

# CHIEF PLEAS NEWSLETTER

[WWW.SARKGOV.CO.UK](http://WWW.SARKGOV.CO.UK)

[committeeoffice@sarkgov.co.uk](mailto:committeeoffice@sarkgov.co.uk)

+44 (0) 1481 832118



**November 2024**



## Community Meetings coming soon!

We are pleased to announce that Chief Pleas will soon be launching a series of Community Meetings (dates tbc).

These will be held in the Island Hall at a time convenient for as many people as possible and feature updates on the work of Chief Pleas Committees.

As a reminder, views may also be shared via email or by using the suggestion box located inside the door at the Committee Office. Please indicate the responsible Committee and the chair will reply, should you wish to provide contact details.

## Foreword

Welcome to this, the first of the new Chief Pleas Newsletters. Improving communication throughout the island is a priority for Chief Pleas, of which this newsletter is a key starting point. A lot of work goes on in the offices and the various committees and hopefully this newsletter and an upcoming revamp of the Chief Pleas website can begin to share that more effectively and enable better interaction between all parts of the Island.

*Continued on p.2*



## DIARY DATES

- Deadline for Nomination Forms: 29th November, 12 noon
- General Election: 11th December, polls open 9am to 6pm

## Foreword continued

It's no secret that Chief Pleas has faced a good deal of challenges over recent years and also a great deal of outside influence, pressure and unpleasantness during the time that Sark has been transitioning away from the old feudal system. Whilst there are still several areas of island services, infrastructure and laws that need to be improved we are not in the doom and gloom position that some would like to suggest. Our reserves may have been reduced in recent years but we still run a balanced budget and do not rely on borrowing to fund services and do not have any outstanding loans unlike many other jurisdictions. New, and old, families are still being attracted to the island and new businesses are starting every year. Times have undoubtedly been hard in our recent past but the island is now moving in the right direction. Yes, there are challenges but Sark has so much potential and a rare gift in that every one of the 500 or so eligible voters here can truly make a difference.

One of the very most important areas of progress over the last few years has been the move towards providing Sark with a professional and robust civil service. We would like to welcome our two new civil servants to the island. Michael Bertram has joined us in the role of Senior Executive Officer having recently held a similar post on the British Overseas Territory of Tristan da Cunha in the South Atlantic. Michael has a long history of working for local governments in Scotland and South Africa and also in the private sector in hospitality. William Spooner has also joined us as the Senior Operations Officer on a break from the UK civil service. William is also experienced with island life after serving on Saint Helena and has many years of experience working in both the Ministry of Justice and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London.

As the nature of government and international responsibilities continues to grow, not only for Sark but for all similar jurisdictions, the need to have a modern, efficient and effective civil service is essential. Strengthening the office with new staff and training for current employees reinforces our basic administrative capability. Any Conseillers joining Chief Pleas now will find it very different from 10 years ago where it is now no longer reliant on Conseillers doing a lot of the leg work themselves in terms of researching and writing reports or sourcing quotes for island purchases. Chief Pleas has long been criticised for a lot of discussion but sometimes a lack of implementation. With a new civil service, which we will continue to strengthen, we intend to turn that perception around and achieve more and more in the years to come.

There are many positive work streams ongoing. In this edition, we have updates from the Douzaine, the Sark Community Power project and from the Sark Medical Centre. You can also read about our budget setting process and a proposed monitoring system for the island's water levels and water quality. On all of these subjects, and any others, input from islanders is always needed and extremely welcome. A new community meeting initiative is outlined in this newsletter which will help islanders to engage with individual Committee work streams. A larger piece of work is scheduled for the second half of next year where we want to conduct a truly inclusive island wide workshop project to develop an updated Island Plan that will outline the direction that Sark residents would like to see their island work towards. Continued on p.3







## Foreword continued

Crucially, we have a General Election on 11th December. This will be to elect 10 members of Chief Pleas. An induction and support package is being developed for new and current Conseillers to be launched in January/February 2025 that will cover all the areas needed to work with confidence as part of Chief Pleas. This will provide training in procedure, legal drafting, GDPR, IT and other areas with representatives from the Law Officers, Ministry of Justice and other politicians and professionals travelling to Sark to offer their assistance and experience at a time that is convenient for Conseillers.

