

CHIEF PLEAS NEWSLETTER

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May 2026

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Newsletter

Sark is entering an important period of reflection, renewal and opportunity. As a small island with a strong sense of identity and shared responsibility, the choices we make now present a real opportunity to shape Sark's future in positive and lasting ways. This edition of the Chief Pleas Newsletter brings together several strands of work that are central to that shared ambition – from setting a clear long-term direction for the Island to strengthening the capacity needed to turn priorities into action.

Sark faces a number of long-standing and complex infrastructure challenges that will shape the Island's future for decades to come. These include securing a resilient electricity supply, managing refuse disposal and sewage treatment, addressing derelict buildings, considering a potential customs post to support tourism, and investing in essential assets such as La Coupée, the harbours, the Sark Shipping fleet, roads and cliff paths, among others. Many of these challenges are not unique to Sark, but are common to island and rural communities more generally, which is why certain themes recur over time.

These are not short-term issues: they require sustained attention, careful coordination and continuity over many years. Chief Pleas is committed to addressing challenges that have persisted for a long time. However, as a small island with finite financial and human resources, Sark cannot progress everything at once. Clear priorities are therefore essential, and those priorities must be informed by what matters most to the community. While Sark is moving in a positive direction, there remain many exciting opportunities to explore. Future Sark is an opportunity for the community to have its say in how the Island develops.

Future Sark is a new island-wide initiative, which launched on Monday 27 April 2026, that brings people together to think collectively about Sark's long-term direction. Rather than prescribing solutions, it focuses on building a shared strategic framework: clear aspirations, agreed priorities, and a common understanding of what progress looks like. This will support more informed discussion and decision-making across Chief Pleas, community groups, and local organisations.

Alongside this, residents may also be aware of the Bailiwick Commission, a separate process examining the external relationships between the islands of the Bailiwick. Whilst distinct from Future Sark, both initiatives invite public participation and reflect the importance of ensuring Sark's voice, interests and experiences are clearly represented – whether in shaping our own future or engaging in wider Bailiwick matters.

article continued inside...

Introduction continued

Turning shared priorities into reality depends on having sufficient professional capacity to support volunteer Conseillers, maintain momentum between political terms, and manage complex, long-running projects through to delivery. In addition to future improvement projects, the Island provides most of the services expected of any modern jurisdiction, with the exception of secondary healthcare and border control. In recent years, Chief Pleas has strengthened the Committee Office and its support team, with a clear vision of moving the Island forward. This investment is fundamental to enabling Sark to progress from good ideas and aspirations to coordinated, long-term action.

This edition therefore also focuses on the Committee Office team – those who work behind the scenes to support committees, manage projects and ensure the effective functioning of government. A strengthened and professional office team is fundamental to Sark's ability to deliver long-term priorities, respond to external obligations and turn shared ambitions into practical action.

This newsletter also highlights the ongoing risk posed by the Asian yellowlegged hornet, an invasive species that threatens Sark's pollinators and poses a serious public health risk. While volunteers work hard each spring to trap incoming queens, keeping the Island hornet-free depends on the vigilance of residents. The article within explains what to look out for and how to report sightings - small actions that play a crucial role in protecting Sark's environment and community.

Future Sark: Setting Direction for the Island

On Monday 27 April 2026, Sark formally launched a new island-wide initiative, Future Sark, designed to support the development of a shared strategic framework for the Island's future. This work recognises a simple reality: Sark faces a wide range of challenges and opportunities, and it is neither possible nor desirable to tackle everything at once without a clear sense of direction.

Future Sark is intended to help the Island think clearly and collectively about where it wants to be in the years ahead - and how government, community groups and organisations can work together towards shared outcomes. It will set out long-term aspirations, identify priorities, and define what progress looks like, providing a practical reference point for future decision-making.

