



The IWALC Bulletin

February 2021

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

Your IWALC Matters!!

What's On, When & Where??

IWALC Workshop

Saturday February 6th starting at 9.30am and finishing at 1pm - via Zoom
(Report on this will be in the March issue)

Planning Training

The Isle of Wight Council's Planning Department will, in February, provide an online training session for parish and town councils on the Environmental Aspects of Planning. This topic has been chosen in consultation with IWALC. We have asked them in particular to address the following question:

When making decisions on planning applications, how does the IWC reconcile the need for new residential and other developments with the need to conserve the Island's environment and preserve its green spaces?

We hope that this will help to address some of the concerns currently facing many parish and town councils on the Island. The session will be offered twice: on Wednesday 10 February 2-4 pm and Wednesday 17 February 4-6 pm. The sessions are open to councillors and staff. However, if there is a high demand, we may have to restrict the number of participants per council.

Bob Seely, MP

Bob continues to hold fortnightly Zoom meetings with Town and Parish Councillors. However as the dates and times are subject to his diary/workload, confirmation will come from his office.

Contact - IWALC County Officer, Heather Rowell (heatheriwalc@gmail.com) for details, availability of spaces etc.



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 print submitted articles.

Hello again!

As you'll all be aware, there's been a change of personnel in IWALC. Ryde Town Councillor, Diana Conyers is our new Chair... we thank Helena Hewston for her time in the Chair for all her efforts in promoting and strengthening IWALC across the Island.

We also have a new County Officer. Heather Rowell, Clerk to Freshwater Parish Council took up her new post on December 1st 2020 and by all accounts, is enjoying the challenge!

And, after a short break, The IWALC Bulletin is back! Thank you to everybody who takes just a few minutes to help us to keep people up to date with the latest news, information and updates.



Let's start with....

MESSAGE FROM IWALC CHAIR

When we look back at 2020, it is difficult to think of anything positive to say. However, 'every cloud has a silver lining' and, from IWALC's perspective, there were two significant achievements.

One was the incredible way in which our parish and town councils responded to the crisis – and are continuing to do so. We have provided a great deal of practical support for our residents, particularly the most vulnerable. Moreover, we have done this in partnership with other organisations, including the Isle of Wight Council, other public sector bodies and voluntary organisations, and with local residents. In so doing, we have demonstrated both the important role that local councils can play in their communities and the scope for partnership working.

The other major achievement was the launch of the IWALC Bulletin. Throughout the first lockdown, IWALC provided a weekly bulletin of information for member councils and the wider community. At a time when coordination was essential but communication difficult, this was an invaluable resource. The bulletin was the brainchild of Jill Webster, our then County Officer. Jill continued to produce the bulletin, albeit less frequently when lockdown ended, until the end of her term of office at the beginning of November.

At our September meeting - the first since the start of the Covid pandemic, members decided that the Bulletin should become a permanent institution. A working group was set up to determine the form that it should take and, although Jill was no longer County Officer, she very kindly agreed to take responsibility for its production. This is the first issue of the new-look Bulletin, which henceforth will be produced monthly. It has two main purposes: to provide a forum for sharing information and experiences between member councils and to inform the wider community of our role and activities. I hope that you will find it interesting and useful – and that you will contribute to further issues. The Bulletin's success will depend on your contributions.

Diana Conyers

SUBSCRIPTION REDUCTION

...and, some GOOD news for our Member Councils!

"We have been able to give a 35% discount to all 2020 member Town and Parish Councils this year because of the reduced costs due to Covid restrictions. The NALC portion of the subscription was paid in full, but the 35% is off the IWALC portion.

"This year's subs are worked out on NALC 7.42p per elector and IWALC is 34p per Band D property on the Council Tax for the first 2000, then 17p for the next 3000. Any number over this is free - this only applies to Newport & Carisbrooke Community Council and Ryde Town Council.



Sue Hardy (Treasurer)

PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS LOBBY MP

2nd February is the National Association of Local Councils (NALC)'s annual Lobby Day. This is a day when parish and town councils throughout England lobby the government about issues of concern to them and their communities.

To mark the occasion, the Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils (IWALC) held a meeting with local MP, Bob Seely, on 28th January. IWALC is a membership organisation, representing 25 of the Island's 33 parish and town councils.



Parish and town councils have played a major role during the Covid-19 pandemic - supporting local residents, especially the most vulnerable, in many ways. However, they have had no direct funding from the government. At the meeting, IWALC members asked Bob Seely to request government to rectify this.

Diana Conyers, a Ryde Town Councillor and Chair of IWALC, said:

"IWALC was set up during the Second World War to coordinate local relief efforts. Over the last year we have had to face a similar crisis and, once again, local councils have rallied to the cause. They have worked in partnership with community organisations, local volunteers, the Isle of Wight Council and the NHS to provide much-needed support. However, we could have done even more if we had received funding directly."

Members also asked the MP to request government to extend the current permission for councils to meet virtually rather than face-to-face (which expires on 7 May), at least until the pandemic is over, and to issue a clear policy statement regarding the May local government elections.

"It takes time and money to prepare for elections," said Bob Blezzard, a Lake Parish Councillor and IWALC's representative to NALC. "So we need to know now whether they are definitely going ahead and, if so, how they will be conducted safely. We can't afford a last-minute U-turn."

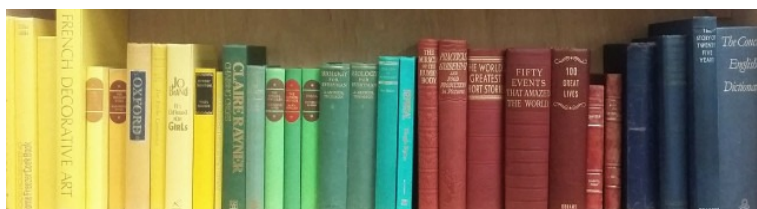
The meeting also discussed issues of specific local concern. Responding to questions about the unreasonably high housing targets on the Island, the MP explained that he is lobbying the government to either extend the Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB) or, preferably, designate the whole Island as some sort of 'Island Park'. He also acknowledged the need for more affordable housing and, in particular, social housing.

Diana thanked Bob for his support during the pandemic. "We appreciate the regular meetings you have had with us during the pandemic and hope they will continue when it ends," she said.

In response, Bob said, "I am a strong supporter of parish and town councils and will always take time to listen to their concerns."

ZOOM!

Hard to believe that this time last year, members were debating whether or not to investigate the use of video-conferencing for our monthly meetings! Now look at us!! Zooming and Teams-ing like there is no tomorrow!!



As people become more aware of their working space, and we all become more 'interested' in what other peoples' houses look like, books seem to be the background of choice!

Don't know if you spotted an item on BBC News a couple of weeks ago about the Bristol-based company, Books By The Yard? To date, they have fulfilled orders for more than 10,000 books! And not just any old books either!

You can rent books by the yard, order bespoke books by the yard, there are unique books by the yard. Hand-curated books by the yard can be supplied in lengths from one yard to 100 plus yards!

If you have a few moments to spare, take a look at their website...it's fascinating ...and no, I am *not* on commission!! (booksbytheyard.co.uk)

HAVENSTREET & ASHEY PARISH COUNCIL.

The lights on the Christmas tree brightened up the village over Christmas, but regrettably, after opening briefly in August and September, the Community Centre has had to close again. The book exchange in the old bus shelter, however, continues to be popular, with books, children's books, and lots of information about Covid help and support.