We have so many talented and able people on Sark, so please consider offering your skills and experience to serve our community by standing as a candidate. The deadline for nomination forms is noon on the 29th November. In recent years several new residents have put themselves forward to serve on Chief Pleas and are now making some crucial contributions in many areas. It would also be good though to see a few more longer-term or life-long residents consider how they could become involved with helping to steer Sark along a new course. There is no substitute for the experience or knowledge built up over many years or indeed generations of living on Sark and this could and should be invaluable in shaping Sark's future. If you have stood in Chief Pleas before then please know that burden on Conseillers is much less than before with a professional civil service handling much of the leg work now. If it would be your first time standing then do not think that you must be overwhelmed by the prospect. As mentioned, a full training and support package is being put together for early next year. If there is one Committee that you feel you could contribute to then make that your focus. You might have a great practical experience of how the island works and wish to be part of the Douzaine which deals with many of the day to day issues on Sark. You might have specific expertise in agriculture, tourism or education and wish to join one of those Committees.

Being part of Chief Pleas is what you want it to be, whether you join one Committee or several. It cannot be overstated how fortunate we are to be an independent jurisdiction that is truly in control of its own destiny. Of course some issues can be tricky to tackle but this is far outweighed by the sense of achievement that comes from working towards solving problems that benefit the community now and for years to come. Being as small as we are has its challenges but also some enormous benefits. There are not many jurisdictions where the input of individuals can have such a tangible and swift effect on the outcomes for every resident. Whether Sark has been your home for years, decades or generations please consider standing for Chief Pleas and being part of shaping a bright future for the island we love.

