

Serving the Island's



Town, Parish & Community Councils

The IWALC Bulletin

March 2023

Your questions answered, your experiences shared... news and information from across the Island...links and updates...

Your IWALC Matters!!

Message from the Chair

Although February is the shortest month of the year, it has been a difficult month for both public and voluntary sector organisations on the Island – and also for many residents. Forthcoming increases in council tax by the IW Council and many local councils, together with cuts in IW Council expenditure, have been widely publicised in the media. Both the IW Council and local councils have had to make difficult decisions. They have had to balance the implications of soaring inflation and (in the case of the IW Council) further cuts in government funding, with increasing demand for services and the knowledge that many residents are already struggling to make ends meet. However, the news is not all bad. There are at least four reasons to be positive.



Firstly, unlike some local authorities, the IW Council has at least managed to set a balanced budget. Failure to do so would have led to government intervention, which could in turn have resulted in further cuts and/or higher increases in council tax. Recent events in Croydon Borough Council demonstrate this. The government gave the Council permission to propose a 15% tax increase but the proposal was rejected following public protests. The Council now has to find an alternative solution by 11 March in order to avoid more drastic government intervention.

Secondly, the IW Council has increased the amount of council tax support that can be given. This will provide some protection for the most vulnerable residents.

Thirdly, local councils have once again stepped in to help fill the gap created by the cuts in IW Council services. This is one of the reasons why many of these councils have had to increase their precept. For example, Ryde Town Council has agreed to take over the funding of the IW Council's Help Centre in Ryde Library, which would otherwise have closed, and Newport and Carisbrooke Community Council will be contributing to the costs of planning enforcement in the town. We will publish a detailed analysis of local council precepts in our next issue.

And fourthly, although the voluntary sector is itself a victim of the cuts in the IW Council budget, it is continuing to do its part to support local residents. Of particular interest to local councils are the new Living Well and Early Help Service, which is run by a partnership composed of Aspire Ryde, Pan Together, Ventnor Town Council and West Wight Sports and Community Centre, and Community Action's Resilience Project. Both projects are community-based and draw on experience gained at the local level, particularly but not only during the Covid pandemic.

Cllr Diana Conyers

DISCLAIMER.

The function of the Bulletin is to inform members of issues and happenings that are of concern. All articles are taken in good faith and the opinions expressed in the Bulletin are those of the submitter. Submitted articles do not necessarily reflect our views. We cannot take responsibility for any legal queries resulting from these. We reserve the right not to publish any contributions that for any reason we consider inappropriate.

IWALC News...

Contact - IWALC County Officer, Heather Rowell (heatheriwalc@gmail.com)

Website - www.iwalc.org - Check out our Facebook page too.

The Bulletin - Communications Officer - Jill Webster - jwebster.iwalc@outlook.com

The deadline for the April edition will be March 31st - Thank you.

February Topic Meeting

Twenty-five IWALC representatives attended the meeting, which was held on Thursday 23 February in the IW Council Chamber and chaired by Cllr Anne Bamford, IWALC's deputy chair. The purpose of the meeting was to find out more about the Council's plans to address the Island's current shortage of affordable accommodation, especially rented housing.

Three officers from the IW Council addressed the meeting: Ollie Boulter, Strategic Manager for Planning and Infrastructure Delivery; James Brewer, Planning Team Leader (Policy and Delivery); and Dawn Lang, Strategic Manager for Housing. Cllr Paul Fuller, who is the Cabinet Member for Planning as well as an IWALC member, was also present.



The meeting focused on four specific aspects of the housing situation: second homes and holiday homes, empty buildings, enforcement, and the Council's new housing company.

Second homes and holiday homes

James Brewer, the Council's Planning Team Leader (Policy and Delivery), explained that both planning and legal means are required to address the concerns about second homes and holiday homes. Since the problems are local rather than Island-wide, neighbourhood plans are usually the best planning tool. On the legal front, the Council is awaiting proposed government legislation that will regulate holiday homes and allow local councils to increase council tax on second homes. Discussion focused on the problems of defining such properties and the loopholes that owners could use to avoid paying increased tax.

Empty Buildings

Dawn Lang, the Council's recently appointed Strategic Manager for Housing, reported that there are currently 922 known empty residential properties on the Island. The Council tries to work with the owners to bring them back into productive use, but if this fails, more drastic measures can be taken. Members expressed frustration at the Council's apparent reluctance to use more drastic measures, especially with larger empty buildings. This led on to the discussion on enforcement.

Enforcement

Ollie Boulter, the Council's Strategic Manager for Planning and Infrastructure Delivery, introduced the Council's proposed new Enforcement Strategy. He explained that, because enforcement is not a statutory function and their resources are limited, they are proposing that the Council focus on major enforcement cases and inviting local councils to contribute to the cost of dealing with other cases in their areas. Members expressed concern about local councils' capacity to contribute to the costs.

IW Council's Housing Company

Dawn Lang explained that, although a company had been registered in 2019, under the previous administration, it is not yet operational. The Council's legal team are currently working on the details, including the company's relationship to the Council, its functions and a business plan. In the meantime, the Council is using other means to increase housing stock and support homeless residents. Members emphasised the need for the company to focus on social housing.

IWALC would like to thank the Council staff for taking the time to come and brief members and for enabling us to use the Council Chamber for no charge.

Next Meeting

The next IWALC meeting will be an Executive Meeting on Thursday 30 March. This will be held at 7 pm at the Riverside Centre.

Meetings with Isle of Wight Cabinet and Bob Seely MP

On Thursday 9 February members held online meetings with both the IW Council's Cabinet and MP Bob Seely. Topics of discussion in the meeting with Cabinet included speeding, the quality of the cycle route between Ryde and Newport, Yarmouth school, problems in connecting new housing developments to sewage supply, and the IW Council's twinning with the German city of Coburg. At the meeting with the MP, topics included the Island Deal, Police action in relation to antisocial behaviour, government funding for intermediate care for people leaving hospital, and termination of Council funding for homelessness prevention. A more detailed report on both meetings has already been circulated to members.

The next meeting with Cabinet will be at 12 noon on Thursday 9 March. All councillors and staff are welcome to attend. Please contact your clerk or Jill Webster to get the link to the meeting. No date has yet been set for the next meeting with Bob Seely.

Training

IWALC's Training Group met on Friday 3 March. Two courses will be held in the near future (April-June):

Basic Skills Refresher Course: This will be open to all councillors but the main target group will be councillors who attended a Basic Councillor Skills course soon after their appointment and now want a chance to reflect on the relevance of their training and probe more deeply into some aspects. Interested participants will be consulted in advance on topics they would like covered.

Accessing the Media: The purpose of this course will be to help councils make the best use of the media. It will include the need for a media policy, press releases, liaison with the main media outlets, and the use of social media.

Further details of both courses will be circulated soon. Courses on Planning Enforcement and Financial Management are planned for later in the year.

Royal Garden Party

There will be a Royal Garden Party on 3 May this year. NALC only informed us of this on 31 January and we had to submit nominations by 14 February. Since there was not time to consult all members, the Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, County Officer and Communications Officer made a decision on members' behalf. We decided to nominate Maxine Warr. Maxine was nominated by IWALC in 2020, on the basis of her long-term commitment to local councils on the Island, including several years as County Officer. However, since the garden parties were disrupted by Covid, this is the first opportunity she has had to take up her nomination.

Peter Whiteman

IWALC was very sorry to hear that Peter Whiteman has resigned as a councillor for Chillerton and Gatcombe Parish Council.

Peter has served the local council sector on the Island tirelessly and conscientiously for many years. He has been a councillor not only on Chillerton and Gatcombe Parish Council but also on Newport and Carisbrooke Parish Council (as it was then called), and he has been Chair of IWALC.

He always played an active role in any activity in which he was involved. His contribution will be missed.



Taking a Negative and Turning it into a Positive.

