We have just made a submission to the Independent Review Panel which is examining the appropriateness of the current rules and transparency of the Island's electoral processes.

In it we suggest that the next years General Election campaign be opened up by allowing broadcast advertising by political parties and candidates.

Chair of P A G Roger Tomlinson said:

"When we looked closely at the existing rules about electioneering it became obvious that there are inconsistencies in the way candidates can communicate with voters during the election window.

In addition to publishing manifestos and road-side placards candidates can advertise in the newspaper. Indeed one mailing of manifestos to each voter is publicly funded and P A G thinks that this should continue.

However the 1993 Broadcasting Act draws the line at any advertisement which is inserted by or on behalf of any body whose objects are wholly or mainly of a political nature.

This is underpinned in a Code of Advertising and Sponsorship which licensed broadcasters follow.

We think that this clause is a throw back to a time when Manx Radio was the only radio station and being a public service broadcaster it was considered that it should broadly follow BBC guidelines."
Times have changed. We now have 2 other commercial radio stations targeting different age groups and radio adverts could heighten interest in the campaign across a broader range of people. Our General Elections happen every 5 years so it's important to broaden the appeal of the whole process"

P A G puts a number of other suggestions to the Panel including a ceiling on election expenditure and the declaration of sources of funding and concludes by stating that the public must have confidence that the electoral system is fair, open, transparent and accountable.