishing what the future may look like, how the availability of services and the method of delivery may change, and who may be interesting in providing those services. There will also need to be careful consideration of the needs of consumers to ensure the future model works for the variety of different needs. The future arrangement will also need to be live to technological changes to avoid services stagnating.

Chris Clarke

That no company ever has exclusivity again.

Michael Goss

The simple fact of the matter is that regardless of who runs/takes it on, the infrastructure in place will need to be maintained and continue to operate. If no other company's step forward or if Sure is unwilling to continue to operate then it will have to fall to FIG to 'keep the lights on' to prevent the entire system going off line and endangering the lives of our community. One would would hope that the staff who currently run/maintain the systems and equipment would stay on during the interim period as their knowledge and expertise are invaluable to keeping the systems online. As to the future, its in the eye of the beholder at this point. Sure may continue, they may not, another company might step in, and so forth. However I will state this, Camp needs the services provided and they have to continue to operate.

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2. What is your position on Sure's exclusive telecoms licence after 2027, and opening the telecoms market for more competition (other than Starlink) post 2027?

Gary Webb

As we look beyond 2027, it is clear that exclusive licensing will no longer be part of any new telecommunications contract. This marks a pivotal shift toward a more open, competitive, and consumer-driven market. Every resident must have the freedom to choose the service that best meets their needs, without facing additional costs or restrictions. In a region where connectivity is essential, choice is not a luxury; it's a right.

Lee Summers

Now that Starlink has been granted a license to operate in the Falkland Islands, we have set a precedent. We must focus on identifying how we can deliver the best, innovative services for all Falkland Islands residents, businesses and organisations.

I will not support an extension to Sure's current license, so we must move quickly and strategically to determine what happens next. Full exclusivity cannot play any part in the future of the Falkland Islands' telecommunications.

Roger Spink

We need to consider the results of the report and expressions of interest by Cambridge MC and FIG but an early decision to terminate the existing contract is needed in my view to clear the way for a different approach that will embrace the rapidly changing telecommunications market and keep the Falklands at the forefront of new technologies given our remote location and challenges in providing infrastructure particularly in camp. How that develops depends on what companies have a level of interest in operating in the Falklands and what conditions they would seek to do so.

Cheryl Roberts

The market must permit other telecom companies to register their interest in the Islands. Whilst I appreciate we are a small market we may well be surprised by the interest.

Mark Pollard

The exclusive telecoms licence should end in 2027. It was created with good intentions, but the lack of clear KPIs, service standards, and accountability allowed stagnation and slow innovation. The failure to adapt early, particularly on pricing and bandwidth models, which contributed to the surge toward alternative solutions, costing households and the taxpayer far more than necessary. Ending exclusivity must be paired with a clear, well-designed framework that protects essential services while welcoming responsible competitors besides Starlink.

Competition should be open to all trustworthy providers who can meet strong, simple, enforceable standards. My criticism is directed at the licence structure, not at the hard-working local staff at Sure. The transition already in train must continue with people who understand both the technology and the needs of the country. A competitive environment, properly regulated, is the best way to drive improvement in service quality, pricing, and resilience.

Clovis Kilmartin

Starlink have sim cards in the works. In my view you should be able to pick any telecon provider. Its only going to get better.

Glenn Ross

Inferred I guess is that another contract may be offered. I personally would see that as highly unlikely.

Stacy Bragger

As outlined above, the exclusive telecoms licence cannot continue, and I would support the opening up of the telecoms market. This will require a great deal of work to ensure that the right steps are taken and that no users are left behind. I would prioritise this work.

Leona Vidal

Ideally, we would find a new partner to go forward with. The community's relationship with Sure is poor and confidence is understandably low. I hope that we can attract new players - and that of course was part of the consideration when agreeing the settlement.

You will know far better than I how many other players are coming into the market - Starlink is the one we all talk about, but other offers will be available and we must be in a position where we can exploit opportunities.

We need to keep in mind the locally employed staff at Sure. They have gone through the wringer for the last few years and, from conversations that I have had, many are feeling very worried about their futures.

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Andy Watson

I think it is a must, more interest, more choice, more competition.

Grant Budd

It is very important for all concerned to be looking at other providers in what has become a very competitive market. Competition potentially keeps businesses' operational costs lower due to self-scrutinisation, to provide the best service for what they consider the best price, not the cheapest!

Gavin Short

The exclusive licence is coming to an end and will be (I believe) terminated thus opening up the Falklands to other operators. Quite what the future will look like will, to a point, depend on the interest shown by other companies. My wish is to see any agreement whilst giving some surety to any company entering the Falklands, allow for innovation and self provision.