The issue that is causing most problems at the moment, however, is intermittent, and in some cases non-existent, phone and Internet connections. There seems to be someone in every road with the phone or the Internet down - creating great difficulties for people who are isolated, or trying to order supermarket deliveries, or remote home-schooling.

Walking to keep fit has become a very popular pursuit and Firestone Copse car park is frequently full, perhaps because of the takeaway tea and coffee van?! Combley, though, is still very quiet.

Planning applications continue to come in, and with budget setting approaching, the Parish Council remains busy and mostly trying to conduct business by email - we did manage to have one meeting in September.

Mick Lyons (Parish Councillor)

NETTLESTONE & SEAVIEW PARISH COUNCIL

A lovely thing that has been happening (in between lockdown phases) is the Nettlestone & Seaview Community Partnership Tree Planting Project – The Parish Council has lent its support to this excellent initiative which is now up and running. The Community Partnership have worked with the Woodland Trust to secure 150 saplings to plant around the Parish. The Parish Council has given permission for these to go on its land and covered the expenses associated with planting them. Twenty-one volunteers made sure that the first trees went in at Hersey Nature Reserve just before Christmas and a further 47 trees have been planted on Sophie Watson's Garden – to represent the 47 service personnel on the local war memorial. More trees will be planted at the school and on other council land as restrictions allow. *Brian Jennings (Clerk)*

As you know I completed my cycle challenge of cycling 4000 mile to raise £4000.00 for Mountbatten Hospice during 2020, in the end I completed 4450 miles and kept the sponsorship open till the end of the year. I am pleased to confirm that the final total that the Mountbatten Hospice received was £8500.55 for which this tough challenge that I set myself was worth it, and this worthy cause benefited.

So many Charities are losing out - not only losing their own fund-raising events/efforts, but also appropriate to other events being cancelled that they would have received funds third-hand from. *Cllr. Michael Ward*

SHALFLEET PARISH COUNCIL

Shalfleet Parish Council's January main meeting was mainly taken up with discussing budgets and agreeing the Precept. Even though generous provision was made for projects in 2021-22 and a contingency pot, we managed to retain the Precept amount we request from the IWC as the same amount for the fifth year running, with no increase, using some of our reserves. We were all pleased with this, especially bearing in mind the difficult times we are in at the moment.

One positive achievement this month has been the planting of over 450 snowdrops at Withyfields, Shalfleet - an open space owned by the Parish Council. We hope we should have a good display when they flower.

Our Extraordinary meeting last night (Jan 27) was a positive one and the project on the agenda did go through unanimously, but it is secret at the moment! We discussed it in-committee.

I can however add to our report that the Parish Council agreed the 2021 Community Award go to Gordon Peach at Shalfleet Stores - for his contribution to the community. Gordon received a framed certificate and a cheque for £100.

This is an award that Shalfleet give annually.

Sally Woods (Clerk)

GODSHILL PARISH COUNCIL

Here in Godshill, we have agreed to invest £80,000 in Public Convenience units, to be supplied by Danfo.

Gareth Hughes (Clerk)

CHILLERTON & GATCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

For the past four years we have held a Christmas lunch for our elders as a 'thank you' for the many years they have given to the community. It was so sad not to be able to do this in 2020. We have a well-practised team able to produce a three-course meal, serve it in the village hall and deliver to those unable to leave home.

Well, this time no one was able to leave home! So we set up another catering team (of six) to produce homemade gifts and a card to be delivered to homes by the delivery team (of five). The sloe gin, Christmas cake, chutney, marmalade, candle, beer, tree decoration, card and coconut ice were a big hit!

But more important than the gifts themselves, there were lots of lovely socially distanced chats on the doorstep and appreciation from the 24 households.

It has been a tough year for everyone, but particularly for those isolating at home and unable to see family and friends. *Cllr Gillian Belben*



ROOKLEY, LAKE AND WROXALL PARISH COUNCILS Round-Up

All the parish councils are meeting on Zoom, which some cope with better than others!

Wroxall has re-activated its Community Help programme for Foodbank, shopping, prescription collection, surgery transport and so on.

Lake has seen outbreaks of vandalism at its public toilets (similar to elsewhere in the Bay) - undoubtedly caused by 'bored youth'.

Rookley is considering an application by Captiva Homes for 28 new homes on the western edge of the village - the largest development proposal for many years. *Mike Taplin (Clerk)*

Nothing much going on in Rookley - except my wife and I getting COVID a week before Christmas! All's well now though.

At Christmas, we managed to get a cherry-picker to rearrange the lights on the tree on the green - they had grown-in until almost out of sight over the last three years. Unfortunately we could not have the annual carol service, but nevertheless we decided to make a modest donation to the Hospice - hope that was legal use of our funds.

We (my wife, that is) do publish matters of interest to the community on the Rookley Village Association Facebook page - you might care to take a look yourself. It might be worth publishing as a good way of keeping parishioners advised. *Ian Rigaudbarrett (Councillor)*

ARRETON PARISH COUNCIL

Here in Arreton we are still grappling with the oil well application as it was re-advertised in the New Year. I pity the poor Planning Officer who has had to wade his way through all the comments. Otherwise, all is as quiet as can be expected at this time of year, with the budget looming and local elections imminent (or not, as the case may be). *Sheila Caws (Clerk)*

YARMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

Everyone needs a happy surprise at Christmas, especially this year.

Yarmouth Town Council put forward an initiative which enabled about 130 residents of Yarmouth and Thorley to receive surprise Christmas Cheer Hampers, thanks to generous sponsorship from the Delphi Lakeman Memorial Trust, Yarmouth Town Council, Yarmouth Town Trust, and Ed and Melanie Panek, the new owners of Salty's Restaurant and Bar.

A team, including Town Councillors and the Panek family, braved the weather to deliver the hampers which contained luxury chocolates, individual Christmas puddings, biscuits, store cupboard items such as jam, soup and pickles, as well as specially made Christmas cakes, and a bottle of wine or beer.

Cakes, nosegays, and decorations, included in the gifts, were made by friends and members of CHOYD. Artist and Town Councillor Jenny Jackson designed the Christmas Card.

Other items for the hampers were kindly donated by Harwood, Medina Wines, The Garlic Farm and Freshwater Co-op.

Steve Cowley



YTC has taken out a £160K loan over 25 years to replace the two toilet blocks inherited from IWC, with coin-operated semi-automatic modules supplied by Danfo.

Bridge Road toilets used an existing building which was modified for the new units, and the Common toilets have been demolished and replaced by a new, bespoke Tetragon unit, the design of which was chosen by Councillors to match the environment.

The new toilets are expected to yield considerable savings in maintenance and operating costs, as well as providing a modest income from coin-operated entry.

The re-opening will be discussed at the next virtual meeting on 2/2/21 but due to the current situation, I suspect it will be little more than handing the keys to the cleaning contractors!

STOP PRESS! As the project manager has gone down with Covid, and the toilets are likely to be a week or three late, we shall have to cross our legs a while longer before we can become 'engaged' with outpourings of delight, or, indeed, any other sort!!

Brian Jacobs (Clerk)

ASK ANOTHER COUNCIL.....

I am concerned that various roadside hedges and trees are being removed on the instruction of Island Roads. This is fundamentally damaging the landscape's appearance.

I have raised this as your representative on CPRE, if there are others who feel as strongly as I do, maybe, IWALC should raise this with the IWC? *Steve Cowley*



What do you and your own Council think about this? Do you agree with Steve? Please let us know...