Sometimes councillors disagree and relationships become cold and unproductive. This sometimes occurs in bigger councils where personalities just don't get on, whether councillor against councillor or councillors not seeing or agreeing with Parish or Town Clerks or other employed staff. At Ventnor Town Council some weaknesses were recently discovered and we collectively had the desire to address some challenges we were having. A councillor set about working individually with all elected members, staff and staff representatives to address some issues in governance and leadership within our council. The objective was to improve human relationships and introduce NALC's Civility and Respect pledge. The councillor who undertook this task could only achieve this with the support and cooperation of all concerned and that must be noted and valued.



Actions taken - Personally held individual meetings with elected members. Attended staff meetings, (VTC has 16 staff) to harvest views and opinions. Wrote a training aid paper on Ethical Leadership for elected members as they (we) are community leaders, but the training aid is equally valid for use with and for staff as our operational leaders in the community. We held an informal meeting on a Saturday, where all elected members attended, giving freely of their time. The purpose, to get to know each other better. To discuss ethical leadership and practice and to discuss elected member's relationship with employed staff and how we can move forward and improve things further on an already solid professional working base. Praise your staff, if you don't agree with staff or another elected member, wear their shoes, understand their position and present your different view positively and not negatively with personal criticism. All views were welcomed at this informal gathering of elected members and we formed a plan based on collective responsibilities and ownership of our behaviours to one another.

Result - Adoption of the NALC C&R pledge, but we have taken it further. We have included additional wording to cover our expectation of staff behaviours. Have introduced a bi-annual signature system (physically requesting elected members to sign the pledge). Using the pledge as a board parameter as to how we conduct ourselves in internal and external matters, whether that be meetings, meeting contractors, the public, our staff etc. The pledge is going before council at the April 2023 meeting for collective and formal endorsement of our commitment.

Cllr Steve Cooper (Ventnor Town Council)

Press Release

Island Echo

https://www.islandecho.co.uk/iwalc-members-find-out-what-council-is-doing-to-meet-affordable-rented-housing-needs/?utm_source=newsletter-919&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Newsletter



Community Action's Winter Pressures Partnership Zoom meetings

Please contact Sandy Ciccognani (SCiccognani@actioniw.org.uk) to be added to the circulation list for more information, log-in details for Zoom and for the date of the next meeting.



Monthly Meetings for IWALC with IWC Cabinet Members

These take place on the second Thursday of the month, remotely, via Teams between noon and 1pm. They are well worth finding an hour of your day for. All IWALC Councillors and staff are invited to take part in these informal but informative meetings.



Please contact your Clerk for the Teams log-in details.

Meetings with MP Bob Seely

All Councillors and staff of IWALC Member Councils are invited to take part in these online meetings.

The Zoom log-in details will be circulated to Clerks in advance.



Please remember to check IWALC's Facebook page regularly for more NALC information and news.

If your Council has a Facebook page, please let Jill know and we can re-post your news etc to IWALC's Facebook page.



News from NALC

Smaller Councils' Committee

Committee Chair

The Smaller Councils Committee met remotely on 21st February. The chair, Councillor Graham Ford from Cornwall was attending his last meeting as he is to stand down as the Cornwall representative on the National Assembly and therefore cannot continue as an Assembly representative on the committee. Graham was thanked for his dedicated work as chair of the committee. He will be a hard act to follow.

Councillor Training

The committee considered its position on the subject of whether there should be mandatory training for councillors. After a lengthy discussion the committee narrowly voted against making councillor training mandatory, instead agreeing it should be strongly recommended and that it should be included in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return and the Local Council Award Scheme.

Financial Resilience for Smaller Councils

The committee discussed the issue of financial resilience and urged NALC to factor into its work programme the production of simplified template documents on subjects identified in responses to the survey of local councils carried out in 2022. In addition, the committee agreed to ask NALC and SLCC to publish financial resilience guidance for smaller councils in the autumn. During the discussion attention was drawn to the issue of by-elections called to fill casual vacancies. For smaller councils these can have a disproportionate effect on finances. In some cases a single by-election can cost more than 10% of a council's precept. Currently by-elections have to be called if requested by ten electors, in some cases signatures are collected by people not even living in the parish. It was suggested that a higher threshold for triggering by-elections would address this problem and that it could be referred to the Policy Committee if a county association were to request it. Parishes on the Island and IWALC may wish to consider this.

NALC/LGA Workforce Survey

The committee's attention was drawn to a joint NALC/LGA workforce survey which is to be carried out this year. The key aims of the survey are to get a reliable picture of the total workforce in local councils and to gain insight into what drives recruitment and retention of staff. The timescale indicates the survey was launched in February with a deployment period to the end of March with presentation of the data to the NALC "Management Team" and production of the full report in April. The committee was strongly of the view that the lead in time was grossly inadequate and that there should be direct email communication with councils with the survey rather than simply relying on councils to respond online.

Climate Emergency

The committee recommended that National Assembly members urge CALCs to promote carbon literacy training and suggest that it should be undertaken by at least one member of every local council. In addition, it was requested that CALCs should advise NALC of the number of councils in their area to have adopted a climate emergency declaration.

Bob BLEZZARD February 2023

Fortnightly Meeting with County Officers

The meeting on February 8 between NALC and county officers included a presentation from Tim Light of the Internal Auditors Forum on the work that they do and the services they have available for county associations, local councils, and internal auditors themselves. Tim was keen to emphasise the earlier a local council organises their internal auditor the better. There was also a presentation on the key priorities for NALC in making representations on the proposed National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The meeting also received some brief updates on VAT and legal changes, and on 'Martyn's Law'.

The meeting on February 22 between NALC and county officers included a webinar delivered by our HR partners Worknest. This ran through the considerations on post-Covid working arrangements, as well as general advice on how to approach requests from staff to variations in existing working hours and location. There will be further webinars throughout the year on a variety of HR topics to help support county associations in their work.

NALC Environment Group

On 14th February I attended the NALC Environment Group zoom call. There were approximately 39 people on that call, and there are 109 people signed up nationally.

It was an interesting call; members discussed and voted on proposals to offer up training to all councillors on the climate crisis.

They also have a WhatsApp group to connect up with councillors doing environmental work nationally. This is handy to share projects and offer / receive advice.

If IWALC councillors on the Island are interested in joining, please click the following link <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/national-networks> and complete the relevant form.

This is important as it enables councillors to vote on national NALC initiatives.

Cllr Julie Hutchison (Ventnor Town Council)

News from Member Councils

Arreton Parish Council
Bembridge Parish Council
Brading Town Council
Brighstone Parish Council
Chillerton & Gatcombe Parish Council
Cowes Town Council
East Cowes Town Council
Fishbourne Parish Council
Freshwater Parish Council
Godshill Parish Council
Gurnard Parish Council
Havenstreet & Ashey Parish Council
Lake Parish Council
Nettlestone & Seaview Parish Council

Newchurch Parish Council
Newport & Carisbrooke Community Council
Niton & Whitwell Parish Council
Northwood parish Council
Rookley Parish Council
Ryde Town Council
Sandown Town Council
Shalfleet Parish Council
Shorwell Parish Council
St Helen's Parish Council
Ventnor Town Council
Wootton Bridge Parish Council
Wroxall Parish Council
Yarmouth Town Council

Gurnard Parish Council

Councillors in Gurnard took the decision to keep the Parish Precept at the same level as last year as we did not want to add to the cost of living crisis. We decided that if necessary we would reduce reserves a little instead, particularly as, in the current inflationary time, any reserves are actually losing value anyway.



We looked at areas where we expected to spend and set what was thought to be an appropriate budget for each item judging from last year's expenditure. We had a parish wide consultation although only on those items felt to be discretionary so, for example, items such as defibrillator maintenance were not included as an item. We asked about seven items: replacing children's playground equipment, testing for water quality and beach safety, safety outside Gurnard School, Gurnard in Bloom, caring for a green space in the village, Cowes library and possible celebrations for the Coronation.

