

Constituency Meeting

Alarm Forest



Tuesday – 28 October 2025 at 7:30 pm

Date: Tuesday, 28 October 2025

Venue: Jamestown Community Centre

Chair: Councillor Julie Thomas

Secretary: Marita Bagley

Attendance: Chief Minister, Minister Andrew Turner, Minister Gillian Brooks, Minister Martin Henry, Cllr Coleman, Cllr Beard, Cllr Essex, Cllr D Thomas, Cllr Midwinter, Cllr Leo and 13 members of the public.

Apologies: Minister Thrower

1. Welcome and Introductions

Cllr Julie Thomas opened the meeting by welcoming all in attendance to the first Alarm Forest District Meeting under the new Council. She expressed appreciation for the community's turnout and encouraged an open and constructive discussion. Julie reminded everyone that Minister Thrower was off island attending a renewable energy conference, with Chief Minister Rebecca Cairns-Wicks acting as point of contact during his absence.

Councillors and Ministers were asked to introduce themselves and their respective roles.

Cllr J Thomas advised that all meetings were being recorded for note taking purposes only and that summaries of each meeting would be published.

2. Bunkers Hill Road

A resident raised the long-standing concern regarding the road leading towards the Bunkers Hill Development Site within Lower Alarm Forest, that was first reported four years ago, alleging poor communication and lack of action. It was also queried whether the housing project would still go ahead.

Julie acknowledged the frustration and confirmed that a ministerial site visit was being arranged to assess the condition of the road.

Chief Minister advised that this issue came up in LegCo on Friday. Since coming into post, the Executive Council decision, is to review where things stood with the previous Council, which has been referred to the Attorney General. Processing such projects are currently underway, and we are looking at how best to move forward.

We also made a commitment—following Corinda's comments on Friday—regarding the roads issue, to engage with all relevant parties going forward.

Turning now to the issue of whether the housing development is still proceeding. I can't confirm that, as the last decision on this came from the previous Executive Council, and it remains part of the wider legal agreement. Until we receive the legal advice and understand the proposed way forward, we won't know whether the project will continue. If it does not, we will need to determine what that means for the road, as the two are directly connected.

Outcome / Actions:

- Ministerial site visit to Bunkers Hill to be scheduled promptly. Residents to be included in visit arrangements; names to be forwarded to Julie.

3. Consumer Protection and Supply Chain Issues

A concern was raised about a lack of effective consumer protection on the island, noting that residents are often forced to buy goods past their sell-by or best-before dates, due to poor supply chain.

They stressed that better consumption tracking systems are needed and appropriate ordering quantities—particularly medicines—so products are used within their shelf lives. Shops should not be permitted to sell expired items.

While acknowledging the island's logistical challenges, it was felt that with regular shipping services, consumers should not have to rely on outdated goods. They call for legislation to protect consumers and help businesses manage stock more effectively, emphasizing that expired or near-expired goods may pose health risks or reduced effectiveness.

Minister Henry explained that medication supply involves complex challenges. Due to the island's small market size, suppliers must buy in small quantities, often receiving end-of-line goods with short shelf lives. Even when orders are placed early, products may arrive close to expiry, and small buyers have little leverage to request fresher stock.

The situation is particularly severe for medications, as global shortages, especially of critical drugs like cancer treatments, are disrupting supply chains. In some cases, chartering flights may be necessary to secure essential medicines. He emphasizes that these issues are largely beyond local control and should be addressed separately from general consumer goods.

It was clarified that best-before dates relate to product quality, while use-by or expiry dates concern safety. It was noted that importers face significant logistical challenges, such as limited market size and unpredictable shipping, which affect product shelf life upon arrival.

Existing protections already exist under the 2016 Food Safety and Health Ordinance, which prohibits the sale of expired goods, and under 2019 Consumer Protection measures designed to prevent profiteering during shortages. However, any new consumer protection initiatives should be developed in consultation with businesses to ensure practicality and avoid worsening supply chain issues. The Ministerial team's upcoming vision statement will help decide if this should be a policy priority.

Outcome / Actions:

- Minister Henry to review current Food Safety and Consumer Protection legislation for adequacy.

4. Youth Behaviour, Discipline, and Social Challenges

A conversation on concerns about declining and poor discipline among children and young adults, linking it to parenting, leniency in schools, community attitudes and lack of consequences lead to wider social issues like mental health, and risky behaviour like drunk driving challenges.

