



The IWALC Bulletin

April 2021

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

Your IWALC Matters!!

Message from the Editor

As most readers will probably know, elections for local parish, town and community councils will take place on 6 May – along with elections for the Isle of Wight Council and for the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Police and Crime Commissioner. Local councils are therefore in a state of limbo at present. Routine business continues as usual but pre-election ‘purdah’ restrictions limit policy decisions and public communication.

Because of purdah restrictions, this issue of the Bulletin differs from previous ones in a number of ways. In particular, this introductory message is from the Editor rather than the IWALC Chair, the section on Local Council News has been omitted and the section on IWALC News is limited to factual information.

However, in anticipation of the elections, we have added a special Annex containing some basic factual information about all the local councils on the Island, including non-IWALC members. We hope that this will facilitate residents’ knowledge of and access to their local council, thereby encouraging them not only to vote but also to participate in council activities. The Annex has been produced as a stand-alone document, since readers may like to keep it for future reference.

Jill Webster

What's On, When & Where??

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)

Website - www.iwalc.org

The Bulletin - Jill Webster - jwebster.iwalc@outlook.com - 01983 721483

Deadline for the May issue is April 30th - thank you.

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.

IWALC News...

IWALC Meetings

IWALC held its last meeting before the elections on 18 March. It was held a week earlier than usual in order to avoid the introduction of purdah restrictions on 22 March. Members decided not to hold a meeting in April because of the imminent elections.

Communications Group

At the 18th March meeting, members agreed to establish the Communications Group as a permanent sub-committee, in order to improve IWALC's publicity capacity. It was also agreed to extend Jill Webster's employment to include the provision of administrative support to the Group and to invite the Island's Local Democracy Reporter to attend future meetings.

Community Resilience Event

Members also endorsed another recommendation made at the February Workshop - namely to host an event on 'community resilience' after the elections. The event will look at the lessons learned from the experience of community hubs during the Covid outbreak and the implications of this for the future role of local councils. It was agreed to approach Community Action as a possible partner in such an event.

Training

IWALC will organise a comprehensive programme of councillor training after the elections. Plans are being made to hold courses on Basic Councillor Skills in June, Chairmanship Skills in July, Planning in September and Finance in October or November. Training in Code of Conduct and the Council as an Employer will be scheduled later. It is proposed, at least initially, to provide a choice of face-to-face and online training. Further details will be issued in the next Bulletin. Training will be open to all local councils. It will be free for IWALC members, while non-member councils will be charged £50 per person per course.

Online Council meetings

Despite persistent lobbying by both the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Local Government Association (LGA), the Government has announced that after 6 May all councils will have to return to face-to-face meetings. Online meetings will no longer be permitted.

Many councils, on the Island and elsewhere, have expressed concern about the logistical challenges that this presents and three organisations (Lawyers in Local Government, the Association of Democratic Services Officers and Hertfordshire County Council) are challenging it in the High Court this month.

Meanwhile, however, NALC has provided guidelines on how to return safely to face-to-face meetings. Bob Blezzard, IWALC's NALC representative has kindly provided the following summary:

1. Consider what business can be transacted before 7th May so that the amount of business after 7th May can be reduced to a minimum.
2. Hold Annual Parish Meeting whilst regulations allow remote meetings to be held.
3. Consider when councils do need to meet face to face and whether meetings can be delayed to later in the year when potential risks may be further reduced.
4. Implement or review scheme of delegation. This will allow clerks to make certain decisions. There should be clarity about which decisions are delegated and which are not, for how long the scheme is in place and when it will end.
5. Keep meetings short with limited business and votes. Consider using electronic voting tools.
6. Carry out risk assessment in advance of the meeting. (I have one available that I produced for Lake last year.
7. Ensure hand sanitiser is available.
8. Require attendees to wear face masks.
9. Consider holding paperless meetings.
10. If papers are provided discourage sharing and require participants to take their own papers away.
11. Ensure attendees are at least two metres apart and avoid attendees facing each other.
12. Ensure good ventilation with doors and windows open where possible.
13. Ensure a large enough room is provided to allow social distancing and consider live streaming. For the public.
14. Consider requiring public questions to be submitted by email.
15. Use where possible Test and Trace apps and record names and contact details of attendees for Test and Trace purposes.
16. Consider having staggered arrival times to avoid everyone arriving together.
17. Consult with staff in advance of return to face to face meetings.

