



The Government of Sark

CHIEF PLEAS CONSULTATION
By the Policy & Performance Committee

Recommendations made by the Independent Election Observer in March 2015

On 19th March 2015 the Independent Election Observer, Howard Knight, published his report on the Election that was due to be held on the 10th December 2014. The report was discussed by Chief Pleas at its Easter Meeting on 15th April, 2015.

The purpose of this consultation is to seek the views of the people of Sark on the report generally and, more specifically, on the suggestions and recommendations on the electoral process put forward by the Independent Election Observer in his report.

It is hoped that as many adult inhabitants of Sark as possible will give their comments on these recommendations. Additional forms can be obtained from the Committee Office, Gallery Stores or downloaded from the Sark Government website, www.gov.sark.gg/public_notices.html

Please submit your views and comments by no later than **5pm on Monday, 23rd November 2015**

by hand/post to:- The Policy & Performance Committee
 The Committee Office, La Chasse Murette
 Sark, Channel Islands, GY10 1SF

or e-mail to:- cp2.consultation@gov.sark.gg

The following is a summary of Howard Knight's suggestions and recommendations on the electoral process, (this is not intended as a summary of the report itself). The full report can be obtained from The Committee Office, La Chasse Murette, Sark, Channel Islands, GY10 1SF during public opening hours. It can also be downloaded from the Government website, www.gov.sark.gg/reports.html

1. Election Timetable

"The election timetable was extremely tight. Chief Pleas were advised of the timetable on 1 October and that timetable became public with the publication of the minutes. However, the formal Notice of Election was published on 14 November, providing just 4 days for the submission of nomination papers and just 19 days for the electorate to know who the candidates were before the intended December 10th polling day."

Recommendation: Returning Officer should submit proposals for the next Election Timetable to Chief Pleas, with a view to being able to publish such timetable during 2015.

Comments:-

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2. Electoral Registration

- "... it was clear that the register was not comprehensive. For example, it was noticeable that not a single person from Brecqhou was registered although it is known that some individuals certainly qualify as ordinarily resident."
- "... the Government of Sark might wish to reflect on whether the rights and responsibilities of being ordinarily resident on Sark extend to an expectation that there is a duty to register. If so, how might that duty be promoted? If it is a duty, are there any sanctions for failing to register?"
(The Definition of a Resident Policy Development Team is currently debating this issue)
- "... it is noted that there is not yet an agreed definition of 'ordinarily resident'. "... It is clear that there ought to be a clear definition of 'ordinarily resident'. Should that definition also apply for other purposes? (For example, tax)."

Recommendation: The Government of Sark should:-

- (1) initiate a citizen discussion on 'the duty to register', exemplifying practices from other countries, including those that operate sanctions; and**
- (2) propose for consultation and, in the light of any responses, determine a definition of 'ordinarily resident'.**

(This will be a piece of work for the Definition of a Resident Policy Development Team to undertake)

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| Comments:- |
| (1) |
| (2) |

3. Voting

- "... The UK Parliament Library has just published an information note on the issue ('compulsory voting'), which provides a useful summary."

Recommendation: The Government of Sark should consider whether 'compulsory voting' should be included in any consultation on election arrangements.

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| Comments:- |
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4. Ballot Paper

Recommendation: The Government of Sark should consider whether 'the ballot paper should provide the opportunity to have a short candidate description'.

Comments:-

5. Postal, proxy, assisted and mobile voting

- *“... I do recommend that Sark should introduce a provision for proxy voting...” “... To avoid abuse or the opportunity for corrupt practice, I suggest that any elector is only allowed to be the proxy for a maximum of two other electors.*

Recommendation: *The Government of Sark should consider ‘the introduction of a provision for proxy voting’.*

Comments:-

6. Candidates and nominations

- *“Sark has its own under-represented groups, with younger candidates being noticeably absent.”*
- *“... I think there is every benefit to be gained from initiating some form of out-reach programme to citizens ...”*

Recommendation: *The Government of Sark consider whether it should initiate a programme designed to increase knowledge about the government and governance of Sark, including for potential candidates.*

Recommendation: *The Government of Sark should consider whether there should be a daily publication of valid candidate nominations or whether valid candidate nominations should remain confidential until the close of nominations at which a single list of candidates should be published. A decision should be taken in time to implement at the next election.*

Comments:-

7. Candidates' communications

Recommendation: *The Government of Sark should continue to encourage and to provide the opportunity for candidates to publish their 'manifesto'. It might also wish to consider encouraging a civil society organisation or group to arrange hustings or debates at the next election.*

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| Comments:- |
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8. By-elections

Recommendation: *The Government of Sark re-affirms that any by-elections to be held on the same day as a general election should form part of a single election, with a ballot determining which successful candidates serve which terms of office.*

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| Comments:- |
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9. Marked Register

Recommendation: *In the interests of transparency, the Government of Sark should be minded to ensure the publication, with availability for continuing public inspection, a Marked Register confirming the identity of those who did and did not vote at an election.*

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| Comments:- |
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| ANY OTHER RELEVANT COMMENTS:- |
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NAME (not obligatory).....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST AND VALUED COMMENTS