A member of the public at the January meeting of Chillerton & Gatcombe Parish Council raised the issue of an increase in litter on verges. Another waste bin will be considered, to be sited in Gatcombe, and a plea for volunteer litter-pickers to adopt and keep clear a stretch of verge was made....with equipment provided. This proved to be a successful request, with several parishioners volunteering.

Have you noticed any increase in litter in your area? What measures have you taken to combat this rise?

NEWPORT & CARISBROOKE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Things have been ticking along and I hope that everyone at IWALC is safe and well.

We are hoping to open our new Danfo toilets in Post Office Lane in February which will be a vast improvement on the facilities that were there before. These toilets will be pay-to-use and will have a sedum roof.

A new see-saw and fence have been installed in the play area at Clatterford Recreation Ground.

Ten fruit trees have been planted at Downside in Pan and we will be taking receipt of free saplings in the upcoming months, courtesy of The Woodland Trust. We will look to plant these saplings in our recreation grounds around the parish.

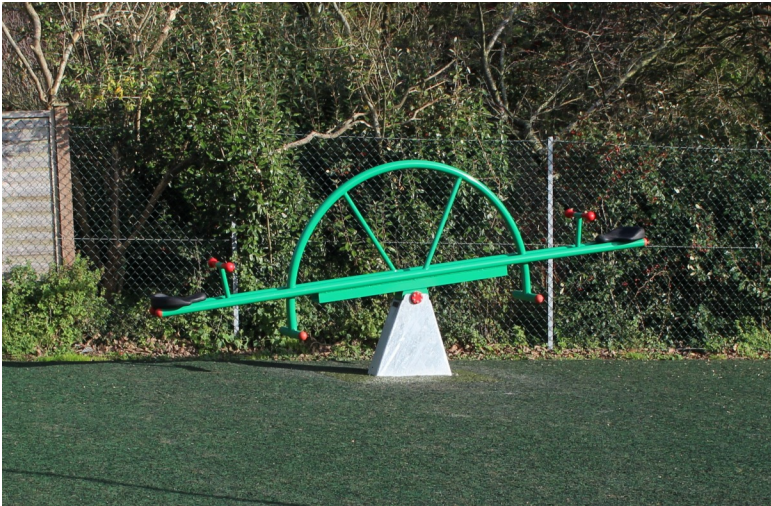
Care in the Garden kindly gifted the Community Council with a planter for Victoria Recreation Ground. The planter fits nicely underneath the noticeboard and will be a welcome burst of colour all year round. Thank you Care in the Garden!

The footpath at Simeon Green (between Castle Rd and Carisbrooke Road) has been resurfaced. There is a large tree which affects the path, but the resurfacing has made the path much smoother.

A new festoon has gone up in Scarrotts Lane. This has made a huge difference to the lane with people reporting that it makes them feel much safer.

Cllr Martin would also like to add that a crossing is in the process of being installed at Ash Lane across Gunville Road.

Lucinda Molyneux (Deputy Clerk)



NITON & WHITWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Crab Niton, working under the umbrella of the Parish Council, has been busy again in the period leading up to Christmas with a steady stream of prescription and other delivery requests, all culminating in the provision of thirty two three course Christmas meals to those alone and or in need. When we announced the idea at the end of November, we were deluged with sponsorship offers to pay for the meals, as well as presents of all types and for all ages and even Christmas luxuries in the form of bottles of Fizz, wines, crackers and other celebratory goodies! The meals, three options including a veggie, were prepared by one of our Parish businesses, PrepRight in Whitwell, and delivered with the gifts and drinks on the 23rd December. The feed back was wonderful with the surprised recipients delighted with the quality of the food and extremely touched by the thoughtfulness of strangers and the selection of gifts.



Where we had too many offers of funds, we were allowed to use the surplus to help fund the Breakfast Club for some of our local children, a project which we are still developing and hoping to carry on into the future as we are concerned that some families are feeling the pinch. We have also been in discussions with the Ventnor Food Bank and have delivered rations, or Crab Pots as we call them, to those that need a larger top up. Due to the generosity of so many people in the area, we hope to be able to maintain this emergency support for the foreseeable future.

On top of all that, Crab Niton, continues to offer a patient transport service, prescription and other pick up and delivery services, and assistance to individuals and families as needed. We had hoped to have been able to establish a local Vaccination centre as the current option of travel to Shanklin is a bit of a struggle for some of our residents, but at the time of writing our offer of assistance has not been taken up. Fingers crossed that some suitable solution will be found in the near future.

All in all, this dreadful pandemic has been a long and morale grinding episode, but it has also shone a light on the thoughtfulness and kindness of strangers towards other strangers. Despite it all, it has been a remarkable display of the best of humanity as our residents did whatever they could to help each other in whatever way they could. Without them, I dread to think what our society would be like now.

Cllr Jon Boileau Goad

HERE WE GO AGAIN...

As we continue to fight this pandemic, a new type of virus appears to slow down our ability to get rid of this thing forever. But nevertheless, I want the new vaccines to rid us of this and save lives.

So, what is our parish council doing? We had a meeting part face-to-face (hybrid) but are now back to Zoom. We had to replace two members and I am pleased to say we have managed to co-opt two new councillors who I'm sure will be a benefit to our council, and the work continues.

My thoughts, as we enter yet another full lockdown, that not enough was done by our government or our council to stop this from happening. If we had controlled the flow of visitors to our Island and had a robust monitoring system, this would have helped to keep the infection rate down and kept people safe.

It's a shame that people still don't appear, even now, to know that close contact spreads the virus. It's too close to home when your sister and brother-in-law have it, but will recover, due to the care they received in St Mary's.

Finally, what do we have to look forward to this year? May elections maybe? I wonder if they should go ahead? I think let's please rid ourselves of this Pandemic first and keep all our residents safe, and that should be our goal.

A very Happy New Year and all, please keep safe.

Cllr Peter J Whiteman (Executive Member for Chillerton & Gatcombe Parish Council)

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

We have continued to support vulnerable residents with prescription collections when Community Action IOW have not been able to respond quickly.

Despite our efforts to comply with Government restrictions and close off the Skatepark, MUGA and Outdoor Gym equipment at Northwood Recreation Ground, barrier tape was being removed daily and the equipment being used by a few members of the public who chose to ignore the tape and signage. Heras fencing has now been installed to securely close off the MUGA and Outdoor Gym areas. There always seem to be a few people who break the rules. The Police have frequently patrolled the area and are speaking to members of the public to check whether they have legitimate reasons for being there, especially if they are in groups.



Important messages from the IW Council and MP have been disseminated to residents via Facebook and Website. We have promoted grants available for businesses, community groups and those who need support at this time. Residents and businesses have been kept up to date with current information on the pandemic and vaccination programme.

We issued a comprehensive Newsletter containing valuable information and points of contact for those in need of assistance throughout the pandemic. The Newsletter was distributed in hard copy to 5,000 local residences, electronically to local organisations and promoted on our Website and on Facebook.

Link to Newsletter: <https://www.cowestowncouncil.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Newsletter-Christmas-2020-FINAL.pdf>

The Budget for 2021/22 was agreed at our December Town Council meeting, with no rise in the precept.

An extraordinary meeting of the Town Council was convened in January to consider a response to the Government's Proposed Changes to Permitted Development Rights Consultation.

We have seen the arrival of eScooters, which are being trialled on the Island. A number of residents have expressed their concerns about the location of eScooter parking bays and usage of the eScooters. We will be engaging with representatives from Beryl to raise residents' concerns.