A Message from the CEO of NALC – Jonathan Owen

I was very impressed by the thinking that took place about the future of the Isle of Wight Association at your recent strategic planning meeting which I was pleased to attend. It is clear that Councils on the island are doing some really exciting things. I was particularly impressed by the community hubs and the level of your engagement with the Isle of Wight council. I think your Association has some really exciting plans for the future, which I look forward to hearing more about.

NALC is committed to working closely with IWALC to make sure that your councils receive the support you need. I am pleased to announce that should you wish to take advantage of it you can have direct access to our services, our team of legal experts deal with around 1000 queries a year from councils and county associations and they have unparalleled expertise in the complex laws applying to our sector.

There are a number of other ways that you can benefit from your membership of NALC, via IWALC.

I would encourage you to sign-up to my weekly E-bulletin (not as good as this one) but it gives you insights into what is happening nationally.



Do remember to get your login details from IWALC to access our website where there is a huge range of material available including legal topic notes, HR templates and good councillor guides. Certainly I'd encourage you to look at the Good Councillor series, the most recent of which focused on cyber security. Probably especially useful for new councillors after the elections.

Much of our work is focused on lobbying government to ensure that laws and regulations help rather than hinder the sector. We work closely with county associations and I know IWALC has had productive meetings with your MP. Recent national achievements include exempting public conveniences from business rates and securing exemption for local councils from requirements to appoint a data protection officer.

This lobbying is informed by Councils' experience on the ground and if you have any issues that you would like to see raised nationally we have a process for submitting motions via your county association. So if there are any things you'd like to see changed in national policy then please talk to your county association. Who knows it may lead in the long term to a change in the laws making it easier for you to help your residents.

And finally we have recently launched our annual awards - star councils. So please do put your council, councillor or clerk forward for this prestigious National award, I know there are many contenders on the Island <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/star-council-awards>

Jonathan Owen
(Chief Executive -
National Association of Local Councils)

Benefits of NALC and IWALC Membership

Over 75% of the town, parish and community councils on the Isle of Wight benefit from membership of the Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils (IWALC) and through that membership affiliation to the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). Officers of IWALC have negotiated with our national colleagues to improve the offer and benefits to member councils. Benefits now include direct access to NALC colleagues for legal and financial advice by all councils, irrespective of size, and later in the year after the elections it is planned to hold a free local conference/training event supported by NALC. In addition one of the benefits of IWALC membership is free training for councillors and clerks, something which does not happen in most county associations which use training as a major income stream.

We would ideally like to see 100% of Island councils in membership of IWALC and with this in mind have in cooperation with national colleagues developed an introductory discount scheme for non-member councils wishing to re-join IWALC. For the first year of membership re-joining councils will pay only the IWALC subscription and not the NALC affiliation fee but will still enjoy the benefit of NALC affiliation including direct access to NALC services. Councils choosing to obtain services from other sources need to ensure that they are fully legally indemnified for advice given by a service provider. NALC indemnity is only given to affiliated councils and affiliation is only available through the "home CALC," on the Isle of Wight this being IWALC.

If your council would like to join IWALC and benefit from the free training available after the election please contact Sue Hardy, the IWALC Treasurer, telephone 401534 or email Sue at susanhardy1@btopenworld.com

Bob Blezzard
(IWALC's representative to NALC)

Police and Community Engagement in Sussex

Community Safety and policing remains high on the agenda of the 250 local councils across East & West Sussex; over the past 15 years we have developed various ways of ensuring towns and parishes are able to have an effective two-way dialogue with the police.