The consultation was distributed as a single A4 sheet inserted into the Gurnard News magazine that is delivered to the vast majority of households in the parish. One councillor used his excellent IT skills and the consultation also went out digitally.

We asked parishioners to say whether or not they agreed with each item on the consultation: was each seen as a high or low priority on a scale of 1-5 and whether the allocated sum was felt to be about right, again on a scale of 1-5.

Councillors learned a lot from putting the consultation out – the next one needs to be a bit simpler to collate for one thing! – but it was reassuring that parishioners and councillors seem to be thinking along the same lines. We had a 10% return rate, something else to build upon in the future.

Cllr Penny Acton

Cowes Town Council

We start this month with the very sad news of the passing of long serving Town Councillor David Jones. David was a Town Councillor since 2003 and was Mayor between 2015 – 2017. He was very passionate about the town of Cowes and was heavily supportive of a number of local groups. He was President of Cowes Heritage and Community Group and other appointments have included Vice President of the Friends of Northwood Cemetery. We send our heartfelt condolences to David's family.



At our February Town Council meeting - Ian Boyd gave a presentation to Councillors about Project Seagrass, which is a global project supported by Sky, Liz Earle and the WWF. Seagrass is incredibly important around our coasts and the Solent is the most important site in the UK. Seagrass persists and survives in the area around Cowes despite the area being a busy working industrial area, a port and a harbour. Seagrass is a flowering plant and is home to many important species including seahorses, pipefish and cuttlefish. Seagrass meadows act as a natural defence by trapping sediment and slowing down current and waves. Seeds of the plant are being collected, grown in a nursery and put back in the sea to propagate. In the area around Cowes, Seagrass copes with a lot and the question is how and why this ecosystem persists in this difficult environment. The outcome of this research will be shared globally to help other areas to nurture Seagrass areas around the world. Ian advised that later in the year there will be a symposium in Cowes. SeagrassSpotter.org is being used to ask people to report any new sightings of Seagrass.

The local Safer Neighbourhood Officer's report included details about anti-social behaviour around the area with door knocking by young people. Extra patrols on late shifts seem to have stopped this behaviour; if it restarts then residents have been advised to call it in. Police are targeting one road a month for anti-social behaviour, speeding or any vehicle related incidents. Councillors can advise the Police if there are any roads that they would like covered.

There is a residents parking permit consultation taking place with residents of Arctic Road, Bernard Road and Bellevue Road due to parking problems in these areas.

Councillors supported grants to Cowes Fringe Ltd in the sum of £2,500 specifically for the promotion and marketing of the Cowes Fringe Event 2023, and Market Days IOW CIC in the sum of £2,500. We look forward to seeing a number of new and exciting events in Cowes this year.

Councillors discussed the IW Council's communication with residents of unadopted and unmade roads. This is due to the waste service provider's problems experienced on these roads due to pot holes and poor road surfaces; the IW Council has a duty of care for Amey employees. The roads affected in Cowes are Alexandra Road, Coronation Road and Weston Road. The Town Clerk has written to the IW Council to enquire if any enforcement action can be taken in regard to residents in the aforementioned roads. This is an Island-wide problem that needs to be addressed.

Potholes – The very wet weather has created a large number of potholes around our local area. Councillors queried with Island Roads why it takes two visits to repair the potholes – a temporary repair, followed later by a more permanent repair. Island Roads have advised they are compiling a Fact Sheet on this topic, which they will be emailing to all Town and Parish Councils.

Wight Tricks Academy has been granted funding from Cowes Town Council, in the form of a bursary, in the sum of £3,000 which will allow students from low income families in Cowes to take part in lessons. The sum will be held by the Town Council and released upon request from the WightTricks Academy.

The group started in 2018, running an airtrack at Gurnard Primary School. They moved to Prospect Business Park in March 2019 and opened their gym. Unfortunately



noise complaints were made which necessitated the group looking for alternative premises. These have now been found at Somerton Business Park and they received the keys on 23 December 2022. The group currently has 100 students attending and 1,000 on their waiting list. The students do flips, kicks and tricks. One of their 12 year old students came first in the Under 16's category of the 2022 Oslo Movement Gathering, an international tricking competition. The new gym will accommodate their existing spring floor and the unit will have a café and waiting room added. *(Photo courtesy of Cllr Michael Paler.)*

Additional Warm Space – The IW Community Club are providing a Warm Space on Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 2pm to 4pm: IW Community Club, Park Road. Free tea and coffee; other refreshments; book exchange; free Wi-Fi; board games; device charging; TV. The Community Club also welcomes Starling Songwriters who will be holding an Early Years Music Group and a Song Creation & Music Tech Club on alternate Saturdays in term-time.

Graffiti – It is disappointing to see our town spoilt with ugly graffiti and other forms of vandalism. The Town Council continues to try to remove all traces of graffiti from our facilities, but it is all too often repeated. Councillors are considering installing CCTV cameras at Northwood Recreation Ground to try and stop this bad behavior.

Connect4communities – We have been successful in securing funding of £5,000 which will be delivered in the form of food vouchers to support those families and the elderly identified as being most in financial hardship.

Looking ahead, the Town Council is again pleased to be supporting the Great British Spring Clean (17 March – 2 April) and will host a litter pick. Date and location TBC.

Kate Scragg (Asst Town Clerk)

Ryde Town Council

In very exciting news Ryde Town Council are delighted to be able to announce the election of Diana Conyers as Councillor for Ryde North West.



The resignation of the previous office holder left a vacancy on the council and we are thrilled that Diana will be bringing her wealth of experience, drive and knowledge to the team.

Allan Bridges (Business Development Manager & Deputy Clerk)

I am delighted to be back on Ryde Town Council, especially since I am representing the ward where I live. And as a Citizens Advice volunteer, I am pleased that the Council has agreed to provide funds to keep the IWC's Help Centre in Ryde Library open and has obtained funds from Connect for Communities to provide supermarket vouchers for residents who are struggling to make ends meet.

Cllr Diana Conyers

Ventnor Town Council

Report by Clerk, David Bartlett



HIGH SHERIFF'S AWARDS

The Island's High Sheriff Kay Marriott came to our Green Room at the start of Monday's Town Council Meeting to make her Awards to three of the town's local organisations. They are made each year through public nominations as a mark of distinction and recognition given to public servants, individual volunteers or community groups based on the Isle of Wight, who are making a significant contribution to their communities. Monday's three recipients were our Wellbeing Café, Baby Box and Better Days Café.



The Office of High Sheriff is an independent, non-political Royal appointment for a single year. Kay Marriott's 45 years work in the NHS included, on the Island, Head of Nursing and Clinical Director for the then, Community Directorate.

RUGBY PUTS VENTNOR IN THE NEWS

To celebrate the 200th anniversary of the game of Rugby, 200 rugby balls are being sent out around the world to help raise awareness of the game. Ventnor was chosen to receive one of the globally sent out rugby balls to be involved in this great event. Ventnor is the only town on the Island and is one of the very first recipients of these anniversary Rugby balls.



Local resident John Bagshawe, who went to Rugby School, organised the event to celebrate Ventnor's achievement in being selected to receive one of the 200 Rugby balls globally that took place on the Esplanade at noon on Saturday.

The event was filmed by Ventnor film-maker David George and publicised earlier on Radio Solent by our Business Development Officer Nigel Slater-Bishop.

BUDGET & PRECEPT FOR 2023/24

The 2023/24 Precept was agreed at the Town Council Meeting on Monday 13 February. Members and staff worked over the past month to keep next year's Precept as low as possible in the context of rising prices for the services we need in order to maintain the assets and support that are so important to the town. We are predicting a total spend in the year of around £513,000 and the Budget shows that £430,731 of that will come from the Precept, which will mean an increase in the Precept of £47,361 from this year, adding 11.97% to the Band D cost, or 35 pence a week.