It was agreed that it starts with how we raise our kids. Too many parents mean well but don't enforce rules. We buy kids mobile phones even when schools ban them. They then grow up not understanding consequences and when real life expects them to follow laws, they struggle. Discipline needs to start at home.

It was also acknowledged that it's not just a school issue — it's a community issue. Parents, teachers, and everyone around the child need to work together. Some parents are engaged, but many aren't. We all must agree that discipline and boundaries are important, and kids need role models. Right now, they look up to what they see on social media, they need help to see that what they see online isn't always a reality or isn't deemed acceptable behaviour. We should be showing them real examples of success. We also must look at the example set by government and adults. If people see rule-breaking with no consequences, it sends the wrong message to children. So really, this is about leadership — at home, in schools, and across the island.

Parents are also afraid to discipline now. Kids threaten to report them, and safeguarding rules make parents nervous, but boundaries are essential. Kids need to know when "no" means "no." Safeguarding shouldn't stop parents or teachers from setting limits — but both need better understanding and support.

Maybe we need a community campaign — one that brings parents, teachers, and young people together to reset expectations around discipline. Cllr J Thomas agreed to take this forward through her Children's Champion work with New Horizons and the schools. We need more connection between generations and more listening to young people too. It sounds like we all agree discipline starts at home, but it takes the whole community to raise responsible young people. If we don't act now, we're setting future generations up for struggle.

It was suggested that rather than focusing on fundraising perhaps Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) should foster greater activation in parental engagement. The discussion evolved to explore school governance reforms as part of the education framework, replacing PTAs with Boards of Governors to improve oversight and standards.

Outcome / Actions:

- Minister Turner to explore transition to School Boards of Governors under COBIS standards.
- Children's Champion (Cllr J Thomas) to strengthen engagement with schools and New Horizons youth programmes.
- Minister Henry to review Safeguarding training for teachers, creches, parents and guardians.

5. Benefits System and Casual Work Opportunities

Several residents expressed frustration that, despite repeatedly raising issues regarding the current Social Benefits Scheme, no meaningful action has been taken. Pointing out it fosters dependency, discourages work, and negatively impact on community morale and the younger generation's discipline, stressing the need to link benefits to meaningful activity or tightened policy controls. It was highlighted that some capable individuals were relying on benefits whilst those in need struggle financially.

Members acknowledged the concerns and outlined the practical challenges associated with reforming the scheme. It was explained that if employment exceeds six weeks, legal obligations arise, such as pensions and liabilities,

creating a financial burden for SHG. It was pointed out that a short-term scheme of less than six weeks with breaks in between has worked in the past citing the roads project as a successful example which did not trigger these obligations and proposed that a scheme of this nature could be reintroduced, as there is a lack of structured opportunities for beneficiaries to contribute meaningfully. It was also pointed out that many beneficiaries are medically unfit to work, either physically or mentally.

It was clarified that some school leavers who collect benefits are often only receiving a small top-up that they are entitled to, due to the gap between their vocational student allowance and the standard benefits. This approach is creating public misunderstanding, as they are being seen as receiving benefits and not in meaningful employment or study. It was suggested raising the student allowance to mitigate this misunderstanding. It was agreed that a comprehensive review of the Benefits Scheme was deemed necessary to ensure fairness, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Key Concerns:

- Exploring re-introducing short-term casual or community work scheme placements, ensuring protection for those medically unfit to work
- Review and clarifying student allowance top-ups for school leavers
- Conducting a full Benefits Scheme review
- Increasing transparency about student top-up payments to reduce misunderstanding

The government acknowledged concerns and committed to listening, reviewing, and exploring practical solutions.

Outcome / Actions:

6. Post-16 Opportunities and Inclusion

A resident raised concerns about limited opportunities for young people with disabilities or autism after leaving school. Many employers were reluctant to take them on.

It was agreed that fear and lack of understanding play a role and proposed better awareness campaigns and awareness training for employers on working with neurodiverse employees to be developed. Minister Henry shared a success story with a member of staff in his portfolio. Cllr Essex referenced a past proposal for a Training and Employment Support Scheme that could be revived.

It was agreed that HR should work with Career Access to identify the interest and capabilities of individuals to determine where they could fit in. Minister Turner agreed to oversee and support the implementation of this initiative.