Currently, this operates at three levels :

- Focus Groups – 32 across Sussex visited every 6 months by SALC CEO and the Senior Communications Manager from the Police & Crime Commissioner's office.
- Chairmen's Forum – every two months local council chairmen are invited to a zoom to raise matters of concern, including policing. Attended by senior officers from the Roads Policing Unit.
- Meeting with Chief Constable and the PCC – half yearly discussion attended by the CEO of SALC and Chairmen of the seven District Associations of Local Councils across Sussex. A month before the meeting councils are invited to submit matters to be raised and are confined to issues of a strategic nature or matters that have not been resolved with the District Commander [Chief Inspector rank]



In this item I will concentrate on Focus Groups.

We have established 16 such Groups in each County that makes up the Force area; these tend to be based on market towns and their rural hinterland, so perhaps embracing a town and three or four parishes. The invitation is extended to non-councillors so, in a given area the Council might choose to involve someone from the Chamber of Commerce, a representative from tourism and hospitality, or a major retailer.

The Focus Group is invited to reflect on any improvement or worsening of policing that has occurred locally during the past six months. This might be purely perception, but for those experiencing a problem perception is real.

Matters raised are fed back directly to the Chief Constable and PCC; by visiting the same areas twice a year, a pattern begins to emerge. During 2019 /2020 this feedback has contributed to the decision to recruit additional police officers and PCSOs, the creation of a dedicated rural policing team and all officers encouraged to engage directly with Clerks of local councils. To assist with this, the CEO was asked by the police to record a podcast that could be used as part of PCSO induction training describing the role of local councils and how important it is for police and councils to exchange information and develop relationships.

It may be that on the Island, the relationship with the police is close-knit and dialogue sufficiently two-way that no improvement is necessary; I have seen the West Wight survey questionnaire and the Facebook page which creates the opportunity for community involvement. If, however some communities on the Island feel they would prefer a different approach, I would be quite prepared to assist with the benefit of the effective Sussex experience.

Trevor Leggo,

CEO, SALC Trevor.leggo@wsalc.co.uk or Trevor.leggo@esalc.co.uk

Other News...

Community Resilience on the Isle of Wight: One project ended but another one will start soon.



HM Government

In partnership with

THE NATIONAL LOTTERY
COMMUNITY FUND

On 20th March 2021, the 6-month Community Resilience project of the Community Action Isle of Wight (CAIW) has been successfully completed. We were able to implement this project thanks to the grant funding from the Coronavirus Community Support Fund (CCSF), distributed by The National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF).

The aim of this project was to build an even more agile and sustainable structure of community resilience response on the Isle of Wight. There were three key elements to this project:

1. Supporting local re-enablement (supporting vulnerable individuals in the community).
2. Helping to deal with the next round(s) of shielding in effective and safe ways.

3. Using the current experience to encourage and support more general community resilience planning (local resilience plans for villages and towns).

Over the past six months, we worked with a network of COVID community hubs, parish and town councils, the Isle of Wight Council, community groups, volunteers and other partners, to help them strengthen their local resilience infrastructure for their communities. Our project linked this network with the formal structure of the statutory Local Resilience Forum (LRF) by attending the meetings of the Community Cell (part of the formal LRF structure).

Despite the limitations imposed by the two lockdowns which were in place during the past 6 months, some 61.8% of all parish and town councils engaged with our project team. Some 11.7 % of all parish and town councils now have drafts of the local resilience plans which were produced with support from our Community Resilience Coordinators. The Clerk of one of the Parish Councils wrote to the Community Resilience Coordinator in their area: "Thank you for the great job you have done and the support you have provided to so much of the Island community – I thought you might like to know that at last night's Parish Council meeting, the councillors agreed to fill in the last parts of the Resilience Plan – ready for adoption. Your work has made this so much easier and I am very grateful for that."

During the past six months, we have engaged with over 98 local businesses, 36 schools, 13 community centres and halls, 29 churches and faith groups, and over 73 voluntary sector organisations.

