EXCO meeting of 26 June 2012

Good afternoon,

Today our EXCO agenda covered quite a wide range of issues. Our first agenda item concerned the management of solid waste on St Helena. Those of you who have reviewed the Sustainable Development Plan will know that a vital goal for SHG is to ensure effective management of the environment. Linked to that is the objective of improving and maintaining environmental conditions through better management of solid waste. With the assistance of a visiting consultant much work has been undertaken to review the best option for St Helena. A key consideration was the airport project and the need to reduce the potential hazard to aircraft presented by the number of birds in the area of the Horse Point landfill.

Of the five options identified to address the issue, the paper recommended one that incorporated source segregation and separate treatment of organic waste. The organic waste would be transported from homes or businesses to a site other than Horse Point, well away from the airport flight path, where it would be processed to produce a compost product to improve soil quality. Dumping only inorganic waste at Horse Point would greatly reduce its attraction for birds, thereby diminishing the risk of bird strike for aircraft. Councillors endorsed the recommendation, while noting that there would be public consultation on the proposal and full costings prepared before coming back to EXCO in August for final decision.

We then considered a paper from the Financial Secretary which sought approval to make concessions from payment of withholding tax on the interest paid by the Bank of St Helena on two approved pension schemes – the Misaint Pension Scheme and the SHG Defined Contribution Scheme. Councillors approved the request noting that the aim of the change would be to encourage participation in contributing to a Pension Fund.

The next paper addressed the terms of a new telecommunications licence and a new TV rebroadcasting licence for Cable & Wireless, to replace the existing ones which will expire on 31 December 2012. This followed lengthy negotiations with Cable & Wireless which had gained momentum following HMG’s decision 8 months ago to fund the construction of an airport on St Helena. That decision means that the future market for telecoms on St Helena looks much more attractive for Cable and Wireless. Subject to a few minor amendments, EXCO approved the licences. Full details of the agreement will be announced shortly, but it combines price reductions with a significant improvement in services and new investment to allow for the introduction of mobile phones.

We then took a paper from the Attorney General on the matter of Stamp Duties. This paper listed a number of points in the Stamp Duties Order 2012 that needed minor adjustment following the introduction of the Order on 13 April 2012. Noting that the adjustments were essentially procedural and technical EXCO approved the paper as presented.

We then noted information provided by a consultant in the UK on the allocation of FM radio frequencies. This made it clear that SHG needed to do more work to develop clear policy guidelines on the allocation of frequencies before it could issue new licences to Saint FM which had requested a number of new frequencies. To assist in that process, certain other Overseas Territories were providing details of their guidelines and legislation on the matter.

Following an earlier decision by EXCO to reject a request from the proprietors of the White Horse Tavern to have their premises exempted from the soon to be introduced smoking ban, EXCO reviewed a further letter from the same proprietors seeking the same exemption. EXCO again rejected the request.

Thank you for very much for listening and a good afternoon to you all.