Importantly, Future Sark is not a set of rules or prescriptive policies. It will not interfere with the day-to-day business of government. Instead, it aims to produce:

- A shared view of Sark's long-term aspirations
- Agreement on roles and responsibilities across the community
- Clear indications of what progress looks like
- A framework to support future planning, prioritisation and discussion

The work is being supported by Question Factory, a strategy and innovation agency with experience working with island governments in the Channel Islands, including the Future Jersey programme. Their role is to facilitate engagement, gather and consolidate views, and help develop a framework that is firmly rooted in Sark's own circumstances.

Public Engagement and Next Steps

Future Sark will run through a series of engagement stages during 2026, including:

- Awareness-raising and early engagement
- A four-week public engagement period
- Community recommendation workshops
- An island-wide survey to help establish priorities

Residents will have multiple opportunities to contribute through discussion, workshops and surveys. The intention is to ensure that Future Sark reflects the views of the whole community and provides Chief Pleas with a clear steer from the public on what should come first.

Later in the process, briefings and supporting reports will be prepared for Chief Pleas, which will have the opportunity to debate whether to adopt the Future Sark Framework. Any decisions arising from the process will remain subject to Sark's constitutional arrangements.

Future Sark is intended to create a shared reference point - a map for the future rather than a set of instructions - that can be used by Chief Pleas, committees, community groups and individuals alike. Further details on how and when to take part will be shared as the project progresses.

Bailiwick Commission

Separate to Future Sark, Sark residents may also wish to be aware of the work of the Bailiwick Commission, which is examining external relationships between the islands of the Bailiwick.

This work sits outside the Future Sark process. The Commission's focus is on external constitutional and working relationships between the islands, rather than Sark's internal strategy or priorities. It has been established by the States of Guernsey to gather evidence and views on how inter-island relationships operate in practice and how they may evolve.

The Commission does not have decision-making powers, and it cannot make recommendations affecting Sark without any such matters passing through Chief Pleas in accordance with Sark's constitutional arrangements. However, as inter-island relationships can have practical implications for Sark, participation helps ensure that Sark's perspective and experience are accurately represented.

As part of its evidence-gathering, the Bailiwick Commission has launched a public survey open to residents across the Bailiwick. Further information and the survey can be found at: gov.gg/bailiwickcommission

In summary:

- Future Sark focuses on developing a long-term strategic framework for Sark itself.
- The Bailiwick Commission focuses on external relationships within the Bailiwick.

Both invite participation, but they serve different purposes and operate through different channels. Any matters affecting Sark remain subject to the normal propositions, debate and decisions by Chief Pleas.

Building Capacity to Deliver

A long-term direction is only meaningful if Sark has the capacity to deliver against it. Much of the Island's progress depends on Conseillers who give their time voluntarily as unpaid politicians. To support their work effectively, Sark relies on a professional civil service with the right skills, capacity to manage projects, coordinate committees, meet governance expectations and ensure continuity.

Over recent months, key roles within the Committee Office and supporting teams have been filled. As a result, the Island is now fully staffed across its core administrative functions. This strengthened team provides essential capacity to support committees, manage complex projects, improve internal processes and follow through on agreed priorities - including those emerging from Future Sark. This edition of the Chief Pleas Newsletter focuses on the people who make that possible.

Meet the Committee Office Team Senior Operations Officers

- **Rhys Rowlands – Senior Operations Officer (Full-time)**

Rhys joined the Committee Office in January 2026, relocating to Sark with his wife Claire as they begin to settle into island life. As senior operations officer (SOO) Rhys provides both strategic and operational support across several of Sark's most critical committees.

His work includes coordinating complex projects, supporting policy development and helping to ensure that the day-to-day functions of government run effectively. The post also requires building strong working relationships across the Island and externally, reflecting the increasingly interconnected nature of Sark's obligations.

Rhys has extensive experience in the development and implementation of complex public policy, public administration, and governance. He has worked for a range of public bodies including the Bank of England, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Ministry of Defence, and NATO, both in Whitehall and abroad.