Community hubs and parish and town councils which played the role of community hubs in their areas were provided with the following support throughout this project:

- Updates about local and national developments relating to the pandemic;
- Information helping them to support vulnerable residents in their area;
- Updates about funding opportunities and help in writing funding bids;
- Help with local resilience planning;
- Connecting them with other people, hubs and organisations;
- Access to free online training for staff and volunteers involved in the work of COVID community hubs offered through this project;
- Other support and assistance as and when required.

In November 2020, we also worked with the Isle of Wight Council, community hubs, parish and town councils and other partner organisations and group to help administer funding from the Ministry of Housing & Local Government to provide support to the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) during the period of the second national lockdown.

Our training programme was successfully implemented despite the lockdowns as we were able to offer it as live online learning. Over the past six months we delivered the following free training for staff and volunteers involved in the work of COVID community hubs:

- Advice First Aid Volunteer training: 4 intakes, 51 learners in total;
- Introduction to Active Listening Skills training: 2 intakes, 26 learners in total;
- Mental Health Aware training: 3 intakes, 42 learners in total;

Resilience during challenging times training: 5 intakes, 64 learners in total.

All our training events received consistently positive feedback from learners who were able to put their learning into practice straight away.

As part of our end of project evaluation, we have undertaken a survey of our stakeholders (community hubs, voluntary groups and other organisations engaged with the project). The data collected through this survey shows that:

- 68% of respondents had contact with the project team between September 2020 often (4 or more times) and 20% had contact with the project team at least 2-3 times;
- 48% of respondents found the support offered through this project very beneficial for their community hub/group/organisation and a further 28% found it moderately beneficial.

Based on their experience, our stakeholders highlighted many aspects of the project which were the most beneficial for them and their communities. These included:

- “Being able to ask a question and knowing that it would be pursued - too often, community groups get fobbed off. The project helped create a two-way dialogue between our concerns / needs and the LRF.”
- “Collaboration with other organisations and additional funding.”
- “The continuous support and updates. It was so helpful to have someone to contact if there was something I was unsure of.”
- “Increasing the team’s knowledge through the training provided.”

As part of the project evaluation, we have also compiled a collection of short case studies which will be published on the CAIW’s website soon.

One of the respondents who had completed our stakeholder survey wrote: “An excellent scheme. Should continue really.” And you know what? It will!

We just received a notification that our new applications for funding from the Coronavirus Community Support Fund (CCSF), distributed by The National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF), has been approved.

This new grant funding will allow us to build on the experience of the past six months and continue working with all our partners to future proof community resilience on the Isle of Wight.

Watch this space – more information about our new project to follow in the next issue.

Zoryna O'Donnell (Community Resilience project Manager)

A few words from Lord Lieutenant, Susie Sheldon...

‘Looking out from Lockdown’

This is the last chance to submit your creative works for the on-line ‘Looking out from Lockdown’ exhibition. Immediately after Easter, Independent Arts will be selecting the works to be displayed at a series of physical exhibitions around the Island, so send in your writings, works of Art, creations, projects **NOW**.

<https://islesolationgallery.com/lookingoutfromlockdown/>

The Lord-Lieutenant would like to know about people, businesses, charities, organisations that have gone that extra mile over the last year of the pandemic so that she can write to thank them.

It may be people who have been instrumental in large projects, or it may be that really good neighbour who has quietly served the community with no acknowledgment.

Please send details to lowlieutenancy@gmail.com

Isle of Wight Council



Restart grants for Island businesses to get underway

Eligible Island businesses in certain sectors will soon receive government Restart Grants to provide support as coronavirus restrictions are eased.

The Restart Grants for business ratepaying businesses were announced in the government budget of 3 March, and will begin from April.

Island businesses which have previously received a government COVID-19 business support grant should automatically be paid via their existing details held by the council. However, the council is seeking further clarification from the government on exactly which previous COVID-19 business support grants and periods qualify.

Businesses which have not previously received a government COVID-19 business support grant, but which are eligible under the scheme, will be able to apply via a form which will be available soon on the council's website at www.iwight.com/covid19_businessadvice.

