

CHIEF PLEAS NEWSLETTER

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December 2025

Welcome and Season's Greetings from Chief Pleas

Welcome to this December 2025 / January 2026 edition of the Chief Pleas newsletter. Here you will find updates from the Douzaine, on the electricity and compulsory purchase and a visit from the school to Chief Pleas, among other articles.

We hope you enjoy reading. We also want to wish the Sark community a very happy festive season and at this time of the year thank everyone who contributes and gives their time to the Island.

Updates from Policy & Finance and Future Energy Committees

Electricity for Sark - current progress

Chief Pleas and Sark Electricity Limited (SEL) have both consented to the appointment of Begbies Traynor as the valuer for the purposes of the Compulsory Purchase legislation. This follows an application from Chief Pleas on 31st October to the Court of the Seneschal for the appointment of the valuer. The method and basis of the valuation will now be decided at a hearing on date to be fixed by the Court, likely to be some time next month.

Funding the Future of Electricity

The purchase of SEL's assets (and remedial works) will be funded through a loan facility from Guernsey States. Guernsey's States of Deliberation approved the loan request in May 2025. Chief Pleas then authorised Policy & Finance Committee to negotiate the loan facility in June. The loan facility will now be taken to Chief Pleas for agreement at the Christmas meeting in January 2026. The loan will be repaid through regulated electricity charges.

For further information, please don't hesitate to contact the Policy & Finance or Future Energy Committees or visit the New Power System page on the Chief Pleas website: sarkgov.co.uk/new-power-system

Douzaine Committee Updates

What's in a name? Restarting the Branchage.

Those of you who were out and about on a recent sunny November Saturday might have wondered why two groups were walking round the island apparently measuring trees. This was the Douzaine restarting what had become known as “the funeral march” but is more properly known as “Visite du Branchage”: a long-standing tradition in the Channel Isles. Branchage means the hedges, branches and trees that overhang our public roads. In Sark, it's the responsibility of the landowner to trim branchage twice a year to give 12-foot clearance over public roads and remove trimmings.

This is both to ensure tractors, trailers and work vehicles can use the width of the road without damage and prevent vegetation and leaf-fall clogging up the gutters. Quite apart from the cost to the island in clearing up leaves, clogged gutters also mean the rain runs all over the road, eroding it and causing more maintenance work – and expense – for the island. Responsible landowners take this seriously so thank you to them. The others will be getting a letter from the Douzaine reminding them that a lack of action could result in a visit from the Constables and a fine of up to £1000.

La Coupée stabilisation works in 2026

The recent Budget Chief Pleas approved a major project to stabilise La Coupée. The plans have been drawn up with Geomarine who carried out the emergency repairs in February. We will be using as much island resource as we can for concreting, shuttering and labour. In fact, if you saw Ollie dangling over the side of La Coupée at the end of October, you'll know that some of these works have already been done.

There's a lot more to come and it will take some weeks.

During the works, access over La Coupée will need to be restricted to set times so we will be consulting with islanders, carters and others as we get closer to the time. The plan is to carry out as early as possible, subject to weather, hopefully pre-Season. Please watch this space for more information.

Further info will be in future newsletters and a report presented to Chief Pleas.

The Douzaine will be covering other subjects in future newsletters as well. If you have any questions, please contact the Douzaine via the Committee Office.



Open Burning at at Les Laches

In the August newsletter, we took a brief look at rubbish disposal and why we had to revert to the old open-burning system. This has been done for decades down at the Harbour Quarry but, due to rockfall on site, was temporarily re-located to Les Lâches.

After a season of operations up at Les Lâches, it has become clear it has many advantages over the old Harbour Quarry location – at least as far as rubbish burning is concerned. Burning can be done on more days (when the wind's in the right direction to avoid too much impact on nearby residents) and rubbish can simply be tipped into the pit directly from the trailer. The pit stays hotter so rubbish reaches a higher temperature more quickly to reduce smoke and ash.

More importantly, we don't present visitors with the sight – and smell – of rubbish burning away while they're waiting for the toastrack or trying to enjoy a cuppa at the café. It'll be nicer for everyone else who works down there, particularly our hard-working public Works team.

Les Lâches has limited space for future burning pits so we're still investigating the best long- term solution balancing the costs of “send it to Guernsey” against “dealing with it on-island”. But for 2026, there'll be no return to burning down at the Harbour Quarry. We can all breathe safely there next year!

Mike Locke, Chairman, on behalf of the Douzaine

The Island Plan

In 2026, Chief Pleas is seeking to develop an island plan to create a clear, long-term vision for how the community wants to grow while protecting the qualities that make the island unique.

As a small, self-governing community with limited land and resources, Sark faces challenges that require careful coordination - such as balancing economic development with environmental stewardship, preserving heritage and ensuring that infrastructure can support residents and visitors.

An island plan building on existing works will provide a structured way to address these issues, setting out shared priorities and guiding future decisions.

This plan will also help Sark prepare for external pressures: climate change, renewable energy needs, tourism trends and shifts in population all have significant impacts on a place as small as Sark; without a strategic framework, responses can become reactive rather than proactive. By creating a unified plan, Sark can hopefully manage change with intention, strengthen its resilience and maintain control over its identity.

