

Constituency Meeting Notes – Alarm Forest held at Jamestown Community Centre

Date: 5 August 2026

Chair: Hon. Julie Thomas

Attendees: 2 Constituents



1. Welcome

The meeting opened with a welcome to those present. The discussion was introduced as an opportunity to provide updates from the previous meeting, hear from the Police Service on current priorities and challenges, and give residents an opportunity to raise concerns affecting the Alarm Forest constituency.

2. Community Policing Engagement

The Temporary Chief of Police Julian Pezzani provided an update on the current position of the Police Service. He explained that, following the withdrawal of the previously appointed Chief, the Chief's position had been re-advertised. In the interim, the Police Service had been restructured to strengthen frontline policing, including the temporary removal of the Chief Inspector post. Recruitment remained a significant challenge, with four vacancies following the recent local recruitment process. A longer-term approach was being pursued to increase the number of local officers, with specialist officers brought in where necessary to develop local skills and eventually enable local officers to take on those roles.

The meeting discussed the difficulty of attracting applicants, including concerns around pay and wider employment opportunities on St Helena. The Police Service is therefore considering updated employment regulations and improvements to working conditions, reward and recognition. Despite the recruitment challenges, the Temporary Chief reported that policing performance was strong, with reported crime detection at approximately 60% and court convictions at just over 80%.

A key theme was the importance of police being visible and engaged within the community. Temporary officers had been given clear expectations and were undertaking more community-based work, including engagement with young people and increased use of social media. It was emphasised that the Police Service should be regarded as part of the community and that maintaining public trust and respectful relationships was essential. The Temporary Chief advised that the approach to complaints was to acknowledge mistakes, apologise where appropriate and take steps to prevent recurrence.

The meeting also considered emerging risks involving young people and social media. The Police Service reported cases involving online "shadowing", where individuals gain access to young people's accounts and subsequently make demands or attempt to blackmail them. Work had been undertaken with external law-enforcement and technical agencies to trace activity. The meeting agreed on the importance of education, particularly through schools and parents, to improve young people's awareness of online vulnerabilities. The possibility of testing young people's practical understanding of online safety was also raised.

Neighbourhood policing was discussed as another positive development. The small neighbourhood policing team was undertaking schoolwork, identifying areas where anti-social behaviour was occurring and engaging directly with young people. Members stressed that addressing anti-social behaviour should involve the wider community and not focus solely on young people, recognising that alcohol-related behaviour among adults also remained an issue.

CCTV was also discussed. The Temporary Chief advised that CCTV could have a preventative role in specific locations but was not considered a complete solution. Concerns included the cost of installation and ongoing management, processing and recording requirements, as well as the possibility of simply moving problems elsewhere. At present, there was not considered to be a sufficiently consistent public crime problem to justify widespread CCTV, although privately operated CCTV in individual businesses could have a useful role.

3. Review of Action Points from Previous Meeting

The meeting reviewed matters raised at the February constituency meeting:

- 3.1 In relation to the Rupert's area road closure and cargo access, it was reported that assurances had been received that, except for emergency works, efforts would be made to avoid a recurrence. No further significant recurrence had been reported, although the matter would continue to be monitored.
- 3.2 Air freight reliability and Saturday collections remained unresolved. There was currently insufficient capacity to amend opening hours, although this could be reconsidered if recruitment improved. Work was continuing with the airport authorities and freight service providers to improve communication about freight movements. The discussion highlighted that freight information can change as final aircraft loading and weight requirements are confirmed, meaning that residents may not know whether their freight is travelling until relatively late in the process.
- 3.3 Access to Rupert's Beach during cargo operations was also reviewed. Port authorities were continuing to balance public access with safety requirements and had provided further information explaining the different operational levels.
- 3.4 The Ruperts Beach facilities were discussed, with clarification that the external showers were intended for rinsing sand before using the internal shower facilities.
- 3.5 The fisheries sector review remained a concern. Members noted continuing dissatisfaction among some fishermen about the consultation and the extent to which their concerns had been reflected in the situational analysis.
- 3.6 The Bunkers Hill road remains a significant outstanding matter. It was reported that no further progress could currently be provided because SHG had commenced legal action and further information could not be released until the legal process had reached an outcome. The Chief Minister had agreed that residents would be updated at the earliest opportunity. The Hon. Julie Thomas undertook to circulate the information received to residents.
- 3.7 Other outstanding matters included waste management and the replacement of bins, which required further follow-up, and the proposed approach to individual road ownership and maintenance.
- 3.8 Telecommunications also remained unresolved. Although telecommunications had been identified as a government priority, no firm timeframe had been provided for a new licence, leaving residents concerned about prices, service speeds and contract renewals.

4. Topics Raised

- 4.1 The meeting discussed support for Saints returning to St Helena and the wider international recruitment strategy. Concern was expressed that arrangements supporting overseas recruits were more developed than those available to Saints returning to the island. It was explained that work was continuing on an international recruitment strategy, but that there was no dedicated budget or equivalent package specifically for returning Saints; assistance currently depends on available savings within individual portfolios.
- 4.2 Questions were also raised about pensions and benefits for people who had previously lived and worked on St Helena before moving overseas. The discussion highlighted the importance of understanding the relevant eligibility rules and providing evidence when seeking assistance. Residents were encouraged to raise individual cases so that they could be referred to the Benefits Office where appropriate.
- 4.3 Youth behaviour, social issues and safeguarding were discussed. It was noted positively that recruitment of a new Safeguarding Board Manager and Safeguarding Chairperson was progressing. There had also been a noticeable reduction in the incidents of damage to the Castle windows that had been occurring in February.
- 4.4 The meeting considered opportunities for casual work and the possibility of extending cash-for-work arrangements beyond care facilities. Members felt that more flexible casual employment could benefit people who wished to work but could not commit to full-time hours, including those with young families. Better coordination between employment services and the Benefits Office was suggested so that available casual work could be matched with people seeking employment.
- 4.5 Post-16 education and inclusion were also raised. Concern was expressed about delays to the planned review of post-16 opportunities and uncertainty over when the review would take place. Parents were

particularly concerned about the level of financial support available to young people and the practical costs of combining education with work placements, including transport. The discussion also highlighted a need to ensure that young people are not unfairly perceived as unwilling to work when they are in fact attending education or employment placements.

4.6 Finally, tourism signage and facilities in the Alarm Forest area were raised. Members noted that some signage had been installed but considered that further improvements were needed. The need for additional public facilities, including toilets, was also raised. The previous proposal for an Alarm Forest Community Centre was revisited, with concern that the identified site was now being used for social housing-related purposes. Members expressed the view that the site would be well suited to community use because of its space and parking provision, and that alternative accommodation should be considered for its current temporary users.

The meeting concluded with residents reaffirming their willingness to continue supporting the community and raising issues on behalf of residents where necessary.