The Restart Grant support is aimed at non-essential retail, hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gym businesses in England who receive a business rates bill.

The support will take the form of one-off grants via local councils:

- Up to £6,000 to non-essential retail business premises, to help them reopen safely.
- Up to £18,000 to hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gym business premises, which may open later under plans set out in the government roadmap and will be more impacted by restrictions when they do reopen.

Businesses must have been trading on 1 April 2021 to be eligible to receive funding under this scheme. For more information visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-youre-eligible-for-a-coronavirus-restart-grant>

Safety net of support will stay in place for vulnerable Islanders

Vulnerable Islanders are being reassured that the safety net of support will stay in place when shielding is paused from Wednesday (31 March). Support put in place by the Isle of Wight Council at the start of the first lockdown last March and which has continued ever since, will carry on for months ahead, even after the current national lockdown is lifted. The authority has written to thousands of clinically extremely vulnerable people to remind them of what that includes.

The council's helpline — (01983) 823600 — is available for anyone who feels vulnerable, needs help because of lockdown or self-isolation, or who is alone with no local network of friends, family or neighbours and needs support.

The council has also launched a new Telecheck service as part of its Wightcare offer, providing friendly chat and catch up social calls as well as welfare calls to check people are safe and well. For more information, please call the team on (01983) 821105 or email: wightcare@iow.gov.uk

Additional information is also available on the Keep the Island Safe website, with sections on support and guidance, vaccinations, testing, self-isolation and prevention guidance. This includes links to many local organisations and businesses offering support such as Age UK Isle of Wight and Citizens Advice Isle of Wight, as well as practical support like 'out and about' cards to help people feel more confident as national pandemic restrictions ease.

If you are clinically extremely vulnerable and have not already done so you can request priority access to supermarket delivery slots, you have until 31 March to register by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support>. The government has confirmed the participating supermarkets will continue to offer priority access until at least 21 June 2021. Some supermarkets may extend your priority access beyond this date.

Free COVID-19 home testing kits for everyone

Community testing sites across the Island will be distributing free coronavirus (COVID-19) home testing kits to anyone aged 16 and over from Monday (29 March). About one in three people with COVID-19 do not have symptoms but can still pass it on to others. Twice weekly (rapid lateral flow) testing of people without coronavirus symptoms is important to help stop the virus from spreading.

Tests can be picked up from any of the council's community testing sites in Ryde, Sandown, Newport, Yarmouth and Cowes, or from the Newclose County Cricket Ground testing site.

For more information, including opening times, visit <https://keeptheislandsafe.org/communitytesting>
Secondary school pupils are given test kits by their school. Primary school pupils are not being asked to get tested. People can continue to take a test at a community testing site if they prefer.
People with any symptoms of COVID-19 should immediately self-isolate and book a test at Newclose County Cricket Ground by calling 119 or via the government website.

Trading Standards have another roundup of scams:

- We have received lots of reports of adverts, emails and face book postings telling you that you have won a fantastic prize. These quite often purport to be one of the main supermarkets but can take many forms. They will ask you for details and information and are generally phishing exercises. Remember, if something sounds too good to be true it probably is. Don't respond and don't share just delete!
- Please be wary of "pop up" adverts that appear on your device. These may be adverts for miracle face creams or slimming tablets that will offer a free trial and all you will pay is postage. To pay the postage you have to use your debit card and what they won't tell you is that you will then be debited monthly and sent additional products for a contract that you don't know you have entered into. Again, if it sounds too good to be true.....
- We have been contacted by a resident to say that she had a phone call about the COVID-19 Vaccine and that it would cost her £299. The vaccine is free and you will be contacted by the NHS. We have been advised that the NHS may text you to invite you to book a vaccine appointment. You can trust your text message is genuine if it comes from 'NHSvaccine', includes a link to the NHS.uk website and gives you the option of phoning 119. If you are still unsure this will be followed up by a letter – if the text is genuine the letter should be delivered a few days later.
- There are an increasing number of reports around home insulation phone calls, the caller will tell you they will visit and check out your home insulation in the roof and then offer you a onetime only deal for providing insulation. Similarly calls about asbestos in your property, they will arrange to call and check your property for asbestos and will almost certainly "find" some, they will then over-charge you for the removal and disposal of the non-existent asbestos. Do not engage with anyone who calls you out of the blue and remember any work that these companies are likely to do will be over priced and of a poor quality.
- Lastly, we have been notified of a couple of email scams that may catch out local businesses. One purports to be from the HSE and says they will be carrying out an inspection on your premises. There is an attachment which you are asked to open and may contain viruses that could infect your computer. Check the senders email address – this won't be a valid HSE email address. The other claims to be from Xero (accounting for small businesses) and is an invoice due for payment. This could be seen as legitimate by a busy trader, so please be cautious with any correspondence you receive like this.