Kate Gibbs (Asst Town Clerk)

MORE ON GREEN GRANTS

I welcome this Government initiative and congratulate IOW Council officers for achieving this £500k grant to help residents of the Island with fuel poverty and especially at this time in winter and mid pandemic.

I would urge anybody who needs to upgrade their home with insulation, double glazing etc. to check (links below) if they qualify ASAP as this grant only runs to April and must be spent or returned to Government and I want to see it spent on Island homes, not returned.

<https://www.iow.gov.uk/news/Green-Island-Grant-brings-500-000>

<https://www.iow.gov.uk/Residents/environment-planning-and-waste/Future-Energy-Initiatives/Energy-Initiatives/Green-Homes-Grant>

In response to an inquiry that works would need to be completed by March and this might prove to be difficult in the current crisis, I felt it was worth asking the Council if there will be any flexibility on the date, due to Covid and sent an email to the relevant Director.

I did get a response from the Director but I'm afraid there is no flexibility on this one, but it is always worth a specific query from a resident with a difficulty on completing in time - let me know and I will see what I can do on that specific matter.

Steve Hastings

(Isle of Wight Council - Member for Central Wight
steve.hastings@iow.gov.uk -07870 127024)

EXECUTIVE MEETING (JANUARY)

Good to see so many people taking part in January's Exec Meeting..... twenty three in all. There was a lively discussion, ahead of Saturday's Workshop about HALC/NALC and IWALC, which promised to ensure that the subject would be soundly discussed...in depth and detail!

The need for extra laptops for schools was also discussed, though there was some confusion whether the IWC had already purchased enough, and concerns about poor Internet connections.

Also discussed was the age-old problem surrounding the need for affordable housing, social housing and the number of empty homes across the Island and what can be done to utilize these.

AND... LOOKING AHEAD TO FEBRUARY'S TOPIC MEETING...

Our guest speakers will be Clive Joynes and Gillian Belben.

The pros and cons of whether the May elections should go ahead or not were discussed at some length during January's Executive meeting.

From the IWC - On Thursday 6 May 2021, Islanders will go to the polls to have their say on who represents them at the Isle of Wight Council, town, parish and community council and police and crime commissioner elections. If you're thinking about voting by post, you can apply to do this now.

Claire Shand, electoral registration officer at the Isle of Wight Council, said: "The elections will take place at a time when COVID-19 continues to present risks to public health. Depending on the infection rate, measures taken to control the spread of the virus may change as we approach May.

"We are working hard to ensure polling stations will be safe places to vote, but you can choose to apply to vote by post or by proxy instead. If you are thinking about applying for a postal vote, then please do so as early as possible. As preparations continue for the local elections, we remain in close contact with the Electoral Commission, the wider electoral community and public health authorities to ensure you can stay safe when casting your vote in May."

To vote in the elections - either at a polling station, by post, or by appointing someone you trust to vote on your behalf as your proxy - you must first be registered to vote, which can be done online in just five minutes. To then apply to vote by post you need to download, print and fill out a postal vote application form. Once you have completed the form and signed it, you need to send it to Electoral Services, County Hall, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 1UD.

To request a postal vote application form e-mail electoral.services@iow.gov.uk or call (01983) 823380.

The deadline to apply for a postal vote and cancel or make changes to a current postal or proxy vote at this election is 5pm on 20 April 2021.

NATURE'S HIGHWAYS: ROADSIDE VERGES ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT

Chillerton and Gatcombe Parish has an objective in the parish plan to foster an appreciation of the rural environment and our heritage, with activities that support wildlife, encourage play and exercise, investigate our history and improve public spaces. One of those activities in 2020, together with Shorwell Parish, was to survey the wildflowers in a number of roadside verges and encourage greater biodiversity by agreeing a new cutting schedule with Island Roads. The two cut per year schedule was revised to take place at the end of winter and the end of summer. This regime allows more wildflowers to set seed. The surveyors noticed plenty of colour in the verges and over the course of the April to August period in 35 surveys we counted 122 wildflower species. You can find some of the surveys on our website www.chillertonandgatcombe.org

In parallel with this work, to be continued in 2021 volunteers from Chillerton and Shorwell worked with the AONB to produce a leaflet that celebrates our Island verges and is packed full of interesting facts and advice on what can be done to bring back colour and insect life to these vital wildlife corridors. The AONB's Lead Officer Richard Grogan said this:

"I would like to thank the parish councils and volunteers of Shorwell and Chillerton and Gatcombe for their efforts with Island Roads to take the guidance in our report and leaflet and turning it into practices 'on the ground'. The combination of actions and monitoring are a good example of best practice and I am sure the verges and the wildlife they support will reward us with the sights and sounds of nature in the spring."

Parishes can contact the AONB if they would like to receive copies of the leaflet for their residents. If they are interested in improving the biodiversity in their own verges, they can also contact Chillerton and Gatcombe Parish Clerk for further information on the verge management trial. *Gillian Belben*

THE ISLE OF WIGHT FOUNDATION

The Foundation has announced the latest recipients of its grant awards for 2020.

The Foundation, made up of the partners in Highways PFI company Island Roads, has announced that Chillerton and Gatcombe Community Association will receive a share the £12,600 announced. The money will be used by successful organisations to improve their buildings making them more accessible.

Each year, the foundation – comprising Ringway Island Roads, Meridiam, VINCI UK Foundation and VINCI Concessions – supports projects working to tackle social exclusion on the Island. Since 2014, the foundation has awarded more than £543,000 to such good causes and this year alone over £73,000 has been shared between ten local projects.

The money will help Chillerton and Gatcombe Community Association's work to upgrade Chillerton village hall as a community facility and hub. They have been awarded £3,505.

IW Foundation chairman Phillip Horton said: "We are delighted to support improvement projects that will make buildings that are hubs for their respective communities accessible for all. "In common with all recipients, these groups share our aim of helping to make the Isle of Wight community a strong, vibrant and inclusive one."

Nigel Phillips, treasurer of Chillerton and Gatcombe Community Association, said: "We are delighted to receive this support from the IW Foundation. The village hall is a very important part of the community but in order to keep it accessible for all we do need to keep it in a good condition. This donation will help up to repoint the east and west walls of the hall and also install an outside tap that will help us maintain our grounds."

Further grant recipients will be announced in the near future. Applications for the next round of IW Foundation grant will be sought from February 8, 2021.

You can read more about the foundation, its work, how to apply for grants, and projects it has previously supported by clicking <https://islandroads.com/iw-foundation/>



CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

About AFAs (Advice First Aiders)

People need advice on problems they are facing at different times of their lives, but don't always need the in-depth advice provided by a Citizens Advice General Adviser. Advice First Aiders are established members of your local community who volunteer to signpost people to trusted sources of information, whilst maintaining the aims and values of the charity.

AFA's are supported by the General Advice team, with access to the Citizens Advice online advice service and our own local Isle Find It Community Directory and The Isle Help Me Advice Portal.

To Date We Have:

- 11 Fully Qualified AFA's
- 68 Enrolled Volunteers at various stages of the training process
- 62 Have attended at least 1 of our 2 induction training sessions
- Numerous organisations represented including Age UK IW, Wessex Cancer Trust, IOW Council, Independent Arts, Parish Councils, Aspire Ryde, IOW NHS, IOW Foodbank and more!

Contact the Advice First Aid Support on 01983 823898 ext 2822 or email simonb@iwcab.org.uk
You can chat about problems you are facing where you see the Advice First Aider sign or visit the Islehelp.me website.



