

In this issue

- Annual General Meeting 2011
- Tax Ordinance
- Economic Forum
- Investment Policy Review Group
- Proposal for revitalising Agriculture
- CEED

Annual General Meeting

At the beginning of April, the Chamber held its AGM in the Consulate Hotel. The Tourism Development Executive, Mike Dean, gave a keynote speech which focused on the opportunities that tourism offers for the business community, both during the airport construction phase and afterwards, giving a considered forecast of how the private sector will have to develop if it is to take advantage of these opportunities.

The main agenda item was, of course, to elect a new Council. The new Council is as follows:

President: Stuart Moors
 Vice President: John Styles
 Secretary: Brenda Moors-Clingham
 Treasurer: Pat Williams
 Other Council Members:
 Chris Bargo, Nigel George, Hazel Wilmot,
 Julia Benjamin, Ian Gough

Tax Ordinance

Following on from the AGM, at a specially convened General Meeting, the members discussed the recently enacted revised Tax Ordinance, particularly in light of the planned "march" on the Castle by members of the public.

The meeting decided that the Governor in Council be left in no doubt, that while the Chamber was not intending to formally support the marchers, the Chamber had serious concerns of a different kind, namely that the revision of the Tax Ordinance was not fulfilling the stated aims, which were to make St. Helena a significantly more attractive place for inward investment. The Chamber's letter was considered in Executive Council.

Economic Forum

On March 2nd, a collaborative effort of the Chamber, PSMP, SHG and SHDA organised and held an Economic Forum meeting for 135 invited participants from the public and private sectors.

A number of topics were covered, some of which were followed up with brainstorming exercises.

The Chamber's contribution was a presentation and exercise focusing on Partnership Working, within the public sector and between the public and private sectors, but also making suggestions for how interests in the private sector can work together in various ways, including an innovative mechanism known as Multi-Activity Contracts.

The Chamber continues to be involved in following up the event with the development of an action plan, which will inevitably require real work from all involved.

Investment Policy Review Group

Ever since the announcement of the resurrection of the Airport Project, SHG has been focusing a great deal of attention on the drafting of the Memorandum of Understanding as the list of commitments to be made in connection with Condition 4, and subsequently the delivery of those promised items.

Several items require wholesale revision of laws, regulations and policies in order that St. Helena becomes an attractive place for investors to do business, and for the tourism industry to flourish.

One central policy revision addresses the future



**"We may have a problem with
our cash flow. Our debt flow
is going great, though!"**

needs for handling investments, and members of the Chamber Council have been continuously involved in helping to draft the provisions of the new policy. The review team has recently been strengthened with the appointment of remote consultancy in the UK.

Proposal for revitalising Agriculture

Some while ago, the Chamber had discussions with the Head of ANRD with regard to the future of the agricultural sector, which appeared to be deteriorating rapidly. With the enactment of the first Tax Ordinance, it became clear that the sector was really on the point of crisis, as we had predicted would be the case, and the Chamber made representations again, during the consultation period for the Tax Ordinance revision.

However, during further discussions with the NRDE Committee, the Chamber developed a proposal which argues that the creation of a Wholesale function to mediate supply between producers (farmers) and retailers, would (with other changes) revitalise the industry and result in increased volumes, quality and variety of food, by making the business environment for arable farmers more attractive. With all of the points in the proposal considered together, the Chamber has submitted an holistic plan for the rescue of the agricultural sector, and we await the deliberations of the NRDE Committee.

CEED

As part of the development of St.Helena's tourism industry, SHG and DfID have resolved to appoint a new post called the Chief Executive for Economic Development, or CEED for short.

Discussions with the visiting consultant, Eric Arnold, last year left the Chamber uneasy about what the purpose of this appointment was, and how the institutional arrangements would be changed to accommodate it.

More recent details have raised some alarm bells, as proposals appear to compromise the independence of SHDA, with which the Chamber has a well-developed working relationship. Any move by SHG to prescribe the activities of SHDA would be most unwelcome, and the proposal that the CEED should chair the SHDA Board does seem to point that way. The Chamber has indicated its concern and a meeting with the Governor is likely in the near future.

Meadow Muffins

"Very often, superfluous customer experience results in repetitive resource shortfall."