To help keep yourself and those you care about free from scams, please click on the following link and watch a short 20 minute video aimed at raising awareness-

<https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/>

Scam texts can be forwarded to 7726 and scam emails sent on to report@phishing.gov.uk where the information will be gathered and used for intelligence.

Report scams online: Action Fraud or on the phone: 0300 123 2040.

Finally, this from Ursula O'Dowd, (Census Engagement Officer) - I have received a notification of a scam text, purporting to be from the census saying that there is incorrect information on the form and to avoid a £1000 fine visit censu.unpaid-feesgov.com/

This has commenced on the island...don't be fooled.

News from Age UK



The Age Friendly Island (AFI) project works towards creating an environment where the Isle of Wight community is set up to help older people live safely, enjoy good health and stay locally involved.

The AFI team work with Island organisations and older Islanders to deliver projects to make the Isle of Wight more Age Friendly. There are lots of ways to get involved from signing up to our Charter to becoming a member of a steering group, for example. You can make a difference.

Age Friendly Island Current Projects

The Age Friendly Island (AFI) project is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and we are currently in our 7th and last year of funding. We have a number of current projects we will complete this year and you will find further details below. We work with Island organisations and older people to co-produce this work. If you would like to be involved do get in touch.

Digital Connectivity

The group works to encourage organisations to work in a consistent, co-ordinated way, to ensure that people who want to become or remain digitally connected, can do so. The group has four sub-groups working to deliver the overall goal.

The following organisations are involved in the Digital Connectivity steering group:

- Adult and Community Learning
- Age Friendly Island
- Age UK IW
- Barclays Digital Eagles
- Census 2021
- Citizen Advice Bureau
- Independent Arts
- IWC
- Seaview and Nettlestone Parish Council
- 3 Ts Project
- Sight for Wight
- Sovereign Housing
- Trading Standards
- West Wight Hub
- Wightfibre



A survey of digital connectivity has just been completed and results will be available in May.

Environment

The group provides feedback for how public spaces can be adapted to help with social distancing and ensuring Age Friendly principles are met. These adaptations are a direct response to Covid-19 with the easing of lockdown and the implications this has.

The group created a set of 'Out & About' Cards with the IWC to help people to feel more confident to navigate social distancing and other Covid-secure measures that are now in place.

The group will also be working with the Heritage Action Zones in Newport and Ryde to give a voice to the issues and concerns of older people during the consultation phase.

Employment

The group is currently focusing on the work of the Centre for Ageing Better's toolkit.

Celebrating Age Festival

The Celebrating Age Festival was last held in 2019 and has been on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic. This year we are linking to the national campaign focusing on Valuable not Vulnerable.

Age Friendly Training

We are now delivering the Age Friendly training again via a virtual platform. Some Town and Parish councils have received this training when we were delivering it face-to-face and to find out more information please email Emma Lincoln at emma.lincoln@ageukiw.org.uk

Please visit www.ageuk.org.uk/isleofwight/our-services/age-friendly-island/ to find out more or call us on (01983) 525282.

