

# Constituency Meeting

Sandy Bay Community Centre  
Thursday – 23 October 2025 at 7:30 pm



**Chair:** Councillor Clint Beard

**Present:** 10 Elected Members  
18 Constituents

**Apologies:** Cllr Ronald Coleman, Minister Karl Thrower

**Secretary:** Anita Legg

**Recording:** Meeting recorded

## 1. Opening Remarks and Apologies

The meeting was opened by Cllr Beard who welcomed attendees, noting apologies from Cllr Coleman and that Minister Thrower was overseas. Consent was confirmed for the meeting to be recorded for minute-taking accuracy.

Each Minister then introduced themselves and outlined their portfolios. Councillors also highlighted their roles in Scrutiny Committees and Community Champions.

Constituents raised the following:

## 2. Roads and Infrastructure

Residents raised significant concerns about the state of the roads in Sandy Bay, particularly potholes, overhanging vegetation, and inadequate drainage.

### *Discussion*

It was explained that road repairs in Sandy Bay had been scheduled but delayed, with teams redirected elsewhere. However the team would be back in November and the programme would include:

- Remedial work between Green Hill, Milestone, and Bamboo Hedge
- Follow-up on pothole repairs and overhang trimming

Government had recently secured £1 million in capital funding for roads, but sustained UK support would be necessary for several more years, to complete the central network and then address outlying roads.

Councillors acknowledged concerns on poor drainage, landslips, etc noting the need for engineering reviews and remedial work. Concerns also included the road to Sandy Bay Beach, which was becoming unsafe, potential flooding of the beach bridge and signage.

### **Actions:**

- Cllr Beard to follow up with the Roads Manager on priorities for Sandy Bay roads
- A site visit to be arranged with Tourism and Infrastructure officials to inspect Sandy Bay Beach Road and drainage
- Issues of beach access to the toilets, signage and local beautification to be included in discussions with Tourism

### **3. Policing and Community Relations**

Residents voiced frustration with recent police behaviour and road checks, claiming locals were being disproportionately targeted and intimidated. Concerns focused on:

- Arbitrary vehicle stops and breath testing without clear cause
- Inconsistent enforcement among police officers from different jurisdictions
- Lowered drink-driving limits introduced without sufficient public awareness campaigns

#### ***Discussion***

The acting Chief of Police had met with Councillors earlier that week, who had acknowledged these perceptions and committed to reviewing police conduct, emphasising proportional enforcement. Attitude and community engagement were equally critical and Councillors would continue monitoring complaints.

#### **Actions:**

- Cllr D Thomas to formally raise concerns with the Police and Crime Panel (14 November)
- Residents were encouraged to report incidents or lodge complaints to District Reps, confidentially if needed

### **4. Public Transport and Access to Services**

Constituents raised concern regarding the lack of public transport and high cost of taxis (up to £10 per trip), which impacted HTH clinic appointments, limited access to doctors and prescription collection.

#### ***Discussion***

Whilst acknowledging that SHG need to recover costs from subsidised transport, Councillors sympathised with the high cost of the current public transport and said these day-to-day issues should try to be addressed. Rural health services have also become harder to access.

### **5. Utilities – Connect Saint Helena**

Electricity and water costs were major public concerns, noting sharp increases in utility bills, especially with standing charges penalising low-usage households.

#### ***Discussion***

These issues are being looked at and Councillor D Thomas confirmed a motion would be tabled in Legislative Council the next day, asking for a value for money review of Connect Saint Helena.

The discussion broadened to renewable energy, windmills, fuel importation, regulatory oversight and more collaboration with Connect. Members explained:

- Government's target is 80% renewable generation by 2028, helping to make electricity production more affordable
- Looking at other different ways to possibly make energy production cheaper
- Regulatory frameworks are being updated to strengthen the Utilities Regulatory Authority (URA), ensuring Connect is held accountable under modern licensing conditions

### Action:

- Cllr Beard to find out which persons sit on the URA.

## 6. Social Security and Pensions

Questions were raised about the Basic Island Pension (BIP), Income Related Benefits (IRB) and Unemployment benefits. Some residents felt the system was inequitable, particularly for those with small additional pensions or those declared unfit for work.