Lewis Clifton

Both Sure and FIG have consistently failed over the last 3 Assemblies to react timely to changing user demands and the rapid evolution of technology. Wise counselling and decision making required before rushing ahead.

Peter Biggs

I would like to see the continuation of the provision of a telecoms service in the Falklands opened to serious interested companies. Sure should be allowed to bid but should have no preferential treatment. Obviously, there will be complications in connection with ownership of the coms infrastructure that is currently used (and I presume, exclusively owned) by Sure.

Jack Ford

The previous two years, resulting in the expanded availability of services such as Starlink, have shown that the exclusivity model covering all services is likely not the best model for the future. The ongoing work on the future of telecoms will help inform FIG on the level of interest from providers in working with the Falklands. This work will also need to consider how different services will be delivered if it is not to be under a blanket exclusivity arrangement. This will need to consider different ownership models as well as the potential cost implications for consumers and the taxpayer.

Chris Clarke

We should be welcoming competition, more chance if value to consumer.

Michael Goss

I do not feel that exclusive licences or monopolys should play a part in our Islands Future. In order to grow and receive cost effective services we need competition.

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3. What is your view on FIG fully owning the core telecoms infrastructure? Should FIG:

- **own all the passive infrastructure (towers, cables and ducts), with private companies offering retail services?**
- **invest in a telecommunications company that also provides retail and wholesale services?**
- **own Falklands' international connections (satellite or submarine cable)?**

Gary Webb

I am not against any of the above scenarios, nor am I against should a suitable supplier not be found that Government takes over the whole operation (Worse Case Scenario). However, I am sure a suitable supplier can be found offering a service and package that will suit our needs and that is what we should be aiming for.

Lee Summers

I would support investigating all of the options suggested by the Starlink Petition Group. The Falkland Islands Government has shown that it can deliver nationalised services efficiently and cost-effectively. We only need to look at the teams running our power grid, water supply, quarry, and FIGAS (amongst others) to see – even if some of the infrastructure needs serious investment – we can run efficient and stable services with local expertise.

Whether FIG owns and operates telecoms fully, establishes public-private partnerships, or something altogether more radical cannot and should not be excluded from consideration at any stage. The most important thing is that, whatever options we decide upon, we embed security, resilience and continuity in our national communications networks.

Roger Spink

All of the above should be considered alongside the possibility of a Stanley Services Ltd/SAAS type of JV company what route to take depends on what proposals are forthcoming from interested parties and which option will give us the maximum ability to adopt technologies that are rapidly developing in this area. As stated above we should at all costs avoid a situation that holds back our ability to take on new improved technology.

Cheryl Roberts

- **own all the passive infrastructure (towers, cables and ducts), with private companies offering retail services?**
Given that FIG have paid for the infrastructure which is currently run by SURE. New Assembly would need to look at best use of these assets and determine whether or not they should or could be run by private companies. FIG probably do not have the expertise to do so and it would only add more onto the civil service salaries if they were to run the current infrastructure.
- **invest in a telecommunications company that also provides retail and wholesale services?**
FIG should leave this for the private sector
- **own Falklands' international connections (satellite or submarine cable)?**
Probably not something for FIG to own, again it would require more salaried staff if that was to be carried. Private sector will no doubt have the expertise in these matters and if they don't they will quickly find it.

Mark Pollard

I am open to FIG owning parts of the core infrastructure where public ownership clearly benefits the community, such as cable landing points, essential fibre or copper networks, or certain towers. These assets are often natural monopolies, and FIG ownership could help ensure fair access for all providers. However, we must fully understand the advantages and disadvantages, which is why completing the next phase of telecoms work is critical before making firm decisions.

My preference is for private companies to run services, but if competition proves impossible in certain areas, public or mixed ownership may be justified. FIG may also need to own or co-own any future international connection, whether a subsea cable or satellite gateway, to protect national resilience. I remain open-minded, favouring a regulated free-market model where ownership supports performance instead of hindering it.

Clovis Kilmartin

Yeah, I like number one, Simon. Basically, FIG owns the core infrastructure to keep it fair and public, and private companies still get to offer the services on top, so you get a bit of competition and innovation too. If I have understood that correctly.

Glenn Ross

I seem to recall most of the infrastructure capital came from FIG, I may be wrong but think the Camp system was as it had no commercial viability. I think there are sadly some public services that would now be better off privatised.

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Stacy Bragger

The concept of FIG owning the core telecoms infrastructure appeals to me a huge amount and I would be supportive of this. However, taking this forward at this stage is likely to be unrealistic given the limitations of funds for FIG for the next few years so may wait have to wait until a future point where this is financially possible. I think there will be a number of different models for future telecoms in the Islands that should be considered by the next Assembly to ensure the right next steps are taken.