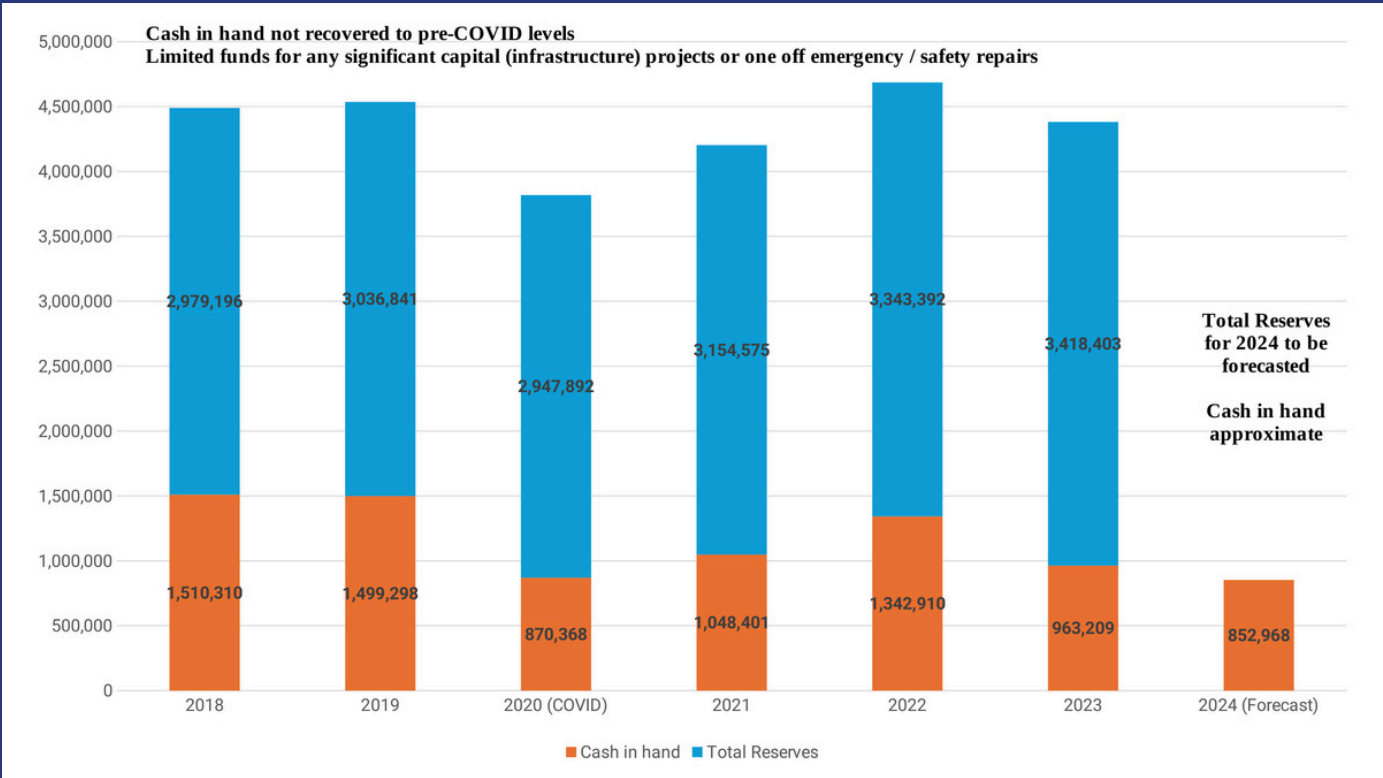
# The 2025 Budget

Setting Sark’s annual budget is probably the biggest, most complex task of the year for Chief Pleas and the Treasury. The 2025 budget process began in February 2024 when chairs of spending Committees were invited to meet for quarterly collaborative planning sessions.

In September we met with Committees to agree line by line their budgets for next year and forecasts up to 2027. Ultimately, budgets are a prioritisation exercise - what to spend public money on (and what not). Once finalised, chairs present their budgets for agreement at the Chief Pleas Budget meeting on 20th November.

Budget setting is not only about immediate needs but longer-term strategic questions on what matters to Sark, hence also political questions for our elected representatives. Our cash reserves will be approx. £850k end of this year, so we need to be mindful of the wider financial picture, while thinking of Sark’s position in 5, 10 & 20 years’ time.

- Sarah Hudson, Island Treasurer





# Sark Community Power

- Jake Burnyeat - Communities for Renewables

Infinite Renewables and Sancus, our design and build contractors for the new Island-owned electricity system, have been busy over the summer with the design-phase works.

Infinite Renewables have confirmed their proposals for a renewables-based system are viable and their tender stage costings achievable. The proposed renewables-based system will generate power from 2 wind turbines and a field of solar panels at Les Lâches with a battery to provide system stability and 100% diesel back-up. Infinite Renewables have also looked at a diesel only solution which would be cheaper to build but result in more expensive electricity.

Sancus, in conjunction with Aurora Power Consulting, are developing the design concepts for a replacement distribution system to ensure safety and security of supply and to enable it to accommodate future electricity demand and renewable generation. It is looking like there is some increase in the budget needed for the distribution system but this is to be expected when progressing from an initial design to a more detailed one.

Whilst the original timetable for the design work has slipped we have also been extremely grateful to have engaged the help of the Alderney Electricity Limited management and key design engineers in recent months. Alderney have just completed a major upgrade of their distribution network and are now looking to invest in renewable generation in order to reduce prices for consumers. On a technical level there could not be a much closer project to Sark's. The Alderney team are helping in the review of the draft designs at the moment and this is a useful extra stage in the process that is worth spending the additional time on.

The ideal situation would still be to purchase Sark Electricity Limited for the community and implement the much needed upgrades and rebuilding that is required to achieve a system that is fit for the next 50+ years of electricity supply on Sark. Efforts are still ongoing to achieve this. At the same time though we must plan for all scenarios and designing, costing and sourcing funding for a new system is part of this. Serious enquiries have been made with the Crown, UK government, States of Guernsey, Guernsey Green Finance and other commercial lenders about funding for the Sark Community Power project. Regardless of the final outcome this valuable technical and funding work will feed into whatever ends up being the best solution for Sark.