Moreover, an island plan will encourage community participation and give its residents the opportunity to voice aspirations for housing, transport, land use, and infrastructure along with local services.

In a close-knit island environment, building consensus is essential and, ultimately, the plan will aim to support sustainable development -enhancing the quality of life for islanders while safeguarding the island for future generations.

Work in progress on Tax

Work is underway to modernise Sark's Personal Capital Tax (PCT), with proposals to replace the current structure with a fairer, banded wealth-based regime. The aim is to create a simple, progressive system that raises sustainable revenue for Sark while requiring only minimal updates to existing legislation.

It is proposed that all residents aged 18 and over would be subject to PCT based on their worldwide net wealth with a banded tax structure. Compliance would operate through annual self-assessment, supported by proportionate audit powers and penalties for non-compliance.

Overall, the reforms aim to broaden the tax base and create a modern framework aligned with international norms - while ensuring Sark remains a distinctive and attractive place to live.

A Conseillers' Surgery, as a listening exercise to gather feedback on the proposals, will be held on Saturday, 10th January from 10am to 12 noon in the Assembly Room. Everyone is welcome to attend and contribute to the discussion. This will be the first of a number of meetings with the public with others meetings to follow.

Class 3 Visits Chief Pleas to Explore Democracy

In December, Class 3 from Sark School paid a visit to Chief Pleas as part of their topic day on Ancient Greece, where they are learning about the origins of democracy.

Members of the Education Committee welcomed the students and demonstrated how democracy functions here on Sark.



The visit included a demonstration of an Assembly meeting, where students saw first-hand how decisions are made through debate and voting. They also observed a Committee meeting, which highlighted the research and discussion that take place before policies are presented to Chief Pleas for consideration.

The students asked insightful questions throughout the visit, showing a keen interest in how decisions are reached and the responsibilities of elected members. During the visit there was also a discussion about encouraging Sark School children to take a greater interest in Sark politics and Chief Pleas. To support this, we are working with the Speaker to arrange a 'Youth' session of Chief Pleas in the Assembly Room, allowing the children to participate in a debate of their choice.

The Education Committee hopes that experiences like these will help students to understand and inspire them to value democratic processes, both in their studies and in their everyday lives.

Sark Branch of the Royal British Legion – John Hunt, Branch Treasurer

On Saturday 29th November, the Seigneur and Chairman of the Sark Branch of the Royal British Legion, Christopher Beaumont, along with the Vice-Chairman and Sark Standard Bearer Peter Plummer and the Treasurer and RBL Branch Standard Bearer John Hunt, represented Sark at the re-dedication ceremony of the Royal Guernsey Light Infantry Regimental Colours.

This was the first time the Sark Standard had been properly paraded in Guernsey. It is important for Sark to be represented as 42 Sark men served in the RGLI of which 12 did not return home.

On Sunday, Peter and John paraded their Standards at a service of remembrance at the RGLI Memorial in the Sunken Garden. They were joined by Sam Craft who kindly volunteered to lay the Sark Wreath which depicted members of the RGLI resting shortly after the battle of Cambrai.

At the same time on Sunday, wreaths were also laid at the memorial in Masnières, France where most of the RGLI had died in 1917.



Sark will take part in *Millennium*, an international celebration in 2027

In 2027, Sark will join the other Channel Islands in *Millennium*, an international celebration led by Normandie to mark one thousand years of Norman heritage. This major cultural moment highlights our shared European legacy and Sark's historic ties with the Normans, still visible today in our traditions, patois and elements of our legal system. It offers an important opportunity for the island to reflect on its identity as a frontier culture shaped by both Norman influence and our independent spirit.

Guernsey's Culture & Heritage Department recently invited Sark Tourism to a workshop introducing the initiative and exploring how each island might participate. Sark and Alderney's involvement was warmly welcomed.

Millennium will promote tourism, learning and heritage through themes such as sea and navigation, history and power, migration, cultural exchange, landscape, nature and contemporary culture. Proposed events include music festivals, re-enactments, cross-border art residencies, student exchanges, markets, food festivals, arts and heritage trails, language resources and legal conferences.

Normandie and Guernsey are offering significant support, creating a strong opportunity to raise Sark's profile and boost the visitor economy. The British Council is also involved, and the British Museum will host the Bayeux Tapestry. Other participating countries include Norway, Denmark, Belgium and Ireland.

Sark is encouraged to contribute its own projects. Early ideas include artist residencies, student exchanges, harbour improvements, a Norman-themed festival, markets, language packs and a food festival. Guernsey is working with us on tourism packages, trails, education resources and festival collaborations, alongside progress on Twinning with Port-Bail.

Anyone interested in developing a project is invited to contact Sark Tourism by end of December. All confirmed events will appear on a central website run by Normandie. 2026 also marks the 160th anniversary of Victor Hugo's *Toilers of the Sea*. Sark Tourism welcomes related project proposals.

We look forward to hearing your ideas. - Tourism Committee and the Visitor Centre