SEA WALL PUBLIC MEETING

Some 70 residents came to the public meeting arranged by the Isle of Wight Council at St Catherine's



Church on Tuesday evening to see drone footage revealing the serious damage to the town's sea wall. The presentation by the Council's Strategic Manager for the Environment, Natasha Dix, provided details of the Emergency Works already completed and the Urgent Repairs stage that had now started and would take



the rest of this year to complete.

ASSETS & SERVICES WORKING GROUP

The Group's meeting on Tuesday morning started with an update on the ongoing maintenance of Salisbury Gardens' South and West elevations followed by a discussion of the uses of our Green Room kitchen. Two items about Boniface Fields came next including the removal of a tree and the possibility of installing a WiFi facility. The final item focused on the rent for our four car parks, currently £24,900pa, and the level of charges compared with those in the other four that are managed by the Isle of Wight Council.

Shalfleet Parish Council



Shalfleet Parish Council

COMMUNITY LED HOUSING – a packed room for the February meeting of the Parish Council to hear John Prickett, the Community Led Housing Officer give his presentation and hold a question and answer session.

John outlined the 5 stages of the project (which is in its early stages), confirmed a site at Crossways had been chosen to take forward and legal advice and funding were being sought.

He explained about Local Lettings and mentioned Community Land Trusts and housing need. A Working Party was in the process of being set up and interested parties asked to contact the Parish Clerk by Monday 20th March 2023. The group were holding meetings with three Architects to determine which should take the project forward. Progress will continue to be reported.

Later in the meeting it was agreed 3 Parish Councillors and the Clerk be the Parish Council element of the Working Party. A ballot was taken by Councillors to agree the three Parish Councillors, these are: Cllrs H Hewston, A Ingram and S Cowley.

Ward Councillors Nick Stuart and Peter Spink both gave reports at the meeting and these related to planning and IWC issues. Resident asked them to look into a much needed footpath between Thorley and Wellow.

Lucketts Farm – the owners, who were present at the meeting and had submitted a planning application to increase the number of pitches from 15 to 30, were given chance to explain their situation. The Parish Council agreed to support this application for a local business.

Kings Coronation – the meeting noted that discussions on several events in villages in the Parish had begun. It was agreed if funding was to be requested from the Parish Council, these should be made in writing for the Councillors to consider at a future meeting, once budgets agreed. Shalfleet Village Hall asked for volunteers to help with their Big Lunch on Sunday 7th May 2023.

Clerks Report – the Clerk gave various updates and confirmed the new defibrillator had now been installed at Wellow Institute. The Deputy Clerk was to arrange signage for this and had already added it to The Circuit and IW Defib websites.

SoundCloud – the Councillors agreed to pay the subscription to enable the 6 month trial to have the recordings of Parish Council meetings added to the website.

Annual Parish Meeting/Community Award – the Councillors agreed who they would like invited as a guest speaker at the meeting to be held on Wednesday 26th April 2023.

They also agreed which worthy individual should be presented with the Community Award, on the same night.

Next meetings:

Wednesday, 8th March 2023 10 am Shalfleet CE Primary School

Wednesday 12th April 2023 7.15 pm Shalfleet CE Primary School

Sally Woods (Clerk)

Fishbourne Parish Council



In the last Bulletin we expressed our regrets at the resignation of our clerk, Lindsey Hood. However, this month we are delighted to report that we have successfully recruited an excellent replacement. Our new clerk is Katie Riley, who is currently also clerk to Northwood Parish Council. Katie has many years' experience of clerking on the Island and we are delighted that she has chosen to join our small team at Fishbourne. Welcome, Katie!

We are also pleased to report that one of our councillors, Cheryl Fontana, has just qualified as a Citizens Advice First Aider. Personally, I am very pleased about this because, as a Citizens Advice adviser myself, I am only too aware that the demand for our services is higher than ever. Congratulations, Cheryl!

Meanwhile, our monthly Coffee Mornings continue to be popular. There is always a lively discussion. At this month's meeting, the topics discussed ranged from TV-sponsored weddings to the shortage of affordable housing on the Island!

Cllr Diana Conyers

East Cowes Town Council

Following another very successful pantomime in the Amy White Theatre at the Town Hall, a new Town Council Theatre Committee has been formed with the aim of making further improvements to the facilities and offering more opportunities for arts and culture vents in the town.



Goal posts will be installed shortly at Victoria Recreation Ground creating a new youth football pitch.

An Emergency First Aid course is being run during March for staff and the community.

Regular monthly events now include the community cinema, community market, charity coffee mornings and PCSO Beat Surgeries.

The Town Hall and The East Side Curve and Library continue to be busy with a wide range of activities, groups and classes. Over 270 additional library users signed up since the opening.

Staff and volunteers will be undertaking Island Ambassador training next month prior to The East Side Curve accommodating the Tourist Information Point for East Cowes.

Claire Gale (Asst Clerk)

Sandown Town Council

Longterm Lifeguard Legacy

Sandown Town Councillors celebrated the development of a longer

term beach safety strategy, working with Todd Miller, national trainer and manager of the local service.

Members highlighted the provision of safety buoys in the Bay, alongside provision in Lake and Shanklin, which has helped address jet-ski concerns of residents; the provision of a lifeguard station, a base for lifeguards and look out station for beach safety; securing grants for the provision of accessible beach wheelchairs; partnership work with Sandown & Shanklin Independent Lifeboat Service; provision of walkie-talkies for local concessionaires; provided sea safe sessions for local young people; first aid and defib provision; and investment in Eastern Gardens Toilets.



Sandown
Town Council



Mayor Paddy Lightfoot said 'This partnership approach has secured grants, enabled capacity building, increased accessibility, help secure the Island's only blue flag, and more importantly provided a high quality beach safety service for the benefit of residents and visitors.'

Deputy Mayor Alex Lightfoot added 'The Town Council value the work of Todd and his team of lifeguards, with the benefit of longer term certainty we can continue to develop the beach safety service, apply for additional funding for specific projects, and jointly work to increase accessibility.'

The Town Council recently approved a budget that continue this long term provision for beach safety, alongside matched funding to support grant applications, as well as other beach side initiatives which will shortly be announced once plans are finalised.

Todd Miller concluded 'Working with Sandown has enabled the service to grow, providing more opportunities for younger people, as well as skilling up local school children and trainee lifeguards to build long-term capacity and provision.'

Richard Priest (Clerk)

Picture L-R Sandown Mayor Paddy Lightfoot, Todd Miller, Cllrs Sue Betts, Frank Baldry, Heather Humby MBE, Toby Wilcock, Jenny Hicks, Ian Fletcher & Deputy Mayor Alex Lightfoot.

Chillerton & Gatcombe Parish Council

It's been a period of changes at Chillerton and Gatcombe recently. Sara McWilliam left the council late last year and has been replaced by the co-option of Julia Newton.

Peter Whiteman has now also left us and the process for filling his place will have to begin. Peter of course is well known to all at IWALC, and his experience will be missed at Chillerton & Gatcombe.

We have also had a change in Parish Clerk with Lindsey Hood leaving to return to the Ambulance Service. In his stead we have appointed Virgil Philpott.

We sadly have had to increase our Precept to £13,000. We had hoped to stick at £12,000 but have found that expensive work is needed on the trees around the village green which we could not absorb in our intended budget.

Cllr Nigel Phillips (Chairman)

Introducing Chillerton & Gatcombe's New Clerk....

Virgil is the manager of Carisbrooke Castle Museum, a charitable organisation, which, he stresses, pre-dates, and is separate from, English Heritage - and which will be celebrating its 125th anniversary later this year. The Museum is currently working on a book, due out later this Summer, which will showcase a number of the IW treasures and curiosities from its collections.

Prior to working at Carisbrooke, Virgil was the manager of RJR Solicitors (for ten years) and before that, from 1999-2003, the Director of the Quay Arts Centre in Newport. He was brought up on the Island (in Ryde) and studied History at Reading University before working in Dorset, Yorkshire and Staffordshire. These days he lives in Newport and has a son, Jabel, who is at Warwick University, and a daughter, Daisy, who is just coming up to GCSEs.

