

Reconvictions and the annual cost of running IOM Prison



£millions of taxpayers' money down the drain?

We recently submitted two Freedom of Information requests to the Department of Home Affairs in relation to the cost of running IOM Prison and the offender reconviction rate.

By a response dated 20th July 2023, the Department confirmed that the total overall expenditure of running Jurby Prison in the single year 2022 was an eye watering **£7,448,747.00**.

The cost per prisoner during 2022 was a huge *£80,094.50 per year* (or *£1,540.27 per week*).

In contrast, according to the UK Ministry of Justice the cost per prisoner in England and Wales during 2022 was a much lower figure of *£47,434.00 per year*.

Is £7.5 million per annum a good use of Manx taxpayers' money? Or could some of that money be spent in a more enlightened way?

It appears that the bigger the Police Force, the more Judges there are appointed and the larger the Prison capacity, the more people are convicted and sent to Prison. In effect an increasing Prison population becomes a self-justifying and self-fulfilling prophecy.

Our follow up Freedom of Information request asked for details in respect of reconviction rates. In a response dated 31st July 2023, the Department confirmed that in 2022 there were 113 receptions at Isle of Man Prison.

Of these, 71 persons had previous criminal convictions (**62%**).

Concerningly, 40 of the 113 receptions had previously served a custodial sentence (**35%**).

By way of contrast, UK Ministry of Justice data shows the reoffending rate of those released from custody in England and Wales in 2021 was a much lower 24.3%.

Perhaps it is time for a more radical approach to criminal justice and sentencing on the Island?

How about actually *reducing* the number of Police Officers and Prison Officers by say 10% and spending that money on rehabilitation programmes?

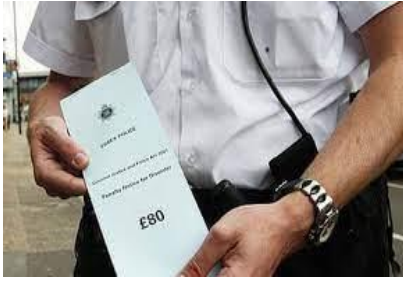
By focusing on rehabilitation such as providing decent accommodation for released prisoners, access to training and apprenticeships, guaranteed job placements or educational courses, much improved mental health support and more accessible drug and alcohol addiction detox and professional support services, the risk of re-offending should significantly reduce.

In other words, spending money on positively tackling the root causes of offending so as to break the *cycle of recidivism*.

By way of example, Norway has one of the lowest re-offending rates in the world because of its emphasis on reintegration and helping prisoners succeed after release.

Scandinavian countries generally have a low number of prisoners per head of population (approximately 75 prisoners per 100,000 people) whereas other countries like the USA (700 prisoners per 100,000 people) have a very high number. There are a staggering 1.7 million prisoners currently incarcerated in USA (State, Federal and local prisons).

Perhaps the IOM Government should also be more progressive in relation to diversionary disposals to criminal conduct. This could include a greater use of warnings and cautions, expanding the scope of "on the spot" fines, increasing the use of Community Service and Probation and also maybe introducing home or Weekend curfews as well as electronic tagging as sentencing options. All of this would considerably reduce the number of men, women and children sent to custody. These sort of options are discussed in the European context by the *European Prison Observatory* (see below).



Pay a fine at the scene and avoid having to go to Court.



Community Service work constitutes restitution to society.



Electronic tagging can be used to monitor offenders' home curfews.

We are currently caught up in a negative cycle of more laws, more Police officers and more Prison sentences, all of which costs more taxpayers' money.

Surely it is time to recognise that this retributive and reactionary criminal justice model is broken.

See hyperlinks below for the Department's FOI replies.

<https://www.ik.im/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/22.07.23-Annual-cost-of-running-IOM-Prison.pdf>

<https://www.ik.im/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/31.07.23-Rate-of-offender-reconviction.pdf>

See also hyperlink to European Prison Observatory document entitled, "*Alternatives to imprisonment in Europe: a handbook of good practice*".

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320124686> Alternatives to imprisonment in Europe a handbook of good practice