Paul Savill

COVID-19 RESPONSE

HUBS MEETING (January 13th and 27th)

Elaine Sharkey (IWC) -

- 25 new residents have been added to the previous number of 297 on the Shielding Register.
- The number of calls to the helpline is falling, 95 in the previous week, down from 167 the week before. 60% of these are for general advice and guidance; six calls concerned finance and isolation, and 30% concerned collection of medication and shopping.
- The Grant to fund free Optio transport for residents to get to a vaccination centre is almost in place.
- Track and Trace numbers are falling from 179 in the previous fortnight..
- Confirmation that the Govt ruling on taxis transporting residents to and from vaccination appointments remains the same - the driver plus ONE passenger only.
- Wightcare is providing phone support. Telecheck costs £5 per week and consists of one phone call per day.

Kay Smith (Actioniw) -

- Optio has nearly fifty drivers who have been cleared, with a further eight still being processed. Optio will transport free of charge, without the need to be a member of Optio, any resident who has no other means of getting to their vaccination appointment. Strict criteria do apply.

Zoryna O'Donnell (Resilience Project) -

- She is delivering training on mental health awareness and working with hubs on specific issues such as free Vitamin D and laptops for schools.
- She thanked Kay Smith for all her hard work.
- Stressed that people need to be aware of Benefits that are available to them. The Citizens Advice Bureau can help with this.

Carol Truman (CCG) -

- The vaccine roll-out is going extremely well.
- The Island is not empowered to decide which group is deemed to be of greater importance in order to receive the vaccine - Govt Guidelines must be followed.
- There are currently six vaccination centres with The Riverside joining them on Monday February 1st.
- The hospital hub is also carrying out vaccinations but not to the general public- only for 'key workers'.
- By the end of January 100% of Care Home residents and staff will have been vaccinated.
- Residents are asked NOT to arrive early for the vaccination; not to ring GP surgeries to ask when they will receive an appointment; make sure the Surgery has all up to date contact information; wait for at least two weeks following vaccination for it to become effective; continue to socially-distance etc.
- Nobody is being invited back as yet for their second vaccination.
- Take-up has been very good - of approx 700 appointments in one day at one of the centres, there were only THREE no-shows.

Gill Kennett & Michael Lilley spoke about the Looking Out From Lockdown project initiated by Susie Sheldon, the Lord Lieutenant.

Useful links-

medication delivery services e.g Lloyds Echo, Co-Op Health, Healthera, Boots online
<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/online-services/how-to-order-repeat-prescriptions-online/>

Wightcare Telecheck service - <https://www.iow.gov.uk/Council/OtherServices/Wightcare-Services/Telecheck-Service>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-taxis-and-phvs>

RYDE TOWN COUNCIL

Partnership working in Ryde - Like many local councils on the Island, Ryde Town Council has responded to the Covid-19 pandemic by setting up an emergency response hub. One of the main features of our response is that it has been a collaborative effort, involving a number of different organisations: the Town Council, its youth service Network Ryde, local voluntary organisation Aspire Ryde, the Ryde Foodbank, the Ryde Jobcentre, Citizens Advice, the Ryde Family Centre and Sovereign Housing Association.

We meet regularly (once or even twice a week during lockdown periods) to coordinate our activities and discuss common issues and problems.

This has enabled us to provide a much needed 'joined up' service for local residents. I just hope that this sort of partnership working continues in the town when the crisis is over. *Cllr Diana Conyers*

ISLAND ROADS

As a result of the lockdown and the sharp rise in local cases, more support staff including those usually based at Island Roads' contact centre are working from home which means residents are being advised to report highways issues via the website www.islandroads.com or email info@islandroads.com

BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN A PANDEMIC

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of community resilience and emergency planning.

In times of need, communities spontaneously help one another and look after their vulnerable residents. However, experience has shown that communities that have spent time planning and preparing for an emergency are better able to cope, and recover more quickly.

By building on existing local relationships and networks, using local knowledge and preparing for risks, your community will be able to cope better during and after an emergency.

One of the ways to enhance community resilience is to develop own emergency plans for your community – your town, village or a group of villages.

These plans will:

- identify risks relevant to the community;
- include the contact details of members of the community with specific skills which could be used during an emergency;
- identify locations within the community that could be used as temporary places of shelters in the event of an evacuation;
- identify resource that can be used in the event of an emergency, such as food, transport, fuel or tools that may be needed;
- contain information about the steps which need to be taken to activate your community response to an emergency and who to contact for help outside your community.

The Isle of Wight Council's Emergency Management Team and the team of Local Resilience Co-ordinators of Community Action Isle of Wight can offer support and guidance in the development of community resilience/emergency plans for your community.

For more information and assistance please contact in the first instance: Iain Lawrie, Resilience Co-ordinator (IW Council): iain.lawrie@iow.gov.uk Zoryna O'Donnell, Community Resilience Project Manager (CAIW): zodonnell@actioniw.org.uk

Further information on community resilience can be found at:

The Emergency Management Team's pages on [iwight.com](http://www.iwight.com):
<http://www.iwight.com/Council/OtherServices/Emergency-Management/Community-Resilience>

Cabinet Office UK Resilience website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-resilience-resources-and-tools>

Zoryna O'Donnell

LOOKING OUT FROM LOCKDOWN

Looking Out From Lockdown is an Island-wide project celebrating the creativity of Island people during lockdown, both in 2020, and again now in 2021. In collaboration with Lord Lieutenant of the Isle of Wight, Susie Sheldon, local arts for wellbeing charity Independent Arts is offering people the chance to exhibit their lockdown creations, be it painting, photographs, poetry, music, speech, pottery, writing, crafts, projects, inventions, baking, gardening or anything else creative completed to keep spirits up during lockdown.

Whether it is something that captures the moment of lockdown one, or whether it is right now in lockdown three, everyone is urged to get creative and submit their projects to fill the gallery with their thoughts, visions and reflections in any art form, plus the story behind them.

The website will become a “time capsule” for our Island Community to admire and share in years to come when reflecting on our experiences during the pandemic.



The plan is to hold physical exhibitions after restrictions end, so please save those creations that can't be exhibited online. For contributors who are unable to photograph and submit work online to the website, there will eventually be the option to use drop-off points, where creations can be photographed and submitted on your behalf and returned.

Charities, radio, local papers, schools, care homes, businesses, clubs and organisations and events during 2021 are all encouraged to get involved in this project and give people the motivation to get creative. Individual exhibitions of Looking Out From Lockdown could be held around the island, once restrictions ease. The Lord-Lieutenant of the Isle of Wight, Susie Sheldon says, “This is an exciting project that should give everyone an incentive to concentrate their talents for a purpose. In these difficult times we all need a purpose to keep us motivated. Everyone has the ability to be creative in different ways and I am really excited at the prospect of seeing all the works, ideas, inventions, thoughts etc that have come out of the time Islanders have spent in Lockdown both in 2020 and again now. Let this be something really good that comes out of the difficult times we are all going through.

Lisa Gagliani MBE, Chief Executive of Independent Arts says, “When we heard about this idea, we knew it was perfect to add to our existing Islesolation Gallery developed in lockdown one – with this new impetus, we hope many more Islanders will find inspiration to have a go and submit something, as we know just how valuable making, doing and displaying one's creativity can be at a time of stress.”

Jo Dare BEM, CEO of Age UK Isle of Wight commented: “Lockdown is challenging but to keep positive we know Islanders have been turning to existing talents, or learning new skills, some of which may have included, or been taught by, older residents. Whatever your age, whatever your way of letting time pass whilst keeping safe, and hopeful for the future, we want to see what you've been up to. You may even inspire someone else to have a go as well!”

