

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Verbal report re loSS request for financial support.

At the Extraordinary Chief Pleas meeting held on the 17th February 2020, Chief Pleas agreed to guarantee a loan in the amount of £300,000.00 (three hundred thousand pounds) from Natwest Bank to the Isle of Sark Shipping Company Limited to facilitate the purchase of the new vessel, Corsaire des Iles.

The purchase of the vessel was completed on the 31st March 2020 by Isle of Sark Shipping using their own funds prior to loan drawn down. The vessel remains in France and it is not currently possible to take delivery of the vessel nor to raise a mortgage against it.

Policy & Finance Committee signed the guarantee documents on the 6th April 2020, however due to the impact of Covid 19, Natwest subsequently requested a letter of comfort to be signed by Policy & Finance as extra support to enable the partial release of this loan.

Section three of the letter of comfort states that the funds are to be used to support the Isle of Sark Shipping Company with the day to day running expense of the Company.

Policy & Finance Committee have taken legal advice, and at this moment are not content that this letter of comfort should be signed, as it effectively changes a secured loan to an unsecured loan, thereby increasing Chief Pleas exposure and risk.

Policy & Finance are aware that the Isle of Sark Shipping, in common with many Bailiwick businesses, are finding the current trading conditions extremely challenging and that Chief Pleas have an obligation to support this lifeline service. Policy & Finance & Harbours, Shipping & Pilotage Committees have held meetings with the Isle of Sark Shipping and the current position is that they have agreed to support the company on a request basis, all requests for funds must be evidenced and approved prior to release of funds. There is no commitment to provide unconditional support and loSS have been asked for a revised business plan for the remainder of this year and into 2021.

loSS is currently applying to the States of Guernsey for relief under their loan guarantee scheme, they are already receiving payroll support through the payroll co-funding scheme. If accepted this support will be available in 7 – 10 days.

We continue to work with the Isle of Sark Shipping and will support loSS on a request basis until a new acceptable letter of comfort and business plan is agreed.

Conseiller Peter La Trobe-Bateman
Chairman, Policy & Finance Committee

Speaker Statements - Easter Chief Pleas 2020

a. Statement by the Speaker - Resignation of Conseillers: Mrs Ellie Lalor resignation to me by email on the afternoon of the 7th April, as a Conseiller of Chief Pleas. Shortly afterwards Mr Rodney Lalor submitted his resignation, also by email. Mrs Lalor was elected at the General Election in December 2018, receiving 138 votes. During her term as a Conseiller she served on the Development Control and Tourism Committees and on the Special Safeguarding Committee. Mr Lalor was also elected in December 2018 polling 123 votes. He served on the Agriculture, Environment and Sea Fisheries Committee and the Douzaine, also being a member of the Public Works Sub-Committee and served on the Future Energy Special Committee. On your behalf I would thank them both for serving in this parliament and for their service to Chief Pleas and the community by their membership of their various committees and I wish them both well for the future.

Statement by the Speaker - the Previous Speaker – Mr Arthur Rolfe. I believe that this full Meeting albeit being held remotely due to the Pandemic crisis, is an appropriate time to say on behalf of Chief Pleas a thank you to the previous Speaker, Mr Arthur Rolfe. Arthur was elected as the first Speaker of Chief Pleas on the 27th February 2017, for a three-year term of office, in an uncontested election. I retired in October 2016 from the role of President of Chief Pleas and Arthur was elected by Chief Pleas as the President, in an uncontested election. By retiring I had hoped that a much younger person would take over the role, well Arthur was younger by eleven months! Arthur served you as the Presiding Officer for three years and five months and I thank him for his service in that role and for his previous service as a Conseiller from Election in the 2014 General Election, uncontested, until he took over as President/Speaker in October 2016. As we know Arthur stood for re-election in January this year and when I also stood, this became a contested election. Arthur lost the Speaker election by one vote. I would wish Arthur well in his future endeavours.

b. Statement by the Speaker - Thanks to the Pandemic Workers. I have been asked by a resident to give a big vote of thanks to all those on the island who have been working so hard behind the scenes to keep this island safe during this Coronavirus Pandemic. This has involved the making of very hard decisions to close the island down to all but essential workers and to put the island into lockdown, decisions that have not been taken lightly. The amount of work undertaken by essential workers on Sark such as shops and carters, Banks and Post Office and all those keeping essential services running is much appreciated by everyone, including our shipping freight service. We are all looking forward to further loosening of the lockdown, as it is safe to do so. Thank you all.

c. **Statement by Speaker** - Code of Conduct. I have been asked by the Policy and Finance Committee to speak on and support the Conseiller Code of Conduct, to make clear my support for this mechanism of accountability. I have no issues with the principles of the Code and would support those principles being utilised to extend similar Codes for the Officers of Chief Pleas and eventually government support staff, in all areas of the government. I look forward to seeing the proposals when they come forward in due course.

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Before I make my statement, I would like to join His Excellency in thanking you all for an excellent meeting which seemed somehow more dynamic despite the technical limitations. By the end of the meeting your voice procedure and use of the pressel had become quite slick. Well done to you all, not forgetting those working out of sight to make the meeting work so well.

I would like to thank a number of people for their efforts in these challenging times.

Firstly, to those that are taking part in the pandemic committee. It is important for those in positions of authority to do their duty and rise to the task. They have done so admirably, and I thank them on the Island's behalf for doing so. The special committee co-opted others have been of great value too. Together they have co-ordinated the island response with measure and fortitude. Well done to you all.

Secondly, as the Speaker said at the opening of Chief Pleas, there are many who have been working behind the scenes to keep essential services going and to provide self-isolation accommodation. We are all impressed by the way normal business has been adjusted in such a short period of time and we are grateful for your efforts. Sark Shipping are a key player in keeping the Island's logistics working and they continue to operate in challenging circumstances we are indebted for their service.

Thirdly, I thank the whole population of Sark on Chief Pleas' behalf. It is all very well to have restrictions placed upon you, but they would count for nothing without your co-operation. It is greatly to your credit that you have agreed to do so, when for some this represents real hardship. Your willingness to abide by the emergency rules has made a real difference. Indeed, this has been a factor in the decision to allow some workers to return to their jobs. Your continued consent to abide by the rules for the greater good is vital to further relaxation of those measures.

Fourthly, I thank those who have consistently donated to the food box scheme and the hardship fund. I would like to be able to say that it's enough, but Sark will need to prevail upon the generosity of those who can afford it, for some time to come. If you are in a position where you can help those less fortunate than yourself now is the time to be thinking what form that help should take.

There is a risk of a second phase of the infection coming after the current restrictions have been lifted. We should therefore be prepared to see

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restrictions relaxed followed by a return to the position of some weeks ago. I think it is unlikely we will see a tourist season this year. As a community we should prepare for this and the consequences of sustaining ourselves until next Easter without the income tourists would have brought to our economy.

Finally, borrowing Her Majesty's words: "We will succeed, and that success will belong to every one of us. We should take comfort that while we may have more still to endure, better days will return." This is the essence of Sark, our forebears did it and we can do it now.