Outside of work, Virgil enjoys cricket and has a fascination for history, art, cinema and traditional music. For fifteen years he was a member of 'The Dollymopps' a group dedicated to researching and performing old IW tunes and songs. Unfortunately that project is currently 'on hold' until such times as they can overcome the technical latency issues associated with long-distance rehearsals!

Weather permitting, Virgil enjoys walking the IW countryside with his partner, Corina. The circular from St Olave's, through the wild garlic, is one their favourite quick, 'doorstep', routes. Virgil says he is looking forward to making a contribution to Parish life and, of course, taste testing the wares at The Gallybagger.



Other News...

News in Brief from the Isle of Wight Council

Family Hubs

The Isle of Wight Council will be a 'trailblazer' for family hubs, the government announced (9 February).



Around £2.6 million has been provided already for a three year programme, until 2025, with an extra £33,000 now confirmed. The Island was one of the first places in the country to introduce the family hub network back in 2015. The local team, which includes colleagues from Public Health and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board, has worked closely with colleagues in Whitehall to inform and advise on the new national rollout.

The council is one of 14 local authorities included in the Department for Education's Trailblazers Scheme for Family Hubs and Start of Life Programmes. The Island will continue to act as a national leader for the rollout of the government scheme, focusing on perinatal mental health, parent-infant relationships, infant feeding and parent support.

The Island will have access to a range of support, including working with other Trailblazer authorities to solve shared problems, sharing best practice and support through regional and national forums and establishing relationships with the people responsible for maternity and early years services in government.

The Isle of Wight's family hub network has expanded to provide a greater range of services, through close working with the community, and voluntary and social enterprise sectors. Families can access many different kinds of support through the network, including health visitors, targeted groups for dads, peer support for new parents and play sessions led by volunteers.

Families can access services in person and online, so they are able to get support in a way that suits their needs.

On 24 February, the anniversary of Russia's barbaric and deplorable invasion of Ukraine, the Ukrainian national flag was raised at County Hall.

The poignant moment of reflection was attended by several Ukrainians who have made the Island their home since the start of the conflict. Hearing them sing their national anthem and seeing their pain made the short ceremony highly emotional for those present. The national flag of Ukraine now flies proudly alongside the Union Flag in a symbolic gesture of support for the people of Ukraine.

Councillor Chris Jarman, who welcomed two Ukrainian families into his family home, said the commemoration was an opportunity to pay tribute to the courage of the Ukrainian people. One of the Island's Ukrainian guests said: "We thank your country and your Island for the love and support shown. Each and every Ukrainian is very overwhelmed and grateful."

Islanders are invited to have their say on a strategy outlining how the Isle of Wight Council will help bring forward hundreds more charging points for electric vehicles, to support the move to greener travel.

An eight-week consultation on the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy was launched on Feb 24 and residents have until 21 April to give their views. The plan sets out how an extensive network of public chargepoints will encourage people to switch to electric vehicles (EV) at the earliest opportunity.

The strategy proposes some actions the council can take to support the rollout. In particular, the council wants to plan for residents that do not have off-street parking and who will be completely reliant on the public network. The sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans in the UK will end in 2030 and, with the target of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2040 in the council's 'Mission Zero' Climate and Environment Strategy, there is a need to ensure infrastructure is in place enabling residents to make the switch to electric.

The full consultation document is available at: www.iow.gov.uk/Council/OtherServices/zzzElectric-Vehicle-Chargepoints/EVCI-Strategy-Consultation on the 'EVCI Strategy Consultation' tab.

The survey itself is available here. <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/5e49ff83dbe04fbab19ddbe33109f988>

A hard copy of the consultation document and response form is available by contacting us on evchargepoints@iow.gov.uk or (01983) 821000. Copies will also be available in public libraries and County Hall reception.

A multi-million pound bid for a new Isle of Wight special school has been accepted by the government.

The new school, set to be built on land next to Carisbrooke College in Newport will cater for up to 75 pupils with additional needs. The Isle of Wight Council, in partnership with Hampshire County Council, submitted the bid to the Department for Education (DfE) last year. The school will offer specialist support and education for primary and secondary aged pupils with special education needs and disabilities (SEND), such as autism or social emotional and mental health conditions.

The Island has the fifth highest number of pupils with Educational Health Care Plans (EHCP) across England at 1,450. And it is a figure that is expected to grow by 2027.

The Island only has two maintained special schools and both are now full. This means increasingly the council is having to place pupils in more expensive independent placements both here and on the mainland.

A free school functions like an academy, insofar as they are funded directly by the DfE rather than through the local authority.

News from Trading Standards.

Please find the latest scam alerts below



- Be very careful of emails telling you that you have won something – one received recently was purporting to be from Currys stating that you have won a Smeg kettle. When you check the actual senders email it is clearly not a genuine Curry's one. This will be a phishing exercise designed to grab your details to use in future scams. Do NOT click on any links in messages like this
- Again please be wary of callers using 01983 numbers residents are receiving automated calls saying that transactions had occurred on their bank accounts and to press 2 to speak to someone. DO NOT do this, hang up immediately and if you are in any doubt you can check with your bank by calling 159 and selecting your bank
- More reports are being received around whatsapp/text messages saying "mum my phone is broken so text me on this new number" this will be an attempt by scammers to get you to send money, thinking you are helping your child but the money will be going straight into the scammers bank account – ALWAYS contact your child on their number to check if you are in any doubt
- More emails purporting to be from DVLA claiming that your details are no longer valid and click on a link to amend. DO NOT click on links in emails they will be at the least a phishing exercise for your details and at the worst an opportunity to take money from your account
- A quite specific scam now but still relevant to some residents – Ukrainian hosts are receiving letters purporting to be from the Department for Levelling UP Housing and Communities asking for information about you and your guest – this has been confirmed as a scam by the Government.

Sally Ash (Fair Trading Officer)

ASDA Foundation Grants

The Asda Foundation supports small, grass roots organisations in several ways throughout the year. Working with Asda's Community Champions in store, we are able to work with a range of organisations and groups on a variety of local community projects.

We are committed to supporting community groups across the UK with over £1.3 million of funding through this grant programme in 2023.

Groups can apply for between £400 and £1600 by contacting their local Community Champion. Full details are available here.... <https://bit.ly/3EwX5Jb>

Last year we supported thousands of groups with our Grassroots Grants.



Citizens Advice IW.

The charity is seeing growing need from Islanders ...as an example I have been comparing January 2022 to January 2023.

January 2022 saw us help 783 clients with 1598 issues. Of those issues Benefits (160) and housing (153) were the top two.

January 2023 saw **an increase of 114** clients up to 897 with 2439 issues. Of those issues Benefits (188) and Charitable Support and Food banks (144) were the top two.

That fits the data which I picked up on the national Citizens Advice Cost of Living briefing. In 2022, we broke many unwelcome records for the number of people nationally we've helped who are in crisis situations. That was over 200,000 people with crisis support — like food bank referrals or emergency charitable grants to help them get by. That's nearly 50% higher than 2021, more than twice as high as in 2020 and more than two and a half times higher than in 2019. You can see the data that is presented, very well, here. <https://wearecitizensadvice.org.uk/>

Our Advice First Aid training has been really picking up speed and we hope most Warm Spaces now have an AFA to support them. If not, please contact simonb@iwcab.org.uk who can tell you about the free training opportunities coming up in person or online.

Thank you for donations that keep coming in - we are encouraging people who shop online to use "Give as You Live" which is a simple tool that donates a small % of your spend (there are 1000s of companies on there) to us and doesn't cost you a penny. We are also putting a series of articles in the press about the type of clients we help, to help people understand we are an Island charity and not part of local government or financed by a big national charity, which is a common misconception.

Thanks, *Paul Savill*



Community Action Isle of Wight

Please see below information about new training courses on offer.