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Information about a new Bereavement Support Helpline from Mountbatten

Mountbatten Isle of Wight is opening a new Bereavement Support Helpline available to all those across the Isle of Wight who have been bereaved.

Bereavement is a natural response following the death of a person you have loved or cared for. The death of a friend or relative can be devastating and, at times, seem unbearable.

As part of the psychology and bereavement service provided by Mountbatten, trained and supported volunteers will be offering a listening ear to those who are bereaved and anyone who feels they would want to talk to someone. As well as listening the volunteers will be signposting individuals to other services depending on the nature of the calls they receive.

Jane Hazeldine, Mountbatten's Director of Director of Psychosocial Care says: "Dealing with a bereavement can be devastating. You may react by feeling angry, sad or guilty. It can affect your memory, concentration, motivation, thoughts and beliefs. Sometimes it can help to talk to someone who is independent and trained to listen to, and support you. I'm grateful to the volunteers who have signed up to help provide this important listening service."

The service will be available from Thursday 1 April 2021 between 10 am – midnight, seven days a week on 01983-217297. The new Bereavement Support Helpline replaces the Keep Connected Line set up at the start of the pandemic.

Sally List, Head of Volunteer Development at Mountbatten, comments: "Our Mountbatten Volunteers have a wide range of life experiences including the death, dying and bereavement of friends and family. They are able to empathise with others and bring their experience to bear on what can be a challenging time. We have provided our volunteers with training in listening skills and they have the information to be able to recommend where individuals should seek further support if required."

Anyone interested in volunteering with the Bereavement Support Helpline can find out more by telephoning Sally on 01983-217368 or visit <https://www.mountbatten.org.uk/bereavement-support-volunteer>



Citizens Advice IW has helped more than 5700 people during the past year of the pandemic.

The charity, which quickly adapted to help more people via the phone, email, and webchat, says Benefits, Housing and Employment have been its top pandemic issues.

Between 1 March 2020 and 28 February this year, it has helped 2476 people with benefits including Universal Credit, and 897 people with employment issues. It aims to find a way forward for people stuck with complicated problems.

There have been many worrying cases such as a family hit hard by the pandemic and a separate health issue for one of the bread winners. Citizens Advice IW was contacted by a parent liaison at a primary school as they were concerned when a parent told a teacher that they had run out of food.

They were supported to make a Help Through Crisis application, and it transpired that the family had taken on a personal loan to pay their mortgage and utility debts. They also needed help with school uniform for the children to return to school.

HTC provided supermarket vouchers, a food bank voucher, and new shoes and school clothes for the children.

The family is supported by the Money Advice team who are in the process of negotiating with creditors and the Citizens Advice Tax team have helped the applicant complete her Self-Assessment tax return so that she would be eligible for a payment under the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, and finally partners at the Footprint Trust are sorting out the utility company bills.

Contacting the charity has changed with around 62% of people helped over the phone, 27% via email, 2% via webchat. This compares to the year before when 49% of people were helped face-to-face.

60 staff and volunteers have been working from their living rooms, dining tables, sheds and kitchens to make sure people could still access much-needed help.

Sandy Belfitt from Citizens Advice IW said: "We've all been on a rollercoaster of change throughout this pandemic.

"We've spoken to people who've never used Citizens Advice before, have never claimed benefits before and have had a steady income for years, if not decades. Suddenly, they felt as if the rug has been pulled from under them and they don't know what to do.

"We're here to listen, support and then help them find a way forward, and it's a reward to hear the relief in their voices at the end of the call."

Paul Savill, Chief Officer of Citizens Advice IW said: "I'd like to thank our staff and volunteers who've continued to help people find a way forward, as we face the problems of this pandemic together.

"Our advisers have been able to help people check what benefits they're entitled to, navigate the furlough scheme, and ensure they're getting all the help and support that is on offer.

"We know people are going to need our help as we begin on the road to recovery, and we urge anyone that needs some support to get in touch as soon as possible. We don't judge how you are facing problems and encourage everyone to contact as soon as an issue looks unmanageable".