Leona Vidal

I don't have a fixed view on this. There is appeal in FIG owning the infrastructure, but finance will be a critical consideration, and all the implications of that sort of arrangement need to be fully understood. I currently don't know all the pros and cons, the financial and practical implications, or what it would take to maintain and deliver to the standard required. Sorry - sounds like a bit of a cop-out, but I genuinely don't have the knowledge to give a settled position.

Andy Watson

I see three options:

- FIG own everything
- FIG have an interest in part ownership.
- FIG has no part, and it is completely run by a private company.

Grant Budd

If the agreement was undertaken correctly and exhausted at every possible angle (with the knowledge and help of experts), the provider to deliver a contract that is suited and tailored to our needs and requirements. Protecting the service and pricing but being able to exit under a shorter contract is the safest option.

Therefore, I would like to see (invest in a telecommunications company that also provides retail and wholesale services). Reason being at this current time and for the foreseeable future we are not going to have the money and possibly the resources. FIG's pay structure is not good for skilled staff and could expose a floor in employment where positions are not filled and is a huge risk. You just must look at the Power Station that is not attracting electricians due to poor salary and then creates a serious risk when it comes to maintenance and services.

Gavin Short

- **own all the passive infrastructure (towers, cables and ducts), with private companies offering retail services**

I am not averse to this but would not be opposed in principle to a Stanley Services type setup which would allow control of profit margins etc whilst blending in the innovation that one would hope that a private company would bring. My nervousness regarding FIG owning infrastructure is that it could become somewhat ponderous as all Government processes and policies etc would come into play and slow down or stop the required speedy and flexible decision making that could be achieved with a JV.

- **invest in a telecommunications company that also provides retail and wholesale services?**

Retail to me is a vital part of any telecoms setup for the consumer and its one of the few arms of the present providers setup that doesn't (as far as I am aware) attract criticism.

- **own Falklands' international connections (satellite or submarine cable)?**

Probably answered above.

Lewis Clifton

FIG seriously missed the Peraton offer. Appalling. But, other events may now have overtaken that opportunity.

Peter Biggs

- **own all the passive infrastructure (towers, cables, and ducts), with private companies offering retail services?**

I would like to see this option explored, but presently I feel I do not know enough to give an informed opinion. It seems sensible to involve private companies, but we must be wary of the monopoly pitfall.

- **invest in a telecommunications company that also provides retail and wholesale services?**

As above – Unfortunately, it seems that nobody, other than Sure, has the data to inform a debate of the best way forward.

- **own Falklands' international connections (satellite or submarine cable)?**

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I prefer the option of ownership by FI, but is it possible for small organisations to own satellite connections? The FIG will not be in a position to own a submarine cable system for some time, if ever, due to cost. Again I feel unable to make an informed choice here, other than to admit I am biased towards FIG having ownership where possible, except for circumstances where there is a clear mathematical case for lease or rental or contracting services.

Jack Ford

The level of FIG involvement will depend on a number of factors, the level of interest from external providers, the technology involved, and the cost. This will all influence whether there is direct FIG involvement or indirect through subsidy. The future telecoms work will help inform this, but until then it is difficult to give a clear view on which may be most appropriate.

Chris Clarke

I don't know how much money FIG has paid out since cable and wireless started many years ago other than the 8mil for sure that I've heard of, so FIG should have a claim to owning a lot of the infrastructure already surely.

Michael Goss

I do not feel that FIG should own the Telecoms in the Islands. As I said in question one, if they need to step in to keep the system running if Sure pull out and no suitable company comes forward, it is vital that the services provided by Sure are kept running and that we do not have a company's worth of highly skilled workers made redundant. However this must only be a temporary measure. We will need another company to take on the responsibility as quite frankly I do not see FIG being able to afford to keep it going for a sustained period of time.

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4. When budgets are constrained in the coming years, how should telecommunications investment be prioritised relative to other major projects? Are you able to rank your preferred budget priorities?

Gary Webb

Telecommunications are fundamental to modern life and quality of life. As we have seen as a Front-Page Headline on 31st October, Major Projects over the next five years have placed immense pressure on resources, logistics and governance. The lack of staggered planning has led to a bottleneck, making prioritization and execution more difficult with everything coming to fruition at once, as a result this plays a detrimental role in ranking.

The Falkland Islands Government has officially signed contracts for the new Port facility, making it the first of three major infrastructure priorities. Next in line is the Power Station followed by Telecommunications upgrades, both critical to national resilience and development.