**Community
Action
Isle of Wight**
at the Riverside

How to improve the success rate of your funding applications – 24 April 2023 (10:00-13:00) - FREE thanks to grant funding

Most charities and voluntary groups apply for funding as part of their efforts to raise money for the work they do in their communities.

Many of the important public services are now run by charitable and not-for-profit organisations. Ensuring the viability and financial sustainability of these services is crucial for the wellbeing of our communities.

This online training session is designed to help representatives of charitable and not-for-profit organisations to gain the knowledge and skills needed for successful funding applications - in the shortest possible time.

You can find more information and book your FREE place on this online training course here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/how-to-improve-the-success-rate-of-your-funding-applications-tickets-531962663647>

Measuring the Impact of your projects – 9 May 2023 (10:00-13:00) - FREE thanks to grant funding

Evidencing the effectiveness of your services, projects and programmes is crucial to secure continued and new funding. A track record of success can also help good ideas spread, allowing the positive change to reach more communities and improve more lives.

Equally important is identifying projects and services that are not doing well, so that they can be changed and improved - ensuring that the resources committed to them have the impact which was intended.

While each project and each organisation are different, there are proven strategies and tools that can be used to analyse and improve the impact of your projects on individuals and groups, including family groups.

In this online training session, you will learn about simple and easy ways of measuring the impact of your projects and services. This will contribute to their effective management and monitoring. The data collected will also be extremely useful for your fundraising activities and grant applications.

You can find more information and book your FREE place on this online training course here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/measuring-the-impact-of-your-projects-tickets-531953877367>

Project Management Skills – 5, 6, 7 & 12 June 2023 (all days 10:00-13:00) - only £60 per person for the whole training course thanks to grant funding

Projects are, more than ever, a fact of life for all organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors. Some people do projects well, whilst others go from one disaster to the next, never seeming to learn the lessons of the past.

By applying project management principles and tools, you can avoid the common problems associated with projects and become an effective and successful project manager.

The Project Management Skills training is designed to introduce you to key elements of project management and to equip you with useful skills, practical tips and tools to ensure the success of your projects.

This training comprises four modules delivered online via Zoom.

Module 1 - Monday, 5 June

Module 2 - Tuesday, 6 June

Module 3 - Wednesday, 7 June

Module 4 - Monday, 12 June

All days 10:00-13:00.

People will need to attend all four modules in order to receive certificates

COURSE FEE - £60.

You can find more information and book your place on this online training course here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/project-management-skills-tickets-531977688587>

Zoryna O'Donnell

Isle of Wight NHS Trust

The Isle of Wight NHS Trust Ambulance Service is seeking feedback. If you or a loved one have recently called 999 for an ambulance or been conveyed by an ambulance, we would really like to know about your experience.

Please visit Isle of Wight NHS Trust - Ambulance Service Feedback (iow.nhs.uk) Thank you.



The Isle of Wight NHS Trust Ambulance Service needs you. If you found someone unconscious and not breathing normally would you know what to do? Learning how to perform CPR and where your nearest defibrillator is takes minutes, but could make a huge difference and save a life.

Could you become a guardian for your local public access defibrillator, do you need help registering your defibrillator?

Please contact the Isle of Wight NHS Trust Ambulance, Training and Community Response Services - Tel. 534111, Email iownt.atcors@nhs.net or visit our website www.isleofwightambulance.co.uk to see what training courses we offer the public, businesses and schools, learn about the support we can give to public access defibrillator guardians/sites.

Useful links:

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/how-to-save-a-life/how-to-do-cpr/learn-cpr-in-15-minutes>

www.thecircuit.uk

www.defibfinder.uk

Louise Walker (Ambulance Education, Training & Engagement Lead)

IW FoodBank

Celebrating the recent World Book Day, we are asking you to join us as we collect 1200 books in March.

We need your preloved:

- Novels
- History books
- Autobiographies
- Biographies
- NO kids books please

Please bring your books to our Warehouse in Love Lane, Cowes, PO31 7ET

We will be selling these books for a donation at the Tesco Charity Book stall in July. If you are unable to donate books, please support us by making a donation in return for a new book!



A Report from MP Bob Seely

Bids for Funding

I have backed a bid from the IW Council for a new school on the Island to support children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). We should hear shortly if this has been successful. *(As you will have read in the IWC News, the bid was successful -Ed)*

I have also backed another bid by the Council for a scheme to make Ryde High Street safer and more pedestrian friendly. The project would create new amenity areas, increase accessibility and emphasise the historic elements of Ryde town centre. The council is seeking £700,000 from the Government's Active Travel Fund and I have written in full support of the bid.



Funding Secured

The Isle of Wight NHS Trust has been awarded a further £9m (in addition to the £12.5m already secured) to modernise digital technology, IT infrastructure and clinical systems.

The IW Council will receive additional funding as part of the government's plan to deliver better drug & alcohol recovery services across the UK. The Council will receive £303,330 this year and an indicative £440,304 next year. That's 25.5% more than they had during 2020-21.

The IW Council is one of 14 Local Authorities included in the Department for Education's Trailblazers Scheme for Family Hubs and Start of Life Programmes. The Island will act as a national leader for the rollout of the Government scheme, focussing on perinatal mental health, parent-infant relationships, infant feeding and parent support. The Island will receive up to an additional £183,000 of funding to deliver extra services in year one of the schemes' rollout (2022/23).

Funding Available

Households without a direct relationship to an electricity supplier can now apply for £400 payments towards energy bills under the 'alternative funding' route of the government's Energy Bills Support Scheme. The portal is now open for applications. <https://www.gov.uk/apply-energy-bill-support-if-not-automatic>

Police & Crime Commissioner, Donna Jones has launched a new funding initiative to

combat Rural Crime. Applications can be made for initiatives that can demonstrate how they reduce crime or support victims of crime in a rural setting. The application window closes at 2pm on Friday 21 April 2023. <https://www.hampshire-pcc.gov.uk/safer-together/funding/apply-for-funding>

I have also been working closely with Donna on the issue of anti-social behaviour in Ryde and Freshwater.

Red Jet Complaints

I have received several complaints recently with regard to the Red Jet service. I have raised these with Red Funnel. I am assured that the overall position has now improved.

IWC Meeting

During my last call with the Chief Executive and Leader of the IW Council I raised concerns about Belgrave Road, Flooding at Clatterford Shute, the enforcement of fly tipping, the groynes at Totland, and planning applications in Godshill, Whitwell and Wootton.

We also discussed the future of the Yarmouth School Site, the Newport Harbour masterplan, the Island Plan and planning legislation for swimming pools at risk.

Islands Forum

I chatted recently with Michael Gove's team at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities about the Islands Forum taking place on the Isle of Wight this year. I persuaded Michael that UK Islands needed a specific forum, so I am delighted it's happening and look forward to meeting on the Island.

Buses £2 scheme extended

Islanders travelling by bus will continue to be able to travel on any single journey across the Island for £2 or less until the end of June after Government extended its scheme by three months.

SEND

Islanders have been contacting me with concerns about the long waiting lists that parents with children who have special educational needs and disabilities are facing, particularly for Autism and ADHD diagnosis. I'm looking into this issue to see what can be done to reduce these waiting lists and I will be hosting a roundtable on it very soon.

Bob Seely MP

An Invitation from Southern Water

We're hosting two drop-in sessions for our customers to talk to us about how we are doing and to share our plans around:

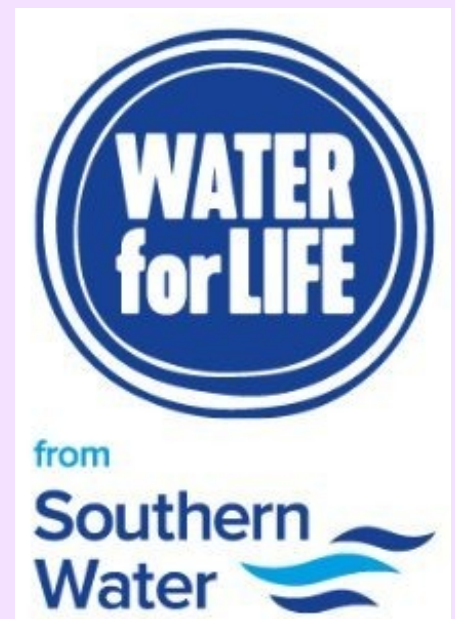
- **Significantly reducing storm overflows by 2030**
- **Ensuring a reliable supply of high-quality water for the future**
- **Boosting access to water supplies and reducing what we take from the environment**
- **Supporting our customers and communities**

Please join us and come and chat with our team.