Mayor of Ryde, Cllr Michael Lilley: “Looking out from Lockdown is a great project idea as it provides a message of hope and an outlet for voices and creativity of all our Island residents from their homes during lockdown. We need our community to stay safe but not silent and this provides an outlet to share our thoughts for the future and the fantastic imaginations within our community”.

To find out how to get involved, head to Independent Arts online
<https://islesolationgallery.com/LookingOutFromLockdown>
Submissions are welcome from any Island resident, of any age, preferably via email attachment to gallery@independentarts.org.uk

BOB SEELY, MP

Cross-Solent Connectivity

Council Leader Dave Stewart and myself have written a joint submission to the Union Connectivity Review (UCR) which is being led by government adviser Sir Peter Hendy CBE. This is a major, independent review of UK transport connectivity – commissioned by the Prime Minister – and we have asked for it to consider how travel between the Isle of Wight and the mainland could be improved.

We have highlighted the “uniquely disadvantageous” position the Isle of Wight faces when compared to islands in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Post-pandemic we must work towards a more sustainable and public-orientated approach in the future, which has proper regard for the essential / lifeline nature of these crossings.

With the railways now transitioning – post-pandemic – to a new, more accountable operational model, we should look to do the same with our ferry services.

Islanders need reliable and affordable cross-Solent connections to access healthcare, work and education – particularly as the community recovers from the effects of the pandemic.

Our connectivity to the mainland is currently entirely at the discretion of unregulated, privately-owned operators who are ultimately not formally answerable for their operational decisions to anyone but their shareholders. Islanders cannot rely on the ferries being there to provide lifeline services. This needs to change. We need intervention.

Whilst our submission sets out the current shortcomings, and suggests some potential ways forward, we are asking Sir Peter – as part of his wider review – to look in detail at how a new regulatory and governance model could be put in place, with subsidies and public service obligations, as necessary.

There are two main ways to tackle the current situation:

1) To make (a) funding available for a new regulatory and governance model for existing cross-Solent connectivity (with subsidies and public service obligations, where needed, to ensure minimum levels of service); and (b) appropriate, additional funding available to ensure that the provision of public services on the Isle of Wight is equal to that enjoyed on the mainland.

2) To continue with the arrangements set out in (1) above, unless the case is made (and funding made available) for constructing a fixed link between mainland England and the Isle of Wight – and then adjusting the ongoing funding model accordingly once such a fixed link was in place.

We consider that, on balance, the expenditure required to establish a fixed link between mainland England and the Isle of Wight would likely be far in excess of the costs involved with making a meaningful intervention in existing cross-Solent connectivity and providing additional funding available for public services, even over many years. On this basis, our preference would be to see (1) above as the best way forward to significantly improve cross-Solent connectivity and help level up

the Isle of Wight’s economy and prosperity with neighbouring parts of the mainland, whilst maintaining its distinctiveness and unique character.

Music Festivals

I have been working to help UK music festivals – such as the Isle of Wight festival – restart when the time is right. I have asked the Government to support festival organisers with a Government-backed insurance scheme similar to that in place for film and television.

In December I hosted a virtual meeting between Culture Minister, Caroline Dinenage, and some of the Island’s leading event’s organisers to discuss what could be done to support the industry this year.

In January I wrote to the DCMS Select Committee Chairman, Julian Knight - who is responsible for the enquiry into the future of UK festivals – setting out the urgent need for support.

Clearly events cannot go ahead until virus transmission rates are vastly reduced, however, the events industry needs to be able to plan for the future.

The Government needs to understand that if event management companies do not get support, the Treasury faces lost tax revenue, mass unemployment in the sector, and widespread insolvencies.

The vast majority of event management companies have received no income for almost a year now and they may not be there when we come out of the pandemic. They need help now.

Insurance is essential to this industry. Organisers cannot plan with confidence without it and livelihoods are at risk.

Isle of Wight festivals and events generate well in excess of £45 million pounds to the Island's economy each year therefore it is important that I champion the need for support.

When the nation emerges from this crisis, festivals and events will be a critical component in rebuilding our local and regional economy. Islanders will need something to look forward to and visitors will require incentives to travel to the Island.

Planned houses at Puckpool

I have objected to plans to build 50 homes at Puckpool Hill in Seaview. This type of development is exactly the opposite of what the Island needs and precisely why I have been campaigning against the Government's plans to accelerate large-scale house building in rural areas.

I oppose this development on the basis that the houses are not affordable for Island families trying to get a foot on the housing ladder, existing infrastructure will not cope and that trees and hedgerows will be destroyed in the process.

Firstly, the applicant claims the construction of 18 'affordable' houses. The starting price for an 'affordable' two-bed property at the proposed site is set to be £172,000. I do not view this as truly affordable.

Secondly, the development would impose strain on existing infrastructure, namely through surface water runoff and increased traffic. Existing residents will be adversely impacted by this.

Finally, the development shows a blatant disregard for nature and the Island's natural beauty with the removal of a significant number of trees and mature hedgerow. We must protect the Island's green areas and build with care and sensitivity.

Landscape Protections

I have asked the Government for further landscape protections. Currently, around half the Island is covered by the existing Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation but I want to see more land protected. This is part of a wider strategy on environmentally friendly development of the Island, both in housing or growing 'green' industries such as wind and tidal energy.

I want the Government to consider three options: an extension of the existing AONB status to cover more of the Island, full national park status, or a new designation - an 'Island Park' - which would sit somewhere between the protection levels of that of an AONB and National Park.

I set out my vision in a virtual meeting with Lord Gardiner, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity, and representatives from Natural England and DEFRA.

AONB status gives land greater protection than 'normal' planning rules and prevents large-scale green field planning, which I pledge to oppose.

The Prime Minister has set out his plans to designate and protect an additional 4,000 sq km of land across the country by 2030. I want the Island to be included in that.

I want the Government to recognise that the Island has a natural uniqueness which is worthy of further protection. We have a mixture of rare geology, unique beaches, some of the richest dinosaur finds in Europe along with chalk downs, marshy inlet and a lot more besides. We must protect them from harmful development. Currently we have five parcels of land designated as AONB: most areas have one large continuous designation. I want us to get away from the field by field approach to designations and protect a much larger area of land.

This is not just about housing and protecting from overdevelopment: it is about protecting landscape in perpetuity and is part of a green agenda for the Island too. Where we build, we need to build for Islanders, in appropriate numbers, in existing communities.

It is clear that to push this agenda will require the full support of the local authority so I will be talking to the Isle of Wight Council to discuss how we can move forward.

Grant Funding for Businesses

The Government has made a range of grants available to cover the current national lockdown period - from 5 January 2021. Businesses forced to close can claim grants of up to £3,000 per month while businesses remaining open - but impacted by local restrictions - can also claim grants of up to up to £2,100 a month. In addition to the rolling monthly grants, all businesses forced to close can claim a one-off grant of up to £9,000. I know businesses on the Island are having a tough time and I want them to access all the help on offer. Not only can businesses claim for this current lockdown period, they can also apply retrospectively for grants they would have been entitled to under the previous Tier 3 and Tier 4 restrictions during the Christmas/New Year period.

In addition, the IW Council also has a pot of money it can use to help businesses severely impacted by the lockdown who might not otherwise meet the criteria for the specific national grant schemes. I know the licensing trade has been very badly affected and 'wet' led pubs on the Island may also be able to access a one-off grant of £1,000 for being in Tier 3 during the period 2 December 2020 to 29 December 2020. Further information about the grants available can be found on the council's website. The government has also published a special 'support finder' tool to help businesses and the self-employed quickly and easily find out what financial support is available.

