

### Speakers:

- Ron Berry, Managing Director 3FM
- Bill Dale, Editor / Joint Owner of Southern Chronicle, Owner, Offshore Public Relations

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PAG's latest public meeting debated what the media could look like in the IOM in a few years time.

Currently a Select Committee of Tynwald is charged with a review of the way public service broadcasting is delivered in the Island and PAG thought it would be a good idea for members of the public to hear what one interested party thinks about the matter.

Independent radio station 3FM's Managing Director, Ron Berry shared his ideas on how broadcasting in general could be shaken up on the Island with effectively - as it was put to him by a member of the audience - a reverse takeover of Manx Radio. Mr Berry denied this was the case, but many in the audience didn't seem too convinced even though there was an element of support for a more 'commercial' approach to be taken to radio broadcasting on the IoM.

Mr Berry pointed out that Manx Radio receives a substantial sum of money from the taxpayer. He said this creates unfair competition with the private sector as Manx Radio also soaks up a lot of the advertising pot that should be available to the two commercial stations. He said even with the money from the taxpayer, the station still makes a loss.

He suggests an amalgamation of the three radio stations, with all operating from Manx Radio's premises, although they would keep their separate identity for programming purposes but by sharing certain overheads and reducing staffing at Manx Radio the service could be run profitably. However, even his proposal included a sizeable chunk of public money being

invested each year; some of which would be returned to government if the new 'Corporation' made a profit – but it would also be shared among the private shareholders too – i.e. Mr Berry.

The idea involves a lot of pre-recorded music shows and repeating the same news items and 'community' programmes at different times of day. How many of Manx Radio's speech based programmes would survive wasn't exactly clear. Mr Berry did concede his 'discussion' document probably cut the number of journalists and newsroom staff, both employed and contracted, too deeply and perhaps a few more would be needed.

Mr Berry added that the method of delivering the news and music had evolved as technology improved and other ways of delivering the service in the IOM needs to be embraced, and he obviously feels he is the man to lead this change.

Bill Dale, a veteran of many Isle of Man newspaper publications, and now the editor of the Southern Chronicle, agreed with quite a bit of what Mr Berry had to say about change being required in the delivery of broadcast media. He reaffirmed that the editorial and news reporting provided by all media outlets on the Island, especially Manx Radio, is not dictated by the government.

He answered accusations that investigative journalism is non-existent on the IOM by saying the media in the IOM is completely different to that in England and other large countries. He pointed out small provincial newspapers elsewhere do not provide any more of that type of reporting than the IOM and the newspapers published on the Island couldn't and shouldn't be compared with the 'nationals' in the UK.

For a start, he said the nationals print sensational stories to increase sales whereas in the IOM he could only remember one time in the whole of his career that a story significantly increased the sale of a paper – and that was the Summerland fire in the early 1970's.

Essentially, he repeated the reason given by Manx Radio and IOM Newspapers that they just couldn't afford to have a journalist tied up on a story for any length of time, especially if at the end of the investigation they couldn't publish anything.

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However, he did concede, having been put on the spot about the lack of the newspapers holding the government to account over certain decisions, they could do more in that respect as they are not required to be as impartial as the radio stations.

Mr Dale also took the opportunity to publicly state he had never had anything to do with the Fo Haloo, the Black Dog publications or any other 'subversive' activities, but he admitted he did know who had.

Manx Radio's Marion Kenny and John Moss attended the meeting and although they were given the opportunity to address the meeting they decided not to participate. They did take the opportunity to record an interview with Mr Dale at the close of the meeting.

Also in attendance at the meeting was Paul Moulton who filmed an interview with Mr Berry and also part of the meeting for MTV.

[Manx TV recording - meeting](#)

[Manx TV recording - interview](#)