Events will be held in:

Ryde: Thursday 9 March 3.30pm – 6.30pm Brasserie Room, Royal Esplanade Hotel, 16 Esplanade, Ryde, PO33 2ED

Newport: Friday 10 March 11am – 2pm Little London Room, Riverside Centre, Riverside, The Quay, Newport, PO30 2QR



CYCLEWight

We hope that you are managing to keep warm and well. As ever, we never stand (cycle) still, so here are a some items of news for you.



We had a committee meeting this week and here are two bits of good news. It would appear that the very bad section at Blackwater on the Cowes to Sandown route is to be repaired. We are awaiting more detailed information. Secondly, we have been given the go ahead from IWC for the 'Think Bike' signs mentioned in an earlier posting. We have been asked to seek a supplier for the signs and a contractor to erect them.

The East Wight LCWIP has been published. Here (<https://www.iow.gov.uk/documentlibrary/view/bembridge-brading-and-st-helens-lcwip>) This is excellent news and we now hope that all of us can use it to improve the cycling and walking in those areas. Thanks to Claire Franklin of the committee who attended the meetings on our behalf. Where are East Cowes and Cowes LCWIPs? Please write to your local Councillor if you live in one of these areas.

We were very disappointed to hear that IWC did not receive any grant from levelling Up Fund 2. The fund, among other things, was for the route out to the West Wight. We have written to the key players, Bob Seely, the Leader of the Council and Phil Jordan, (Cabinet Member for Roads and Infrastructure) to ask how do we progress from here. We wrote over a week ago and have had no contact from any party.

Active Travel England have announced a £200 million fund for walking and cycling in 23/24. It would appear that there is only one scheme ready to be submitted for this funding round. We are going to write to IWC to ask them to work with us to identify 5 routes from the LCWIPs that can be worked on so they are ready to present for the bidding process for 24/25.

On the web site we have added a section on the 'new' Highway Code. It is now one year on, but both the links are well worth looking at and forwarding to friends.

We have commented on the planning application of the large solar farm off Wilmingham Lane. The contractor's vehicles and works themselves cover many of our favourite routes. We have asked for a reduction in speed limits and for access for cyclists at all times.

Bikeability is what many of us knew as cycling proficiency. It has a new lease of life with over 20 schools taking part. Alec Broome, who administers it, has written a short piece. Please take a couple of minutes to read the attached report.

In the last briefing we mentioned London to Paris Bike Ride - Mountbatten Isle of Wight (<https://www.mountbatten.org.uk/Event/london-to-paris>) and now we have another based on the Randonnee. The Brain Tumour Trust. ([https://www.braintumourresearch.org/fundraise/take-on-a-challenge/event/2023/07/01/take-on-the-challenge/brain-tumour-research-isle-of-wight-randonn%C3%A9e-\(in-conjunction-with-british-cycling\)](https://www.braintumourresearch.org/fundraise/take-on-a-challenge/event/2023/07/01/take-on-the-challenge/brain-tumour-research-isle-of-wight-randonn%C3%A9e-(in-conjunction-with-british-cycling))).

We are continuing to plan for our 30th anniversary celebration. Do you have any experience of doing press releases? Please contact us if you could help. If you have any pictures of the last 30 years of CycleWight please send those too.

By the way, registration for this year's Randonnee has been announced. Are you already too late?

*Linked to the above news, do you have any pictures of the cycle path below the bridge at Merstone from around 2013/14? Please send them to us.

Tim Thorne

Island Roads

The condition of a section of the Shide to Merstone cycle track has been improved. by Island Roads.



The track either side of its crossing with Blackwater Hollow – nearly 200 metres in total – has been resurfaced. During the project, the cycle track was closed as a through route and there were traffic lights in operation at Blackwater Hollow.

The work was done during the winter when use of the cycleway is less busy than at other times of the year. The work was limited to this particular section because of localised flooding on the route, and Island Roads remains in discussion with the IW Council re further resurfacing of these areas as soon as this issue has been resolved.

An Island Roads spokesperson said: “This is a busy route, and we hope that by undertaking these works when the cycleway is at its quietest will reduce the impact our will have on users.”

Island roads responds to pothole ‘perfect storm’

Island Roads is continuing to respond to a ‘perfect storm’ of weather conditions that have created a recent increase in the number of potholes on the road network. A hot, dry summer followed by prolonged rainfall and below-freezing temperatures have, unfortunately created the ideal conditions for potholes to form.

In January alone, at the height of the cold snap, there were 354 reports of potholes received by Island Roads. Island Roads have been working flat out to repair these in line with national safety requirements. At times, additional resources have been deployed to ensure these requirements were met. Currently, while teams remain out on the network, there is no backlog.

However, though Island Roads staff keep a regular eye on the network, residents are advised to report any potholes they come across. The best way of doing so is online via the Fix My Street service via the home page of www.islandroads.com

New, updated information on the types of potholes and their causes have also been added to the Island Roads website and can be viewed here <https://islandroads.com/factsheets/>

Cllr Phil Jordan, IW Council cabinet member for highways and transportation said: “The weather has provided the perfect conditions for potholes to form, which is why we're seeing a marked increase in the number of road defects across the Island. We have made a huge investment in our roads and pavements through our PFI contract which enables us to have well-connected communities and improved highways which meet the Councils objectives and provide the best Highways network possible. The Island’s road and pavement surfaces are among the best we have ever had and favourably comparable to any other area in the UK but we will ensure that potholes reported to us are investigated and we will make a prompt and effective repair where necessary.”

Samantha O' Rourke

The Wightlink User Group - Who are we?

The Wightlink User Group has been established to be an independent campaign group which comprises a broad coalition of Wightlink users, from both the island and mainland, who have to use the ferries to travel to and from the Isle of Wight in order to access work, healthcare, education, leisure and all other activities.

What's our history?

Initially, we came together in response to Wightlink's failure to reinstate a full and reliable foot passenger service following the lockdown. We established a Facebook group to gauge public interest which has grown to more than a thousand members in just 2 months.

What have we done so far?

We liaised with Wightlink about the lack of late night foot passenger crossings. We gained their agreement to introduce trial WightCat crossings prior to Christmas. Subsequently a large number of people used these sailings, demonstrating the validity of our argument which we supported with a petition. Wightlink have now promised a resumption of late night catamaran crossings with effect from the end March. However, many of our members are sceptical that these crossings will not remain a permanent timetabling change. They worry that the late night crossings will be withdrawn at the end of the tourist season so we need to keep the pressure up.

What are our future plans?

The issues raised by this group have necessitated a broadening of our goals. We are aware that our popular and proactive group needs to expand to include those people who are interested and want to be represented but are not on Facebook.

We know that at present we are only reaching a fraction of people who need 'A service that is affordable, reliable and regular through the year' and who need this to be a legally guaranteed service. Therefore, we need to expand our current platform to increase our membership so that Wightlink and lawmakers have to take notice of us. We want to give you a voice. To this end we are establishing a website, and we will attract additional interested parties by using other social media network avenues and newspaper articles and advertising.

So please join us...To add your voice and support to the User Group.

We promise to work with Wightlink and others on your behalf to get us all a better deal for this absolutely essential service link to the mainland. We are marooned without it!