Bob Seely

POST OFFICE CLOSURES

In response to concerns regarding the closure of Island Post Offices, and in particular, Newport Post Office, MP Bob Seely hosted a meeting between 20 representatives of The Post Office, Town and Parish Councils and Community-based representatives, on January 21st.



Laura Tarling (Post Office) made the following points-

- There are 11,500 post offices across the UK.
- The Government has committed to extra funding.
- The majority of Post Offices are run by retailers.
- The good will of the retailers has to be relied upon.
- The operations usually run very smoothly but these are difficult times now and impacted by Covid-19, when retailers may have to shield. It is a fragile and delicate situation at the moment.
- Many supermarkets are not interested in taking on Post Offices.
- Independents have to fully fund the cost to set-up the operation

Julie Jones-Evans asked whether two or three smaller Post Offices situated within Newport was an option?

Mike Bulpitt wondered who would be prepared to take a Newport Office on? He made the point that a post office was a community service.

Laura Tarling spoke about the six criteria which the Post Office has to fulfil, ** which are-

- 99% of the UK population to be within three miles of their nearest post office outlet
- 90% of the UK population to be within one mile of their nearest post office outlet
- 99% of the total population in deprived urban areas across the UK to be within one mile of their nearest post office outlet.
- 95% of the total urban population across the UK to be within one mile of their nearest post office outlet
- 95% of the total rural population across the UK to be within three miles of their nearest post office outlet
- 95% of the population of every postcode district to be within six miles of their nearest post office outlet.

Wootton Bridge Clerk, Liz Kingston said that WB PC had looked at costs and revealed that it costs approximately £18,000 to set up one post office counter.

The possibility of whether WH Smiths on the High St would be keen to have a post office within their store was discussed and opinion was that it could be financially beneficial to them. Bob Seely will contact them.

The possibility of having a mobile post office, similar to mobile banking vehicles, was suggested and thought to be a very good idea worth investigating, although the costs were said to be high.

The best suggestion though was of having a post office employee visiting outlying and rural areas on a regular basis for perhaps a couple of hours at a time. This would involve a small cost (Community Fund) to Town and Parish Councils. Bob Seely and Mike Bulpitt will put a proposal together which will be circulated to all T&PCs.

** <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201919/cmselect/cmbeis/247/24706.htm>

ISLE OF WIGHT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

If you're over 50 and looking to start a business or be your own boss, we can help. The IW Chamber hosts monthly workshops (currently via zoom video call) and provides ongoing mentoring. The business mentors can provide on-going practical help and friendly support. If you've been made redundant or are at the early stages of retirement, you might be thinking of starting something new.



BUSINESS START-UP

50 PLUS START ME UP - FREE BUSINESS START UP COURSE

We offer new businesses the opportunity to take their ideas from paper into practice. As part of the 50 plus Start Me Up Programme we offer a free business seminar aimed at people over 50 who are starting a business. Get the tools you need to take your idea from the drawing board to the real world.

This course is designed for those with a business idea through to those who have been in business for six months. More information can be found via <https://www.iwchamber.co.uk/training-courses/>

Emma Spinelli

FEDERATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES

Recognizing the need for mental health care, the Federation of Small Businesses is in the process of finalising details with Solent LEP and hope to launch a programme very soon.

"Mental health support for our small business owners who are under extreme stress at the moment is vital. More details will be coming soon," said *Nicola Bailey*.



MEMBER OF THE FEDERATION
OF SMALL BUSINESSES

RED FUNNEL

While we are continuing to run our vehicle ferry and Hi-Speed Red Jet service, 7 days a week, we remind everyone to abide by the government's latest advice and only travel if it is absolutely essential to do so.

We also encourage anyone traveling for NHS appointments on the mainland to visit our website at www.redfunnel.co.uk/NHS prior to travelling. Here, you can find out more about special rates, as well as how to make a request to remain in your vehicle if you're shielding right now.



For those who still need to travel, we want to assure passengers that our teams are working very hard to keep our ferries clean and safe. We continue to take appropriate precautions including ensuring that all high-touch surface areas such as tables, counters, arm rests, railings and toilets are cleaned and sanitised between every crossing. Hand sanitiser remains widely available throughout all vessels and hand washing facilities are regularly checked and restocked. Safety and social distancing signage remains prominent, including ample reminders to wear a face covering when inside our vessels. Our staff policy also includes the wearing of PPE at all times. In alignment with the face coverings legislation, we also took the decision to disallow food and beverage consumption (unless for medical reasons) within the interior of the passenger areas.

To permit greater social distancing we have also reduced our passenger capacity. At this time, our vehicle ferries are running to just 28% of normal capacity – to a maximum of 250 passengers instead of the usual 892. Our Red Jets are currently capped at 148 passengers, which represents 53% of our normal capacity of 275 passengers.

Given the current travel advice concerning essential travel only, combined with the general decline in traffic at this time of year, we are seeing record low passenger figures. So whilst these passenger limits are currently in place, in reality we are carrying far less passengers on our crossings. Anyone still needing to travel for essential reasons at this time should find that there is ample space to maintain significant social distance between other passengers.

We'd also like take this opportunity to thank our Island customers for their patience and understanding throughout these many months.

Our team has done everything possible to maintain our duty to keep sailing and keep the Island connected and supplied. This journey hasn't always been easy, and we've had to make some difficult decisions. If you've been adversely affected, we truly apologise. We will continue to do all we can to ensure our resilience and keep serving our Island community and we wish to take this opportunity to thank you for your support and custom.

Fran Collins

SOUTHERN VECTIS

The update from here is that we're very much still open for business for key workers and others making essential journeys. We are running at around 25% of usual levels with around 30,000 individual journeys being made each week.

We've made a few minor service reductions, but our key daytime buses remain at pre-COVID levels.

We've got hand sanitizer onboard all buses and have implemented greatly improved cleaning regimes, including daytime touch-point cleaning on buses when at Newport or Ryde bus stations.

In non-COVID news, we have a new mobile app (Touch On Touch Off) launching in the next couple of months, offering journey-planning, real-time bus tracking, and ticketing.

Richard Tyldsley



HOVERTRAVEL

Adding to its critical community timetable, Hovertravel is adding two extra services to its weekday services, to ensure that key workers and essential supplies continue to flow across the Solent. From Monday 25th January until further notice, the weekday timetable includes a 1645 from Ryde and a 1700 from Southsea.

Loretta Lale, head of commercial at Hovertravel added: "We are in constant communication with the NHS Trusts on both sides of the Solent, to make sure we are answering their requirements for flying medical professionals to and from the Island. Similarly we listening to those key workers who are traveling with us to identify the times of the day when extra services are needed. With our short journey time of less than 10 minutes and flexible operation we can add in services on an ad hoc basis but we also want to give confidence to those who need to travel and have made these extra services a permanent addition to our timetable."



Hovertravel's timetables can be viewed on their website:

<https://www.hovertravel.co.uk/timetables/>

Stephen Forster



SOUTHERN WATER

Just to update you on emergency works we are undertaking at Appley seafront, Ryde.

Since Monday 25 January, we've been working hard to repair a collapsed sewer which has caused a sinkhole.

The one metre wide pipe carries all of Ryde's wastewater and stormwater, so tankers and temporary pumps have been drafted in to maintain flow.

These are critical in helping us to maintain wastewater services and ensure local residents and businesses can continue to use all kitchen and bathroom facilities as normal.

