

## Welcome from Conseiller John Guille, Chairman of Policy & Finance

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the May 2025 edition of the Chief Pleas Newsletter. Across our Committees, practical and forward-looking work is underway. From secondary education planning and updates from the Douzaine to the energy and ambition of the Tourism Committee, we are seeing meaningful progress. Thank you to everyone who is devoting their considerable time and effort to achieve positive changes for the good of Sark and its community.

A significant development occurred on 1st May 2025, when the States of Deliberation in Guernsey overwhelmingly approved a £1.5 million loan facility to enable Chief Pleas to enter good-faith negotiations to purchase Sark Electricity Limited. This is a crucial step forward in what has been a very long running and serious issue for our community. We now have a very real opportunity to bring our energy infrastructure into local hands as we look to secure a safe, sustainable and independent future for our island.

The loan conditions offered by the States of Guernsey are not only prudent from a financial perspective but also present an opportunity for Sark to modernise aspects of its governance and fiscal sustainability. At first glance, concerns about autonomy or external influence might be understandable. It is important though to consider that these stipulations are in fact an opportunity to strengthen Sark's position in the modern world. Seizing these opportunities can reinforce and protect our independence for generations to come.

A key point is that loan repayments are calculated to be covered through the unit price of electricity – making the arrangement financially self-sustaining. The use of Sark's Impôt tax as security is a last resort backstop and not a primary repayment mechanism. This is a reasonable safeguard from Guernsey's perspective. A similar arrangement was used in 1825 when Sark last borrowed money from Guernsey; that time, it was to rebuild and modernise Creux Harbour, another key part of the island's critical infrastructure.

The ongoing taxation review gives us the opportunity to ensure our revenue model is fair and equitable and aligned with our island's needs; with limited resources and growing responsibilities, this is a timely and necessary step toward long-term sustainability.

Participation in the proposed Bailiwick Commission would provide Sark with a stronger voice in addressing shared challenges across the Channel Islands. It encourages co-operation, promotes mutual understanding, and ensures we play an active role in shaping our collective future. Discussing long-standing issues such as secondary healthcare provision and health insurance costs has the potential to deliver meaningful change for residents.

Finally, work has now begun on developing an 'Island Plan'. This will genuinely engage with all residents and stakeholders. Whilst similar pieces of work have been carried out before we feel it crucial that residents are given the maximum opportunity possible to have their views heard and to be active participants in the Plan's development. This important project will guide decisions about land use, service delivery, and infrastructure investment ensuring we have a clear, joined-up vision for Sark's long-term future that we can all be invested in.