

OPINION

Donkey spirit to make us all proud

THE trailer for Sea Donkey – one of the finest films ever produced by this island – says it is a must-see for anyone inspired by the tenacity of the human spirit.

As one man ploughs his way through mile after mile of freezing waters, refusing to give in when all seems lost, it is indeed impossible not to be inspired. And a little bit in awe.

Countless hours of training in the chilly waters of La Vallette pools are required just to earn the right to take on the 19 miles of misery that is the North Channel.

Once under way the swimmer, Adrian Sarchet, must battle not only fatigue and extreme cold but countless stinging jellyfish.

There is an unbearable tension to the conclusion of the documentary, which is testament to his never-say-die qualities.

The dedication and spirit required for that one swim are impressive enough. But that it is just one of the marathon swim challenges undertaken by Adrian in his bid to avoid the heart attack his lawyerly lifestyle was leading to and complete the Oceans Seven.

It has taken him from the chilly waters of the English Channel in 2012 to California's Catalina Channel, then the Strait of Gibraltar, the North Channel, the Kaiwi Channel in Hawaii and, in 2017, Japan's Tsugaru Strait. And finally, hopefully in a few weeks, his last challenge, from New Zealand's North to South Islands across the Cook Strait.

Each of those swims would, for most people, rank as a lifetime achievement, something to tell the grandchildren.

Guernsey produces many extraordinary people with tales of grit and determination.

Top racing drivers, tennis players, squash stars and footballers are joined on the pantheon by polar explorers, mountain climbers, long-distance runners, sailors, walkers and people who endure all manner of horrors in the name of charity.

Perhaps it is the Guernsey spirit, that stubbornness born of the donkey, which refuses to give up in the face of life's challenges.

It is invidious to compare one such accomplishment with another. But if Adrian can become one of just a handful of people ever to complete the Oceans Seven he would do donkeys everywhere proud.

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Open Lines

Planet Peewee...



'Looks more like a strategic surrender to me.'

Model would allow parents to decide the future of secondary education

WHEN I fall ill, I decide what treatment I will accept for my illness. I only take advice from medical staff with relevant qualifications and experience and a successful record. Knowing that most people feel the same about health care, the DHSS pays for the medicines and other treatments I need, but makes no attempt to force me to accept a treatment it has decided upon without even consulting me. It would never suggest that all patients should receive the same treatment, regardless of the condition being treated.

Similarly, I expect to decide for myself what form of education my children should receive and to be advised only by those with relevant qualifications and experience and an excellent track record. I will never willingly allow my rights as a parent to be usurped by a group of people who cannot between them show a single qualification, body of experience or hint of talent relevant to the issue and have taken advice only from others with even less justification to get involved. I have repeatedly suggested a model for the organisation of secondary education in Guernsey that would allow parents to make the final decisions about secondary education on behalf of their children and that would drive increased teaching standards and improve the cost-effectiveness of schools but Matt Fallaize and his band don't have the intellectual adaptability to consider any scheme fundamentally different from the one they were presented with when they took over ESC.

I do not wish to be unkind to those who are hard of thinking, but I'm not prepared to allow them to foist their discredited educational dogma on a matter so important to the future wellbeing of my family.

BARRIE PAIGE
GY6 8BP.

ESC's changes in the best interests of our children

I AM the father of a child in Year 7 at Beaucamps and another in Year 4 at Castel School.

As a family we are 100% in favour of the proposed educational reforms, which we understand having received a number of informative updates from each of the schools.

I am convinced that under the old system my eldest son would have 'passed' his way to the Grammar School, we also gave our son the chance to go to Elizabeth College if he wanted to. However, he preferred to transfer to Beaucamps with all of his friends – and he's thriving and loving it.

Although we are impressed by the all-ability teaching at Beaucamps, what we are really looking forward to is the range of opportunities and curriculum choices which the larger De Saumarez College will provide. While a small, all-ability school such as Beaucamps has now become a fine in Year 7, it will struggle to provide the range of subjects and the degree of setting which the top comprehensives elsewhere make available (I have a nephew and a niece thriving at a school with over 2,000 pupils in East Sussex in the UK, where it is possible to take an A-level in subjects as diverse as Mandarin and Russian).

Among other things, what attracts us to the currently proposed model are:

■ 11-18 schools mean our children can go from Year 7 to A-levels without having to move school

■ 11-18 schools will make it easier to recruit staff

■ An all-ability school allows for late developers to be better catered for

■ Bigger schools mean more choices

■ Bigger schools mean bigger facilities and less reliance on one or two specialist teachers; far more robust.

I know change is always traumatic and controversial, but these changes are clearly in the best interests of Guernsey children. Indeed, they draw on the experience of the very best all-ability schools elsewhere.

When our son chose Beaucamps over Elizabeth College we were delighted as we knew something much better was in the pipeline. I felt safe in that opinion then as the States had voted overwhelmingly for it. I remain very optimistic about the prospects for both of my sons' education in the exciting new system. Despite all the unfounded 'noise' being made by those opposed (many of whom were always against scrapping selection), I know many other parents with children currently in the system who agree with me. Even those who don't share my enthusiasm for the proposed new system are exasperated at the prospect of yet another change of direction.

I am deeply fearful that there will be a real damaging impact on all of Guernsey's children currently in the system if the States support this request, adding more delay quite clearly orchestrated for political gain.

This politics is playing with my children's education and lifelong opportunities. Please, for goodness' sake deputies, you have made a clear decision – twice – just get on with it. Deputies Dudley-Owen, Gollop, Lowe, Smithies and Queripel – please find another cause for your upcoming election campaigns and get on with that instead.

ALEX DUNCAN
Address withheld.

Where am I?



Find out how well you know the Bailiwick with our daily picture quiz. No prizes, just island pride. Answer in the next edition.

So that's where it was...



Yesterday's picture by Adrian Miller was the lychgate at St Matthew's Church, Castel.