Finding a permanent solution is our next priority. Due to the complex nature of this and the resulting sinkhole, this is going to take several weeks.

The necessary temporary works continue this week and the permanent repair is scheduled to start on Monday. The adjacent footpath will remain open.

We recognise the disruption this has caused locally and apologise to all those affected. We wish to reassure customers that we are working to rectify the issue quickly and safely.

We thank all for their patience and for giving our frontline workers the safe distance they need to carry out their work safely.

Information will continue to be posted on our social media channels and via the media, and I will also keep you posted as and when I get more from the relevant teams.

Many thanks, *Laura Mora (External Liaison Co-ordinator (Isle of Wight))*



WIGHTLINK

Wightlink's takeaway cafés will be closed from Saturday 16 January 2021. In addition, customers will not be allowed to bring their own refreshments to eat or drink onboard ferries or at ports.



All customers must wear a face covering throughout their crossing (unless medically exempt) to help stop the spread of coronavirus, especially the new variant of Covid-19 which is 70% more transmissible than the first strain of the disease.

"Although the vast majority of essential travellers onboard our ferries are obeying the law over mask-wearing, not everyone is following the regulations," explains Wightlink Chief Executive Keith Greenfield. "We want to remind customers that they need to wear a face covering, at all times and in all areas, to protect themselves and others during the pandemic." Remember Hands - Face - Space.

Money accidentally left by passengers on board Wightlink's ferries will help the charity Solent Mind support people with mental health issues across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

At the end of each year, Wightlink donates unclaimed money to charity. It is typically loose change left by passengers in the last 12 months on board ferries or at terminals.

This year, with mental health issues becoming significant during the COVID-19 pandemic, the ferry company will donate the money, which it has topped up to a round £1,000, to Solent Mind. The leading Hampshire mental health charity provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem and campaigns to improve services and raise awareness.

Keith Greenfield, Wightlink Chief Executive says: "Throughout the year, any cash that has been left at our ports and on board our ships is safely banked by our colleagues, in case it is claimed.

"At the end of the year we donate any unclaimed money to a worthwhile cause. We ask our colleagues to suggest which charities they think should benefit from this money and this year Solent Mind came out on top.

"We are delighted to help them out particularly during the pandemic when mental health issues are really coming to the fore."

Joanne Silsbury, Corporate Liaison Officer from Solent Mind, adds: "This is a very welcome and unexpected boost for us, and it comes at a really important time. Generous donations such as this will help us to be there for those feeling anxious, low, worried or isolated during this winter lockdown. Our thanks go out to the thoughtful colleagues at Wightlink."

You won't be surprised to hear we are carrying very few people at present as only essential travel is allowed in lockdown. In terms of timetables we like to refer people to our online timetable as they're always up to date on the website www.wightlink.co.uk

Karen Woods

TRADING STANDARDS

Trading Standards are receiving a worrying number of reports about a Covid Vaccine Scam email. Having seen a copy of this it is incredibly realistic and the wording has clearly been taken straight from the NHS. It will ask you to click on a link to accept your invitation however it will then ask you for personal details and then bank account details. This is a SCAM please do not be fooled by the genuine looking branding. You will not be contacted in this way to receive your vaccine and the NHS will never ask for banking details.

This email can be forwarded to report@phishing.gov.uk before being deleted.



A couple of reports from residents this week about suspicious emails purporting to be from Microsoft regarding Word and Office 365. The message says that these are due to expire so you will need to update and ask you to click on a link – DON'T! This is a SCAM if you check the senders email address you will see that it is not a valid Microsoft email. These scammers will harvest your details and use them to perpetrate further scams or to gain access to your bank accounts. These messages can be forwarded to report@phishing.gov.uk and then deleted.

Remember - never click on links in messages and no genuine company would contact you like this

And a variety of scams that have been plaguing the Island.... if you get any of these whether email, phone call or text – ignore/delete them – never click on links in messages or respond to requests in phone calls – these are all SCAMS

- Email from the Royal Mail that says due to incomplete address they are unable to deliver a parcel – asking you to click on the link to complete the information required – DON'T
- Email from EE to say that your payment couldn't be taken and asking you to click on a link to verify your details – DON'T
- Text message allegedly from the DVLA to say that your payment couldn't be taken and asking you to click on a link to make the payment due – DON'T
- Calls from Amazon Prime stating that the annual membership of £79.99 is due for renewal – HANG UP



Remember, any unsolicited communication is likely to be a scam so treat them with suspicion.

Sally Ash

And just a couple more, from individuals.....

My company did an anonymous (fake) scam email check on us, and 25% of people clicked on the fake scam link! So it just shows how easy it is for all of us to be tricked - I guess it's a message to us all to take extra care with email. *Tom A.*

I had a scam message yesterday that will almost certainly catch people out. An email from Parcelforce told me that they had called at 1.06pm and I was not in. I had to press on a link to get it redelivered. You had to pay money to get it redelivered! And they wanted your bank card number. I knew I was not expecting anything and when I checked the sender it was a weird email address. But without checking the sender you would believe it was from Parcelforce.

They did not leave a card in the door either. Just to make you all aware anyway. *Brenda R.*

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL

Library services are now closed to reinforce the need to stay home, protect the NHS and save lives.

The 'Order and Collect' scheme, along with access to computer services, has also been suspended due to the rapid rise in positive coronavirus cases on the Island.

Library staff are standing by to be redeployed to assist with the Covid-19 response and to support the community at this time of crisis.

The situation will be reviewed during the last week of January and the council may be able to restore its Order and Collect service in February, depending on local infection levels.

All current loans have been extended to 1 March and no fines are being charged.

Library services are available online, including access to ebooks, audio books, magazines, newspapers, music, comics and graphic novels.

People can access these services on the council's website at www.iow.gov.uk/thelibrary



The Island's COVID-19 testing centre is now open seven days a week.

The centre at Newclose County Cricket Ground, Blackwater Road, Newport, will also be open for longer each day — from 8.30am until 4.30pm, including Sundays for the first time.

The changes will enable more tests to be carried out as needed.

People with COVID-19 symptoms who are unable to get a test slot online should call 119 and will then be advised of available appointments. Home testing kits can also be ordered online or via 119.

Elderly residents with concessionary bus passes are able to access free bus travel all day, every day for essential journeys currently.

As part of the Isle of Wight Council's efforts to support residents during the COVID-19 pandemic, free bus travel will be available before 9.30am to help eligible residents make use of early morning slots for vaccines, healthcare, shopping and other vital appointments.

Previously, free concessionary travel for age related pass holders was valid between 9.30am and 11pm from Monday to Friday, and at any time on weekends and public holidays. The relaxation of the rules will continue until schools begin to reopen.

Residents are being urged to have their say on plans to make it both easier and safer to 'get on your bike' in Newport.

A public consultation has launched today (Monday) on proposals to upgrade the footpath that runs behind Fairlee Road into the town centre.

Under the scheme, the former railway line between Mews Lane and Newport Quay would be upgraded with a smooth, all-weather surface, creating a safer route for cyclists away from the busy main road.

As part of the plans, the path would also be widened in places to enable shared use with pedestrians.

The footpath was identified as a priority route to and from Newport in the council's Local Cycling and Walking Plan published last year.

It has since secured £235,000 from the government through its Active Travel Fund to deliver the scheme, should it receive support.

To have your say on the plans, visit <https://www.iow.gov.uk/Council/OtherServices/Sports-Development-Unit/Stay-Active-During-Lockdown/>