### *Discussion*

It was explained that around £6 million annually from UK aid supports pensions and benefits. BIP recipients total roughly 800+, with IRB payments adding about £2 million to the budget.

It was acknowledged that communication in SHG needs to be improved regarding benefit eligibility and categories to reduce misinformation. Also reform or contributory pension systems may need to be explored long-term.

## 7. Public Facilities and Beautification

Residents noted the lack of functioning public toilets and suggested using Community Centres as shared facilities. Councillors agreed that improving public amenities should align with island beautification goals, benefiting both locals and tourists.

### Action:

- To include public toilets in its entirety in future infrastructure improvement programmes
- Explore shared-use options with community buildings

## 8. Employment, HR, and Equal Pay for Saints

A long and candid discussion focused on pay inequality between Saints and Technical Cooperation (TC) officers, the lack of recognition for local qualifications and barriers to career progression.

### *Discussion*

Community members and Councillors agreed that while TCs fill critical skills gaps, locally qualified Saints often face lower pay for equivalent roles and limited promotion opportunities.

Members acknowledged systemic HR issues, including:

- Outdated TC frameworks no longer fit for purpose.
- TC policy and salary structures need to be reviewed, ensuring parity and fairness
- Need for succession planning, graduate schemes, and career development for Saints
- Discrimination in travel and recruitment support for overseas Saints wishing to return
- Loss of key personnel, including a local Engineer
- Need for review of membership of the different groups e.g. TC monitoring group, salary review group etc

Members said they would certainly be taking these issues forward to the new Head of Public Service to try and come up with solutions and to press for training, mentoring, and recognition pathways for qualified local staff.

## **9. Constitutional Matters**

Residents queried progress on constitutional reform and opinion on the Saints-First policy.

### ***Discussion***

Cllr Essex explained that earlier efforts (2017–18) to change a clause in the Constitution, to secure a local-first employment clause had not been encouraged by a previous Governor and the UK government, whose policies at the time favoured open immigration within Overseas Territories.

Councillors agreed that while constitutional change remains a priority, progress is dependent on UK review outcomes. Chief Minister will raise this matter at the upcoming Joint Ministerial Council in London.

## **10. Land Prices**

Residents asked why land for house building is so expensive.

### ***Discussion***

Members advised that work has already been undertaken to reduce prices of land for first time buyers. Issues that remain include BOSH loans to enable house building and a review of Building Regulations.

## **11. Health**

Residents inquired about the status of the current health promotion and raised concerns about the lack of public engagement and the importance of promoting healthy lifestyles.

### ***Discussion***

Minister Henry said the programme is still in its early stages with limited staff and efforts focused on building a data foundation and planning sustainable initiatives. However Health had employed two health professionals and were training two school leavers to start entering data in the system.

## **12. Diana's Peak**

Concern was raised about the status of Diana's Peak, management of the pathogens to prevent disease spread and the date for reopening.

### ***Discussion***

The main pathogen is Phytophthora, causing death in cabbage trees and is widespread across the peaks, and present in paths. The extent and duration of the disease is unknown but it does not affect crops. Mitigation measures, such as boardwalks are in place. Monitoring and testing will be continued and there is further funding and support for pathogen research and mitigation. The Peaks will not be opened until it is safe to do so.

### **Actions:**

- Minister Thrower to publish information promptly to keep the public informed

## **13. White Weed**

Residents asked what could be done about the spread of white weed.

***Discussion***

Largescale eradication is difficult but is important to look at and future research work should look at aiding the ecology. Current unmanaged unproductive lands are challenging to control. What the island is seeing in nature is natural succession, as white weed is replacing historical flax-dominated areas. Tree planting and livestock grazing were some suggested methods to manage the whiteweed.

**14. Closing Remarks**

The meeting closed with thanks to all attendees for their participation and forthright contributions. The Chair said work needs to be done on improving communication between SHG and the public and constituents need to hold Members to account if necessary. He invited constituents to contact him anytime and recommitted to following up on district-specific issues.

The next Sandy Bay Constituency Meeting would be scheduled after follow-up on site visits and actions.

**Meeting concluded:** Approx. 10:00 pm