Outcome / Actions:

- Minister Turner: Work with HR, in collaboration with Career Access, to assess the interests and capabilities of young people with disabilities or neurodivergent functions who have recently left school or due to leave school, in order to identify suitable employment opportunities.

7. Tourism and Signage

A resident enquired about the lack of road and tourism signage, previously promised under the Tourism Development Programme. Julie noted prior public resistance to some signage designs but agreed to follow up on the current status with the relevant directorate.

Action: Julie to request update from Tourism Office on signage rollout and funding allocation.

8. Fisheries Concerns

Strong dissatisfaction with the management of St Helena's fishery was raised with emphasis placed on the Saint Tuna Corporation lack of progress on the revised business plan promised by June 2025 from Saints Tuna Corporation (STC). Senior officers within SHG were accused of obstructing political directives and disrespecting Public Accounts Committee (PAC) commitments.

It was observed that problems in fisheries management have persisted across three different governments, suggesting that the issues are less about ministers and more about systemic challenges at the officer and managerial level. Patterns of inefficiency and lack of accountability have been noted repeatedly over several years.

There was discussion of repeated failures in implementing ENRP processes and a lack of follow-through on commitments, particularly concerning business plans. Officers at the top management level were identified as contributing to delays and poor decision-making, which undermined ministerial directives.

The letter detailing quota allocations was highlighted as a major concern. Commercial fishermen are receiving extremely limited quotas (22 Grouper over two months), despite proposals put forward that were more robust than those of the authorities. Recreational quotas were not properly considered, and decisions appeared biased and disconnected from local realities. This mismanagement is seen as both disrespectful to local authorities and harmful to the fishing community.

Concerns were raised about the specific senior management officials' competency in handling fisheries data and decisions. While not viewed as malicious, their actions consistently produce flawed outcomes that undermine local operations and ministerial accountability.

There was concern that past structures designed to ensure science-led fisheries management are being undermined. For example, mismanagement of quota allocations and disregard for local knowledge are eroding trust in the system and threatening sustainability.

Outcomes and Agreements:

- The group agreed that a "reset" of the fisheries management process may be necessary. This would involve re-engaging investors, re-evaluating quota allocations, and ensuring decisions are aligned with Saint Helena's best interests.
- It was emphasized that Saint Helena must retain negotiating power, especially in relation to investors and commercial operations, with the primary focus on local benefits rather than external partnerships.
- It was agreed to focus efforts on legal and compliance frameworks to ensure that decision-making becomes evidence-based, timely, and fair.

Actions Recommended:

- **Immediate Appeal on Quota Letter:** The letter allocating 22 grouper to commercial fishermen will be formally challenged by the next day to prevent enforcement starting on 31st October. This action will utilise local and ENRP data to contest the flawed allocation.
- **Data Review and Analysis:** A full review of fisheries data, including commercial and recreational quotas and license activity, will be conducted to inform equitable quota allocations.
- **Engagement with Investors:** Steps will be taken to bring the investor back to the table, ensuring negotiations occur on Saint Helena's terms.
- **Science-Led Decision Reinforcement:** Government will reaffirm the principle that fisheries management must be guided by scientific evidence and local input and will work to restore and strengthen the structures that support this.

The meeting highlighted deep frustration with recurring systemic failures, mismanagement of quotas, and a lack of respect for local fisheries and authority. However, there is cautious optimism that through a structured reset, strengthened evidence-based processes, and robust engagement with investors, Saint Helena can regain control and ensure fair outcomes for its fishing community. Immediate steps are being taken to prevent further mismanagement, starting with the quota appeal.

Chief Minister Rebecca acknowledged the seriousness of these claims, confirming that the issue spans multiple governments and reflects systemic weaknesses in governance and accountability. She assured the public that Fisheries would be prioritised upon Minister Thrower's return and her leaving.

Outcome / Actions:

- Minister Thrower and Chief Minister to prioritise Fisheries upon his return.
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9. Any Other Business

- **Road Improvements:** Positive feedback was given regarding recent works by SHG.
- **Future Meetings:** Julie reiterated that minutes would be published online and in print to encourage broader engagement. Residents are happy to continue using the Jamestown Community Centre for their meetings.

10. Closing Remarks

Cllr **Julie Thomas** thanked all attendees for their open and frank contributions, acknowledging the depth of feeling in several issues raised. She emphasised that actions and follow-up reports will be made available in due course and encouraged continued participation in future meetings.

The meeting concluded with appreciation for community attendance and constructive debate.