Whilst we appreciate that there is a debate over whether a fixed link might be part of the Island's transport infrastructure in the future, such a link is unlikely to be feasible for many years so we will be focusing on more immediate solutions to the problems of cross Solent travel, which means improving all our ferry services.

Find out more and join us at www.wug.org.uk

Wightlink User Group Mission Statement

To *establish, expand and maintain* an interactive and collaborative User Group in order to:

- a) gain a formal Service Level Agreement (*public service commitment?*) between HM Government, Wightlink (and other cross Solent transport providers) which legally recognises that cross Solent transportation is essential to provide accessible Healthcare for Isle of Wight residents and Equality of Opportunity for both island residents, businesses and other users and;
- b) ensure that a formal Service Level Agreement enshrines minimum service level provision and affordability for Isle of Wight residents and other users;
- c) to provide a forum for interactive, constructive and ongoing dialogue between the Wightlink Company and the User Group which addresses the health, safety and affordable access needs of all cross Solent travellers whilst recognising the need for Wightlink (and the other Solent travel providers) to continue as a profitable company.

Objectives

To secure commitment from elected and prospective parliamentary and local council representatives to support the introduction and enactment of legal instruments to effectively regulate the ferries to meet enforceable public service obligation standards and to work closely with other cross Solent transport user groups in order to further our common aims and objectives

To secure improved affordable and reliable transportation for patients who need to access mainland health care provision. To include provision of a dedicated phone line for patients and carer/companion to access and book transportation, provision of reduced fares for patients and carer/companion needing to attend hospital appointments and provision of parking concessions for patients and carer/companion.

To secure a minimum level of service on the three Wightlink routes including provision of an hourly FastCat service throughout the day and late evening 7 days/week, 52 weeks of the year.

To secure greater transparency and accuracy on reliability and timetable provision including real and robust engagement with the User Group to discuss and agree proposed timetable changes including all cancellations from the published timetable to be shown as cancellations and not published as an "amended timetable".

To secure affordable fares with substantial discounts for IOW residents to travel to/from the mainland without the need to purchase block advance ticket passes and secure agreement from Wightlink that it will consult and engage with the User Group to discuss and agree any proposed fare increases

To secure recognition that the car ferry is not a viable alternative to the CAT for the majority of foot travellers.

To secure commitment from Wightlink to publish an annual public report which clearly details how much of its income is used to improve services and reduce fares and how much is used to service parent company debt and to pay shareholder dividends.

Hovertravel

Spring has been in the air at Hovertravel recently, with several school groups coming to learn about our hovercraft, experiencing onboard hovercraft demonstrations and asking questions of our pilots. The feedback from the schools has been hugely positive with one teacher saying "The children (and adults) loved finding out about the hovercraft and the pilots. We were so grateful for the welcome Hovertravel gave us, and how accommodating you were."



We also continued to support the Isle of Wight Community Rail Partnership's Suit Yourself course with interview role play and the opportunity to experience the working environment both onboard our craft and in our terminals.

Our Hovercraft Centre of Excellence at Ryde, which includes the Solent Views meeting facility, has been hosting customers of our sister company Griffon Hoverwork whilst we work together to deliver engineers and pilots training schemes.

Stephen Forster

Wightlink

Fame awaits Sandown youngsters after they triumph in their DanceLive! heat

Wightlink operated extra late evening foot passenger sailings in late February to support Isle of Wight schools to compete in the annual Dance Live! event at Portsmouth Guildhall.

Hundreds of pupils, staff and helpers crossed the Solent across six nights to take part in the regional heats of the competition.

The Bay in Sandown came first in its heat with 'Save the Rainforest' and has won a place in the final in April

The other Island schools taking part were the Isle of Wight Education Federation, Ryde School, Ryde Academy, Cowes Primary, Lanesend Primary, Medina House School and the Federation of Newchurch and Nettlestone Primaries.

Wightlink has already announced extra late night FastCat services will resume from Monday 27 March when the summer timetable comes into operation. They will be the 21:20 and 22:45 from Portsmouth Harbour, returning from Ryde Pier Head at 22:00 and 23:10.

Tasty Island treats for a top chef

Legendary chef Michel Roux Jr was presented with a basket of Isle of Wight products on his way to the Island with Wightlink to create a memorable meal at leading restaurant, Heron in Ryde.

Captain Dave Booker handed it over on the Bridge of St Faith. The basket contained Island Ales, Isle of Wight Salt and Tomato Stall juices and sauces with produce from The Garlic Farm and the Isle of Wight Biscuit Company.

Heron Chef Alex Kimber says he was delighted to welcome the famous chef to his kitchen in Castle Street: "Michel Roux Jr and his family have been leading the culinary scene in the UK for many years and I personally have been greatly influenced by his passion, style of cuisine, and service."

Wightlink Commercial Director Phil Delaney adds: "We are proud to sell food and drink from Isle of Wight suppliers in our Wight Taste outlets on our ships and at our ports. When we heard Chef Michel was travelling with us, we hatched a plan to ambush him onboard with some top-quality tasty treats."

Dry-docking nears its end

Wightlink flagship Victoria of Wight has almost finished its annual refit after dry-docking at A&P shipyard in Falmouth. Contractors have transformed the Deck 4 Wight Taste café into a spacious customer-friendly area and maintenance has been carried out in the engine room and on the Voith propellers. The final ship to go through refit before Easter will be the Yarmouth-Lymington ferry Wight Sun. The whole programme involving all eight of the fleet costs more than £5million.

Karen Woods (Communications & PR)



Red Funnel

Red Funnel celebrates 2022 Charity of the Year with £23,000 cheque handover

As part of Red Funnel's ongoing charity work, Operations Director Leanna Lakes presented a cheque for £23,000 to representatives of Young Lives vs Cancer, following some amazing fundraising efforts by the team and its customers throughout 2022. The Red Funnel team were joined by Jean's House and Isle of Wight resident Ewan, along with his mother, Stef, and father, Martin, to accept the cheque on behalf of Young Lives vs Cancer. Jean's House is one of Young Lives vs Cancer's incredible facilities that provides free housing for families to stay close to their child during cancer treatment.

Leanna Lakes, Operations Director at Red Funnel, said: "We are pleased to have partnered with Young Lives vs Cancer and hope that our donations will help those affected by cancer and support their families. We are proud to be supporting residents on the Island like Ewan and it was wonderful to be able to visit Jean's House and see the positive impact the charity has on people's lives."

Red Funnel tours 2023 Charity of the Year, Aspire

Red Funnel's charity work for 2023 kicked off in earnest with a trip to its 2023 Charity of the Year, Aspire. Red Funnel staff were welcomed to Aspire's converted church to see some of the amazing work done by the team. Red Funnel staff explored the "Creative Hub" where incredible fundraising ideas are brainstormed before being treated to a sneak peak of the upcoming Escape Room.

Aspire provides a much-needed community hub giving people a place to meet and thrive. The charity does so much to support people who have fallen on hard times during the cost-of-living crisis and who just need a bit of kindness.

All aboard for Red Funnel's resident artist

A budding young Picasso shared art onboard the Red Falcon with his hero captain! Four-year-old Joe and his dad took the journey across the Solent and showed off his amazing artwork, featuring a Red Funnel ferry masquerading as a bright red ice breaker!

Discovery Bus sets sail to the Isle of Wight

Red Funnel helped sail the Maritime Archaeology Trust team and its Discovery Bus over to the Isle of Wight Shipwreck Centre & Maritime Museum for its open weekend. The bus gave visitors the chance to explore educational and interactive videos, learning about fascinating local, maritime heritage as well as hands-on displays providing a fun and interactive experience for budding maritime historians.

Red Funnel Apprentices take up full time positions

For National Apprenticeship Week, Red Funnel shone a light on two of their amazing team members. Orsolya and Christopher recently qualified for the crew member apprentice positions. Both Orsolya and Christopher deliver exceptional passenger service, Orsolya as a Customer Service Assistant since 2021 and Christopher as a Pontoon Attendant since 2013.

Josey Page (Account Executive)