Lee Summers

The next few years will be a critical time in the Falkland Islands, with several essential once-in-a-generation national infrastructure projects coming to completion. Telecoms is part of that essential infrastructure that underpins modern life, and when Sure's current license expires, we must be ready to ensure continuity of service.

We need all of these critical pieces of national infrastructure in place for our nation to thrive, and whoever is elected must ensure they are all delivered.

It should be noted that, historically, we have also struggled to utilise our planned capital expenditure within the expected timelines. If we can learn anything from the past, it is that budgets may not be quite as constrained as some would have you believe.

Roger Spink

The last assembly prioritised Oil Development and Telecommunications over all other areas. Hence I see no reason given its importance to every individual's lives why Telecommunications should not continue to be prioritised.

Cheryl Roberts

Telecommunications is obviously a necessity for all in our community and would need to be prioritised. I have no comment on how budgets should be prioritised until I am able to sight all the necessary information for each. There is already commitment to 3 large capital projects.

Mark Pollard

Telecommunications is essential infrastructure and must be treated as such, alongside health, education, housing, energy, and transport. I do not believe in austerity; shrinking public investment would shrink the economy and undermine essential services. Telecoms improvements can actually reduce costs elsewhere through telemedicine, virtual learning, efficient government services, and better support for Camp communities. Reliable connectivity is also a safety issue, for example, an excellent health service means little if people cannot call for help.

Because major sectors are interconnected, I do not believe in ranking them in a simple list. Government must progress several priorities at once, focusing within each sector on the most critical elements first. My immediate priorities are clear: improving housing delivery, protecting people from cost-of-living pressures, and moving essential infrastructure such as telecoms forward in a planned and community-focused way. Connectivity underpins economic diversification and future growth.

Clovis Kilmartin

I'm big advocate for telecom investment and I think it should be right up there with the big core projects.

Glenn Ross

Rather boring I guess but my top three priorities are Potable Water, Power and Food security. Followed by Health and education and Comms falls into a next grouping but is essential now. Tarmac is a long way down the road....I will see myself out.

Stacy Bragger

The amount of available funding that the next Assembly will have outside of the already committed capital projects will be constrained as the question highlights but telecommunications investment would feature highly on my list of priorities for funding.

Leona Vidal

Telecoms are critical infrastructure - an essential need for any country to operate successfully, never mind grow and develop. Ensuring service provision will always have to be a priority. Realistically, though, there are many other key pieces which also must be delivered.

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Power is probably top of my list of priorities - without electricity, everything else falls away and we are quickly in real trouble. I've been exasperated to hear talk to delaying the power station - that is tantamount to suicide for the country.

We are already committed to delivering the port and that also must not be derailed. Sea Lion has also been at the top of the list and will occupy a huge amount of officer time yet.

Telecoms is right about here for me. That's not to say it is more or less important than the others, but the project can and should run concurrently.

There are many other priorities - some capital, some policy, legal and societal - and the reality is that they all need attention. It would be lovely to do one thing at a time, but then we would never, ever make progress.

Andy Watson

This will all depend on what the new MLAs find in the pot when they are elected.

Grant Budd

This industry and service is vital for connectivity in general and will require continued investment for improvements and ongoing maintenance which is essential if the services provided are effective.

1. Housing
2. Capital Projects
3. Current & Future Projected Economy
4. Telecoms (Starlink had enabled a breather)

Gavin Short

Telecoms ranks high but you are right, cash is going to be tight which is why it may make more sense to have a JV setup.

Lewis Clifton

Budgets will be constrained; outgoing Assembly actions shows reserves to meet "current" recurrent expenditure are projected to fall to 1.2 x reserves. Policy requires 1.5 which is far too low and not reflective of unforeseen risk. Arresting unsustainable expenditure (capital and recurrent) is vital to ensuring island-wide life essential services are not impacted.

Peter Biggs

A very difficult question, but there are some obvious priorities:

- a. Managing funds to ensure the timely and complete discharge of FIG debt, according to the debt schedule.
- b. Ensuring FIG has a balanced annual budget.
- c. Ensuring that FIG continues to provide the basic services.
- d. Ensuring the timely and cost-effective delivery of the current capital expenditure projects.
- e. 2027 and onwards telecoms solution.

As you will see, for completeness I had to list current budget commitments, but next in my priorities is the future telecoms solution.

Jack Ford

Telecommunications form part of the critical national infrastructure network, and as such will carry a high priority when it comes to investment. However, as funds become more restricted it will be important to balance the costs an importance of telecoms investment against that of other infrastructure needs to ensure best use of the available funds.

Chris Clarke

Comms go below housing and cost of living if a choice has to be made but funds have to be made for all, there will be a drawdown regardless because FIG operating costs are so high but the renewables spending should be suspended.