- **Aidan Mallon – Senior Operations Officer (Full time)**

Aidan joined the Chief Pleas team at the end of March 2026, taking up the second Senior Operations Officer role. He supports committees across some of Sark's most wide-ranging policy areas, including infrastructure, environmental management, education and harbour operations. Alongside committee support, Aidan is involved in modernising internal processes, supporting organisational development and strengthening communication across committees and with the wider community.

Aidan brings a strong background in policy development, strategic communications and operational delivery across central government and the criminal justice system. Before joining the Chief Pleas team, he held policy roles in the Department for Work and Pensions - supporting long-term Fraud, Error and Debt reform, as well as Pensions strategy - and in the Ministry of Justice, where he led the implementation and communication of complex programmes.

Earlier in his career with the Crown Prosecution Service, he worked in the Victim Liaison Unit, the Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Unit, and in Complex Casework, building a reputation for clear judgement, analytical rigour and confident handling of sensitive, high-profile issues.

Committee Support Team

• Ali Bateson – Senior Committee Support Officer (Full time)

Ali provides essential support to committees, ensuring meetings run efficiently, documentation is well prepared and elected members have the information they need. Her work spans procedural guidance, correspondence management and the coordination of committee-related tasks, helping to keep Sark's political processes organised and effective. Ali's primary focus includes long-term project support for the Douzaine and the committees she serves.

Although raised in Guernsey, Ali has always maintained a strong and enduring connection to her island roots and moved back to Sark over 30 years ago. She has worked in a variety of roles across the island. Alongside her organisational skills, she brings a deep knowledge and understanding of Sark's history and inner workings.

• Jenni Robinson – Committee Support Officer (Full time)

Jenni supports several busy committees, helping ensure that agendas, minutes, communications, and follow-up actions are managed effectively. Her role contributes significantly to the smooth running of Sark's governance framework, particularly in operationally active areas such as education and Harbour management.

Jenni has lived on Sark for 18 years and worked in different sectors. She recently ran a successful tourism-based business and brings a hard working and practical attitude to the role.

Chief Pleas of Sark – Committee Office Portfolios



Rhys Rowlands

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Committee oversight:

- Medical & Emergency Services
- Policy & Finance
- Tourism

Priority projects:

- Bailiwick Commission
- Electricity Project
- Emergency Planning
- External Relations / Stakeholders
- Legislation
- Tax Reform
- Treasury Liaison

Aidan Mallon

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Committee oversight:

- Agriculture, Environment & Sea Fisheries
- Douzaine
- Education
- Harbours, Shipping & Pilotage
- Scrutiny Management

Priority projects:

- Bailiwick Commission
- Communications
- Data Protection
- Future Sark
- Infrastructure Project Management
- Human Resources
- Office Management

Ali Bateson

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Committee oversight:

- Douzaine
- Medical & Emergency Services
- Policy & Finance

Priority projects:

- Douzaine projects

Jenni Robinson

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Committee oversight:

- Agriculture, Environment & Sea Fisheries
- Development Control
- Education
- Harbours, Shipping & Pilotage
- Scrutiny Management
- Tourism

Treasury Team

- **Sarah Hudson – Treasurer (Part-time)**

As Treasurer, Sarah is responsible for ensuring that Sark's finances are well managed, transparent and aligned with long-term sustainability. Her role includes budget oversight, financial planning and close collaboration with all Committees to support informed and responsible decision-making.

Sarah has held the role of Treasurer since 2020. Before moving to Sark, she spent ten years as Finance Controller at Girlguiding, leading the finance function at the charity's London headquarters and managing complex budgets totalling £20 million. She is highly experienced in financial management and reporting, operational efficiency and performance reporting, with a proven ability to streamline systems and strengthen internal controls. Sarah also has extensive experience working alongside volunteers and supporting them to deliver their roles with confidence.

