

£700,000 spent on IOM Lieutenant Governor in 2023



Government House, Onchan – The opulent Home of Rest for Retired British Generals.

We recently submitted a Freedom of Information request to the Cabinet Office in respect of the financial costs of the Isle of Man Lieutenant Governor.

The Lieutenant Governor is His Majesty the King's personal representative on the Island and is appointed by the King, who is Head of State of the Isle of Man. The warrant of appointment includes a specific requirement to promote the Royal Family.

This unelected position of Isle of Man Lieutenant Governor dates back to around 1773 and is typically given to a retired and often elderly British Army General or Royal Navy Admiral.

On his appointment for the next five years on 29th September 2021, the current Lieutenant Governor, Sir John Lorimer, received a handsome annual salary of **£108,208** (on top of his Armed Forces pension). Significantly, the salary for this plum job is paid for in full by the Manx taxpayer.

Remarkably, this remuneration is completely **tax-free.**

In addition, the Lieutenant Governor resides entirely **rent free** at the grand 5 bedroom Government House, Onchan and receives the complimentary services of eight full time staff including cook, chauffeur and even a butler. No doubt it is the Island's delightful climate rather than these financial perks which attract applicants for the position.

However, the Isle of Man has its own Parliament, *Tynwald*, with members of the *House of Keys* democratically elected every 5 years. In such circumstances, some people are asking why is an essentially ceremonial Lieutenant Governor necessary at all. Others are reasonably querying why the Manx taxpayer has to subsidise the personal representative of the King. And others even argue that the Island has sufficiently evolved politically so as not to need the King (or anyone else) as Head of State.

By a Freedom of Information reply to us dated 28th August 2024, the Cabinet Office disclosed somewhat alarming financial information including the following:-

- i) The overall financial cost to the Manx taxpayer of the Lieutenant Governor in the single year 2023 was **£698,543.77**.
- ii) The gardening contract at Government House, Onchan in 2023 cost **£97,491.00**.
- iii) The building maintenance of 200 year old Government House in 2023 cost **£59,251.40**.

Since this information was publicised, numerous residents have contacted us to express shock and real anger that a staggering £700,000 of Manx taxpayers' money was spent on the Lieutenant Governor last year.

The Governor's PR team responded to this publicity by hastily issuing a rather desperate and self-serving statement on 29th August 2024, which claimed amongst other things that the position of Lieutenant Governor helps boosts tourism. Undoubtedly, some loyalists will agree with this and praise Sir John Lorimer for his efforts in the community. But this misses the point.

Because no matter how many village fêtes the Lieutenant Governor opens, no matter how many afternoon tea parties he hosts, no matter how many honours he presents and no matter how many charities he is patron of, the fundamental concern about the legitimacy, necessity and funding of his role will remain.

The truth is that the position of the Lieutenant Governor is anachronistic, democratically illegitimate and constitutionally objectionable. In other words, the whole institutional edifice is built on dubious foundations.

Given that *Ellan Vannin* is a nation with an elected and fully functioning government, the very title, "Governor" is a laughable misnomer.

The blunt reality is that the only thing any Lieutenant Governor actually governs here is his vegetable plot in the manicured grounds of Government House.



Not just one Swan's feather in my cap!

For many people, whilst there is no personal criticism of any particular incumbent, the role of Lieutenant Governor is nothing less than a repugnant colonial hangover and parasitic burden on the Manx taxpayer.

Why should Manx men and women continually pick up the tab for a representative of the Royal Family to live in the lap of luxury at Government House, waited on hand and foot with maybe Dubonnet cocktails and caviar canapés served *Upstairs* on a silver tray by a *Downstairs* butler and be chauffeured around the Island in a black limousine (complete, of course, with the highly sought after personalised number plate *MAN 1*)?

The **Home of Rest for Old Horses** on Richmond Hill, Santon provides a tranquil sanctuary for elderly steeds. No doubt these retired Douglas Tram horses thoroughly deserve pampering in a comfortable home in the countryside being hand fed apples and carrots.

But quite frankly, does the Lieutenant Governor similarly deserve to be leading the *Life of Riley* at our public expense?

If successive Lieutenant Governors really need a *Jeeves*, shouldn't they jolly well pay for one privately themselves?

To many ordinary folk, the moment has come to make politically extinct this 250 year old line of peacocks and sweep away one of the final embodiments of Establishment elitism. Perhaps a national referendum should now be held to settle the issue.

At the very time when some citizens are struggling just to pay for their weekly groceries and electricity, this glaring inequality between the genuine hardships of ordinary working people and the cossetted financial situation of the Lieutenant Governor is particularly offensive.



***20TH March 2024 – Ready for a Pimms at Government House
with Camilla and assorted hangers on.***

Seven questions to Sir John Lorimer:

1. As you are the representative of the British Crown, why shouldn't King Charles or the British Government be paying the colossal £700K every year required to fund your role and privileges?
2. Isn't it fundamentally wrong and unfair that the Manx taxpayer has to pay for your position?
3. Do you agree that £700K per year would be very much better spent on worthy public projects such as reducing the disgraceful 5,458 patient waiting list for an Island NHS dentist or repairing potholes in Port St. Mary High Street or improving Primary School meals or supporting the Island's Hospice and Foodbank?
4. If the stately Government House were to be valued by an estate agent, would it be reasonable and proper for King Charles to start paying a commercial monthly rent?

5. Alternatively, if you really wish to help the Isle of Man, will you consider vacating your grace and favour Official Residence and supporting its conversion into affordable housing for local young families?
6. Is it fair and equitable that everyone else on the Island legally has to pay Income Tax but Lieutenant Governors do not?
7. From your £108,208 salary, will Your Excellency voluntarily donate £20,000 per year, the approximate sum you morally should be paying in Manx Income Tax, to charity (perhaps including the *Home of Rest for Old Horses*)?

See link below to FOI reply from Cabinet Office dated 28th August 2024:

<https://www.ik.im/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/700000-spent-on-IOM-Lieutenant-Governor-in-2023.pdf>



ELLAN VANNIN: "Thy throne of Home Rule, makes us free as thy sweet mountain air".