Michael Goss

Money is going to be incredibly tight in the coming years and priorities must be decided accordingly. I do not have the relevant information on the budgeting so I honestly do not know. My main drive will be in stabilising our economy and ensuring that we have the capital to support the country into the years to come.

How will you ensure that public opinions about telecommunications are fully taken into account when government decisions about telecommunications are being made?

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Listen to the people. Public consultation must be sought to gauge the direction of any discussions on this and many other topics. Any candidate who is elected in has a responsibility to the people who they represent first and foremost.

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5. How will you ensure that public opinions about telecommunications are fully taken into account when government decisions about telecommunications are being made?

Gary Webb

The Public/Community must play a part in the future decision to be made, the next contract to be signed affects everyone. MLA's are there to make the difficult decisions when needed, but involving everyone as a collective gives a sense of ownership.

Lee Summers

Consultation with the public should be at the core of all decision-making. A select committee provided opportunities to present evidence and for decision-making to be scrutinised during the last round of telecoms licencing. I'd support a similar approach again.

Roger Spink

So far as is possible public presentations on the options being considered should be made, The telecoms group should be informed and be given the opportunity along with other groups to provide feedback and criticism. Having been on the other side in 2016 when our concerns were not acted on I can see the importance of careful consideration and listening and acting on informed opinions in the decision making process.

Cheryl Roberts

There certainly has to be transparency and wherever possible, the public should be aware of how decisions are made.

Mark Pollard

Public engagement on telecoms must be far better than it has been. If the system had worked perfectly, we would not have seen a petition of this scale.

Good engagement means involving people early using tools such as consultations, clear information, workshops in Stanley and Camp, and regular updates. Government must also work with community groups and local technical experts, including strengthening the Technology Development Group (TDG). Partnerships with groups like the Starlink Petition Group show the value of informed community involvement. Transparency builds trust, and ensuring people's voices are genuinely heard leads to better, more sustainable decisions. No one has a monopoly on ideas.

Clovis Kilmartin

Just be open and transparent.

Glenn Ross

It would be impossible to govern by referendum and this is why everyone when voting might best choose someone who you believe will make the choices you would have.

Stacy Bragger

It will be the responsibility of the next Assembly to make sure that the public are informed of the process that will be taking place to address telecommunications and the arrangements for after the current licences finishes. There should be opportunities for formal consultations, but the Assembly should be able to provide updates throughout the process. An independent telecommunications advocacy group will no doubt keep a focus on the work, and this will provide a forum for engagement between FIG and the public. FIG should welcome views and challenge on the subject.

Leona Vidal

There will need to be a great deal of discussion and debate on future arrangements. I would assume formal public consultation and also involvement with your group as a public advocacy body. It can be challenging when people have differing views or think that everything is very simple (in my experience, that is very rarely the case!) - so two-way information exchange will be important.

Andy Watson

It is clear that not all the public are interested in Starlink or higher internet speeds, as such, in order to meet everyone's needs, there must be choice.

Grant Budd

I believe in the best interests for all, that a Telecommunications Services Group is implemented to work within the community, to feed information via the Chamber of Commerce. Where FIG can take the issues onboard and converse thereafter to have the better understanding of the community and what needs to be addressed.

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Gavin Short

I believe that the forthcoming report (or at the very least the options and possibilities) will be/must be publicly debated.

Lewis Clifton

Better transparency than has hitherto existed and certainly better transparency than was made available to Technology Development Group members representing cross-sectoral business and rural interests, when first established and since. Mega faults on both sides of the table.

Peter Biggs

There must be a system of transparency and consultation, while respecting commercial confidentiality.

Jack Ford

Public opinion will be a very important part of future telecoms decision making.

Chris Clarke

Listen to the people, listen to the people with the expertise and make an informed decision.

Michael Goss

Listen to the people. Public consultation must be sought to gauge the direction of any discussions on this and many other topics. Any candidate who is elected in has a responsibility to the people who they represent first and foremost.

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6. What will you do to ensure that everyone in the Falklands – including older people, students, and those in Camp – can benefit from digital services?

Gary Webb

It is about Affordability to ensure that everyone can benefit.

Lee Summers

The next Assembly must ensure that Digital Inclusion is a cornerstone of our national strategy, and we must all ensure nobody is left behind. This doesn't just mean investing in infrastructure; we must also have social initiatives and support networks in place to help people stay connected and learn how to use new technologies effectively.

Beyond that, I'm eager to understand, in particular, how new communication technologies can help improve camp education and open up options for remote medical assessments. Part of any strategy should ensure that all benefits are thoroughly explored.

Roger Spink

This needs to be one of the important criteria for selecting the right option for the future.