- **Lynda Higgins – Deputy Treasurer (Part-time)**

Lynda has held the position of Deputy Treasurer since 2015 and deputises for the Treasurer in her absence. Lynda supports the Treasury team with routine financial administration and day-to-day tasks that help ensure financial processes run smoothly. She works alongside the Treasurer on preparing financial information, maintaining records and supporting the completion of annual financial activities.

Lynda was a Pensions Manager in the UK. Since moving to Sark she attended GTA University Centre in Guernsey and graduated in 2011 with an MSc in Corporate Governance and is also an Associate of the Corporate Governance Institute.

Public Works

- **Angela Lewis – Public Works (Part-time)**

Angela oversees the Public Works treasury functions with consistency, accuracy, and a strong sense of accountability. She coordinates, tracks, and reconciles financial activity for the team responsible for maintaining Sark's infrastructure, ensuring that budgets are well managed and expenditure is transparent and well documented. Through her careful oversight, she provides clear and timely financial information that supports effective planning and decision-making.

Angela works closely with operational colleagues to align financial controls with day-to-day delivery, helping to ensure public works projects are properly funded, compliant, and delivered efficiently. Her attention to detail, reliability, and proactive approach contribute significantly to the smooth running of Public Works and to the safeguarding of public funds.

Looking Ahead

As Sark moves through 2026, the Committee Office continues to adapt to the needs of the Island. With new team members in post, projects progressing and responsibilities expanding across multiple committees, the focus remains on professionalism, transparency and supporting the work of Chief Pleas.

If you have any questions or would like to know more about Committee activities:

Telephone: 01481 832118 **or Email:** committeeoffice@sarkgov.co.uk

The Asian Yellow-Legged Hornet Doesn't Discriminate

From March through to early June, waves of Asian hornet queens take advantage of helpful weather conditions to cross to Sark from France and Jersey. Left to their own devices, each will go on to build a nest that will ultimately, not only consume kilos of Sark's pollinators, but pose a very serious Public Health risk. Sometimes their nests can't be detected and any child innocently playing or gardener using machinery might find themselves falling victim to hundreds of hornets protecting their nest.

These insects are not part of our ecosystem and must be controlled at all costs. Each year, volunteers work tirelessly to keep Sark hornet-free, but our eyes can't be everywhere, and we rely completely on Sark's Residents to help.

A group of 70 trappers will be attempting to trap the queens as they arrive, tempting them with a specially prepared bait. This Spring Queening programme concludes as we go into June, but we're sufficiently experienced to know that not every queen will be trapped and killed.

You might encounter an Asian yellow-legged hornet in the house; they seem to be drawn to human habitation. Should you encounter one in the house, please kill it and let one of our volunteers know, saving the specimen to be positively identified.



From June, the queens will be constructing their primary nests and these might be found inside sheds, nesting boxes, watering cans or even hidden behind fascias and soffits. Ranging from the size of a tennis ball to that of a small watermelon, these buff-coloured nests raise the first workers, which then go on to construct the much larger secondary nest.

The primary nests can easily be confused with a wasp's nest, but only closer examination will confirm that. Should you encounter anything like the description, don't deal with it, but call one of the volunteers.

As June turns into July, any hornets seen will almost certainly be workers. They start by looking for energy-rich food sources and can be a pest to those drinking outside pubs and in restaurant gardens. They shouldn't be killed, but, if possible, photographed and their flight path noted. They will fly directly back to their nest and it is this information that provides us with the means to start tracking.

You can help us by being our ears and eyes and reporting possible nests, killed queens and worker sightings. Regular updates can be found on the Sark Asian Hornet Group Facebook page as the season progresses.

Peter Cunneen: 07781 121714 / cunneen@cwgsy.net **Ringo Brown:** 07781 439360



A community conversation about our island's future

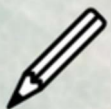
Share your thoughts on a new question every week, and help shape the future of Sark!



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hello@futuresark.com



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