As has been stated before the aim all along has been for the Sark Community Power project to be self-funding through the unit price of electricity. This means that beyond the initial investigation stages it will not rely on tax payer money and any loans needed for infrastructure will be repaid by electricity sales. This is why much work is underway to explore all possible options for loans that might be available to Sark as these will be critical to the viability of the project. We will hold a community meeting early in the New Year to present the results when the design work has completed. For more information please visit: [sarkcommunitypower.com](http://sarkcommunitypower.com)







## Water Sustainability

A study was commissioned in Spring 2024 to set the scene for how much water is available on Sark and whether any increased resident population would exceed the available water. The issue of possible climatic change is also explored. Key Findings and recommendations for action can be viewed online: [sarkgov.co.uk](https://sarkgov.co.uk)

In the report of June 2024, Dr Derek Clarke made 7 recommendations regarding water quantity and quality. It is important for the current and future residents and visitors that these are acted upon. Accurate long-term data is required for understanding what water resource Sark has now and looking forward to future population needs and climate change implications.

La Société Sercquaise is supporting Chief Pleas in undertaking the work required to action the recommendations. Propositions will be coming to the Christmas meeting of Chief Pleas.

## Douzaine updates

The 'new' Douzaine Committee has been in place only since Easter Chief Pleas. Our remit is, as many know, broad with challenges including the island's waste management and sewerage

What we have done: we have arranged for the two sewerage tanks to be repaired. We are hopeful this will at least reduce or end the discharge of untreated sewage.

Waste disposal: At Chief Pleas on 2nd October, we asked for views on whether an incinerator could be replaced or for the practice of open burning domestic waste to continue. Before we commit public funds, we need Chief Pleas' views and for community engagement.

Facility location: Part of this is considering moving the incineration and burning facility from Harbour Quarry to Les Lâches. We appreciate Chief Pleas members, and the community will have views on this. No decision has been taken and no plans have been drawn up, and we, the Douzaine, welcome views from the community before we look at the next steps.







## La Coupée and cliff surveys

We are working with Geomarine Ltd from Jersey, a leading provider of civil engineering, marine construction and geotechnical services, to inspect La Coupée causeway and the cliffs in the harbours and incinerator areas. Two engineers will be visiting Sark in mid November and will be using drones to inspect the cliff faces.



## Stamps and coins

Exploratory work is ongoing to explore possible revenue generation through more extensive use of stamps and coins, aimed at the collectors' market. This is an important source of finance for other, small jurisdictions, such as, Tristan da Cunha. The aim is also to foster pride in the Island, and both will include local community participation.

## Honours Nominations

The honours system recognises people who have made an outstanding contribution to public life and/or who have committed themselves to serving and helping the Bailiwick of Guernsey.

Anyone can be nominated, but only those of exceptional achievement will receive awards. Achievement comes in many forms. We look for those who have made a real difference for the better in their area of work or community. For details on how to nominate an individual or group for an award, and for an overview on how nominations are assessed go to: [governmenthouse.gg/honours-awards](https://governmenthouse.gg/honours-awards)





## Sark Medical Centre – Opening Hours

With the return of our nurse, Hollie, we are back to full strength and dedicated to continuing to provide the community with a safe, confidential, patient led, and evidence based medical service of a high standard.

The Centre would like to remind the community of our opening hours of 8.30am to 2pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Fiona, our Practice Manager, is also normally available between 9am and 1pm on Wednesdays.

At all other times, the Medical Centre would like to strongly encourage all members of the community to contact the doctor via calling 999. This route provides the very safest and quickest way to get help.

## Vaccine Clinic

Dr. Bruce Jenkins, Medical Officer of Health

Since mid-October, the Sark Medical Centre has been rolling out our annual influenza vaccine clinic which is available to all islanders at a cost of £20.

In addition to this, we will also be providing a Covid booster programme which is available to all islander ages 65+ and those who fall into the clinically at-risk groups. Islanders are encouraged to contact the surgery with any queries or concerns regarding this and uptake is strongly recommended.

We will also be catching up on the Shingles and Pneumococcal vaccines for those in the eligible categories. In line with the rest of the Bailiwick we will also be introducing the new Respiratory syncytial vaccine (RSV) vaccination to the eligible age and at risk categories.

Vaccination is not only important for the individual but also for the good of the community and those most at risk.



**What would you like to see included in the next edition? Let us know!**

© November 2024, Newsletter design by **RLTB Photography & Design**