Cheryl Roberts

This technology is beyond my knowledge but will be keen to work with those that do understand to ensure all can benefit from digital services.

Mark Pollard

Digital access is essential infrastructure, and everyone (such as older residents, students, families, and Camp communities) must be able to benefit. Barriers such as cost, patchy coverage, limited mobile broadband, lack of confidence with digital tools, and cyber crime all need addressing. A Universal Service Obligation will likely be required in future, delivered by government and regulated independently or through a strengthened community telecoms champion. This provides clarity and protection for every household.

Where the private sector cannot deliver a reasonable level of service at a fair cost, FIG must support access, just as it does for radio and TV. Digital literacy and support for older people, affordable home connectivity for students, and fair access for Camp residents are essential. LEO satellite services will help level the playing field, but they must form part of a broader strategy focused on safety, resilience, and community inclusion. I have always fought for universal service and will continue to do so.

Clovis Kilmartin

I would make sure the information is out there, and be transparent. Government and private sector could help with this.

Glenn Ross

I think we saw in the UK an internet poverty issue during the pandemic. Digital services are becoming ever more important, life changing even and from FIG revenues from license payers, I'd be happy to see some of that go to provide for those who genuinely can't afford it.

Stacy Bragger

Ensuring that no-one is left behind with the arrangements after the conclusion of the current licence will be a key element of the work that FIG will need to do. There will be many opportunities to improve how people make use of the internet and it will be important that this is embraced across all of FIG to look at what innovations can be provided in the delivery of their services.

Leona Vidal

The first step was, obviously, breaking the monopoly (I'm still not sure that everyone realises quite what a step and how much work that was! :D) - but now we need to really make use of these opportunities.

The FIG support scheme is one step for those who might struggle with affordability and I was pleased to support that.

Education are looking at remote teaching opportunities and I think the hospital should be exploring telemedicine. There must also be more options for remote working and new business opportunities, but I don't think that this is being widely considered yet.

In my manifesto I included a line about this - I think that the Technology Working Group should be reshaped to put more of a focus on driving innovation, exploring opportunities and how to access them - I would be very keen to discuss this with your group. Breaking the Sure agreement came at significant cost - in time, money and effort - the benefits MUST be more than just online gaming or better streaming (that's simplistic, just to the make the point!), and I'm absolutely convinced it can be; but I think we need to be taking a courageous and imaginative look at what might be possible.

Connected Falklands Group, MLA Candidate Telecommunication Questions

Andy Watson

Any new contract with an existing or new company must take this into consideration.

Grant Budd

To ascertain that ALL that can be done is being done but most importantly “achieved” and placed at the forefront as there was a lot that was just not being done, let alone discussed. Continued faults were not being addressed, dealt with and rectified complete, but a constant problem of operation.

Gavin Short

You identify three important sectors. At the moment we are in a state of some flux and this is going to continue. FIG have put in place a scheme to assist those who are going to get caught with new package and line rental increases etc. Its not perfect and I fear it will not catch everyone and there is a danger of a digital divide starting to appear. As technology develops we may have direct access to mobiles from satellites which will be a game changer for rural customers as to be fair to the present provider, the rural system and backbone is expensive. The short answer though is that whatever replaces what we have must have the elements that you mention addressed.

Lewis Clifton

Its not just a matter of digital services; any telecoms services needs to reflect on basic routing, reliability, resilience and “island-wide” assurances. Consideration of H&S risking of remote rural communities is not understood by FIG, not the current telecoms provider. Much change needed.

Peter Biggs

It is the duty of MLAs to ensure that whatever system is chosen for the future, it must include at least one cheap and simple solution – this should be included in the contractual terms.

Jack Ford

A mindset of continuous improvement and maximising benefits for all in our community accorss the Falklands will be an important part of ensuring this happens in the future.

Chris Clarke

Seek the advise from those who know the best way to provide and try to facilitate.

Michael Goss

I do not understand the question. If it is based on services to be provided, then everyone in the community should be able to benefit. Not just a small percentage of the community.

* * *

7. How would you ensure that any future telecommunications provider is transparent, offers good value for money, and is held accountable to its customers?

Gary Webb

This is one for select Committees to take the New Provider to task each year, on performance and value for Money. Any New Contract should highlight as to what is demanded / required.

Lee Summers

This all comes down to the regulatory regime. The regime we have at present was shaped around the old exclusive service model and must be refreshed alongside whatever changes are to come after 2027. Regulation should be a scaffolding around a system, to support it, rather than a mould to which a system is shaped. Whatever system we implement must still be independent, with controls setting out what information must be shared and made public, including KPIs that can be independently assessed. Package flexibility and competition will be key to ensuring value for money.

Local shareholding in companies always adds to accountability, particularly in the Falkland Islands, so, aside from the regulatory system, we must also encourage local involvement in whatever comes next.

Roger Spink

I have grave concerns about the effectiveness of regulation alone in policing this area. I have always believed having a Government involvement in the future provision and allowing a level of competition via self provision is a more effective tool in ensuring accountability, service and value for money.

Cheryl Roberts

Ensuring that decision made by the assembly are transparent and relayed to the public.

Mark Pollard

Future providers must operate under a strengthened, simplified, and enforceable regulatory framework. The independent regulator already exists, but its mandate must be clearer and more robust. Providers should be required to meet defined service standards, with clear KPIs for availability, outage response, customer service, and billing accuracy. The simpler the rules, the easier they are to enforce. Complaints should follow a clear escalation path monitored by the regulator so that customers know exactly where to turn.

Transparency should increase when competition is limited or public money is involved, for example through publishing performance metrics or service data. At the same time, regulation must be balanced, firm enough to protect customers and ensure value for money, but flexible enough to encourage innovation and new market entrants. With the right oversight, we can create a telecoms environment that is more responsive, fair, and community-focused while protecting the interests of Stanley and Camp alike.

Clovis Kilmartin

This is a (Milton Friedman) approach... by having an open and free market, competition ensures that the best ideas and companies naturally win. That way, providers have to be transparent and offer good value to succeed, so the market itself keeps them accountable.

Glenn Ross

Not a huge fan on transparency. I think every Government, every business, every family needs to conduct some of its function in private. Value for money will be now automatic as options will exist. Customers are seldom right but in Starlink they were, so well done.

Stacy Bragger

The regulatory regime will need to be strengthened and I will support this.

Leona Vidal

Even in my first term I was arguing that the Telecoms Regulator post was not properly established or equipped with the powers it really needed - that wasn't widely supported, but I still think it needs to be addressed.

The existing KPIs are poor and limited - should be strengthened and more meaningful penalties built into the system for under-performance.

Although there are likely to be commercial-in-confidence issues, any new provider should be required to be more open in its accounting. The VFM question will be one of the key considerations in any contract, and new arrangement should allow for ongoing, regular scrutiny by the Regulator, reporting to FIG and the public.

Connected Falklands Group, MLA Candidate Telecommunication Questions

Andy Watson

FIG should have a regulator in place.

Grant Budd

When FIG are financially supporting a service and an important one as this that is using a large part of public money, that if they do not deliver on the service and in the "reasonable" allotted time to undertake installs, repairs, that refunds need to be issued. It would also be good to have a monthly graph/table showing customer service satisfaction.

Gavin Short

A JV would help in this matter and there must be a way built into any contract that allows customer experience to be measured at the owners premises. Like the Stanley Services JV, a formula could be put in place to stop over-zealous profit taking from the consumer.

Lewis Clifton

Better than existing to date, but clearly contractual arrangements much have confidentiality. The absence of a telecomms regulator or a person competent to be a regulator has been sadly and expensively lacking as far as customers are concerned.

Peter Biggs

I think we must never get into a situation where a monopoly exists, and we do not have the right to have full access to their accounts. Future contracts should have a collaborative approach and built in transparency. Perhaps there should be a member of FIG on the board.

Jack Ford

The contracting of future providers will be key to ensure these issues are properly addressed in future.

Chris Clarke

Fund a comms regulator independent of FIG OR AS YOUR SUGGESTING.

Michael Goss

There is no straight forward answer to this question. Ultimately who ever takes on the responsibility of ensuring that this vital service continues in the Islands will know about the current situation with Sure. We have established a president for a more transparent approach, perhaps more can be done to open that up, however I do not know how that would look at this time.

* * *

8. What do you see as the benefits of an independent telecommunications advocacy group representing Falkland Islanders as a follow-on initiative to the Starlink Petition Group?

Gary Webb

The Starlink Petition Group seems to have demonstrated how focused, collective advocacy can drive tangible outcomes especially when individual voices alone struggle to gain traction. Having a group not only amplifies public sentiment but also provides a structured way to engage with decision-makers. Having Community Representation ensures that the needs and frustrations of telecom users are heard and addressed. MLAs play a vital role, but they can't be expected to master every technical domain. A dedicated group could offer - informed insights and recommendations, monitor service standards, pricing, and infrastructure development, keeping both providers and policymakers accountable.

Lee Summers

An impartial, independent advocacy group, which represents the whole range of views from across the Falkland Islands, would be of great value to the community. Such a group would be incredibly useful in helping to consolidate public views, particularly over the next 24 months. On the other hand, selective representation can undermine any advocacy group's influence on decision-makers, and it is important not to accidentally fall into that trap. The Starlink Petition Group has done a tremendous job to represent the needs of the public so far, and in a way that is encouraging, supportive, and data-led. Whatever comes next for the Group, I would like to offer my thanks for all your hard work and continued support to bring tangible improvements for our community.

Roger Spink

The Starlink Petition Group was extremely effective in presenting a professional and considered case for self provision. I would welcome the input from an independent advocacy group in keeping MLAs informed of their views on the Government's proposals for the future. That input, before final decisions are made, given their expertise in such matters, will be critical in making sure robust decisions are made for the future.

Cheryl Roberts

This would be very beneficial and crucial to ensure such a group is set up. It must not be FIG heavy and always include those from the private sector with telecommunications knowledge are included.

Mark Pollard

There is value in exploring a community-based advocacy or advisory group to follow on from the Starlink Petition Group. Whether it becomes a body similar to the Chamber of Commerce, FIFCA, the RBA, FITA, or the GEU, or emerges as an evolution of the Technology Development Group, is something that should be openly discussed. Such a group could represent user experience, provide technical insight, and help shape the telecoms agenda in a transparent and constructive way.

Any group should be primarily advisory, with regulatory oversight remaining the responsibility of an empowered regulator. Government should always welcome community ideas and work with people who care deeply about improving services. For too long, government has been slow to embrace technological innovation. A strong community voice could help drive progress, support trials of new ideas, and ensure that the future of telecoms reflects the needs and creativity of all Falkland Islanders.

Clovis Kilmartin

Yes, it's a great idea. We need it. The Free Starlink people have done a great job already. The councilors only jumped on when there was momentum and mini movement was happening. They said nothing for a good year while you guys were out there Campaigning.

Glenn Ross

We would not be in the position we are today without the SPG. As long as it is coming from an informative and collegiate angle, it can only be good. If it's a whinge fest then not so good.

Stacy Bragger

The benefits of having an independent advocacy group have been demonstrated by the journey that has been taken in the legal provision of Starlink in the Islands that is a result of the work of the Starlink Petition Group. It shows that people can make change happen. I feel it would be beneficial for an independent telecommunications advocacy group to keep the spotlight on the issue to ensure that the pressure for further improvements continues.

Leona Vidal

There is real value in this group - not just to the community, but government too. It's useful to have a group sharing information and gathering public views which can be fed back to the Assembly and FIG.

Connected Falklands Group, MLA Candidate Telecommunication Questions

All I would ask - and this is a personal plea, whether or not I am in the next Assembly - please can this relationship be developed on the basis of partnership rather than as adversaries.

There are many in the community who are all too keen to believe that MLAs/FIG are out to get them, or are being deliberately difficult/uncaring/stupid or even corrupt. I don't believe that is ever the case... Most people go into the role of MLA as a servant of the community and want to do the best they can for the whole country; senior FIG officers work hard and do their best to deliver, within their capacity and the law or regulations that govern them.

I appreciate that you are very aware of the way some people can behave when it comes to government officers or MLAs - it can be hugely unpleasant, exhausting and depressing, and can be deeply distressing and hurtful for the families of the individuals who are being abused. I think that sometimes people forget that officials are just human and part of the community too...

This group could provide a really important two-way conduit for ideas, for discussion of issues etc. and can help ensure it is a productive relationship. I really hope that can happen.

Andy Watson

Unsure at present.

Grant Budd

The benefits to have made changes as per the (SPG) in such short time was not a bad thing but obviously should not have to be implemented if others are delivering accordingly. I totally support this because look at what has been achieved and what was once a hot topic, is not as heated, people have got what they wanted. Yes, at some cost but you do not gain something for nothing, especially when adjusting an exclusive agreement. I do think it is very important to continue, even if under a different name but to keep those on their toes when using taxpayers' money is not a bad thing.

Gavin Short

It's vital. The group have proved themselves to be worth their weight in gold by being able to advocate for change in a clear, concise and fair way. The group is also able to conduct surveys etc without being encumbered by any Government baggage.

Lewis Clifton

Some merit in this. The other option would be to formally establish a Telecomms Advisory Committee to Executive Council. Would replace the TDG and have better teeth, perhaps.

Peter Biggs

I would strongly support the creation and involvement of such a group.

Jack Ford

I believe there is benefit in such a group continuing to represent the telecoms related views of the community going forward, in the same way that there are already a number of other industry representative bodies in the Falklands.

Chris Clarke

Will it work any better than independent regulator?, you tell us.

Michael Goss

I feel that if this was to go ahead it would have to have justification. The Petition is over, the results are in and implemented. What would this group aim to achieve in the following days?

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