For information and advice, call Citizens Advice IW on 0800 144 8848



A Report from Island MP Bob Seely



Post Office Closures

I'm working with Community Action IW to try to secure post office provision on the Island. It's clear that partnership working is the key to securing long-term post office services across the Island.

I am grateful to Community Action IW for the work they are doing, and I hope that working together we can find solutions that are sustainable and meet the needs of Island communities. I would urge town and parish councils to seriously consider supporting the work Island Community Ventures Ltd is doing. This may be the only way to ensure services continue or resume, in some areas. The cost is extremely modest considering the value it brings.

Dentistry

I have written to the Health Secretary about the situation faced by Island residents and dentists.

It's vital that Islanders have access to NHS dental care, and ideally on the Island. A lack of dental care can lead to more serious problems including cancers, and I am concerned that head and neck cancer referrals were down by around 65 per cent last year.

There are a number of issues that need to be addressed, some which are unique to the Island. I will update you once I receive a response.

Planning/Housing

I have objected to plans to build two new holiday lets on an area of woodland in Love Lane, Bembridge. These plans are completely inappropriate and damaging to the area.

Dredging off Sandown Bay

I am investigating concerns raised by residents about dredging activity currently taking place off Sandown Bay. I have written to The Crown Estate, which is responsible for granting dredging licences, seeking reassurance that coastal erosion around the Island is not linked to marine aggregate dredging. I am told that this is approved marine aggregate dredging but I am checking what that means in terms of impact assessments that have been undertaken prior to work commencing.

I know residents are concerned that the work might be impacting on the beach, so I am seeking reassurance that this is not the case.

Pharmacies

I'm seeking support for local pharmacies to protect them from closure. We have six independent pharmacies on the Island, and they are all highly valued, but I worry for their future and the impact potential closures could have on our communities.

I have spoken in Parliament about this and I have also written to the Health Secretary and the Chancellor on the issue. You can watch my speech here.

Support for Festivals

I'm calling for more support for festivals – specifically a reinsurance scheme to enable festival organisers to plan with confidence.

Festivals contribute significant value to the Island's economy, although their value is wider than just economic. They support extensive supply chains, local businesses, equipment hire and similar areas of the economy. They also support the Island's visitor economy, such as shops, bars, restaurants and accommodation, and they also help local farmers to diversify their incomes. You can watch my speech on this here: <https://youtu.be/ThSTnBU3KZc>

Education Debate

I have asked the Government to consider how education can be better delivered following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Teachers, support staff and parents have worked so hard this past year to keep children learning as best they can I can't thank them enough for their hard work in these very challenging times.

Now is a good time to review what works in our education system and what doesn't. Our young people will be integral in building a better future for our country, so we need to equip them now with all the skills they are going to need.

I have put some ideas forward to the Government. You can watch my speech here: <https://youtu.be/Muj4fuWfKPM>

Bob Seely

High Sheriff's Awards 2021

Our thanks to the High Sheriff, Caroline Peel, for presenting individual awards to students in Business, Engineering and Horticulture, as well as three of our amazing Pathways students who have learning difficulties and disabilities.

The following poem, written by one of our heads of department, is an amusing summary of the past year:

"Lockdown Life" by A Bad Poet

It's been almost a year
since our lives turned upside down,
Empty classrooms, friendship lost, staff rooms empty
my happy smile replaced with a frown.
No classrooms filled with natter and chatter,
laughter and dreams
just the constant ringtone of Microsoft Teams.

The faces that I see have changed, that's a fact I'm
faced with cats 'n' dogs and naughty kids
caught in the act!

Bad hair days, laundry and monster beards
confront me on my visits to the virtual world.
But teachers are teachers and they will not rest
until they deliver lessons ... the best of the best!
Innovative, creative and driven to succeed
They work damn hard to deliver
what learners need.

Box rooms, bedrooms, conservatories with no shade
This is where remote lessons are made.
Could I ask for commitment more?
You have given 150% that is for sure!

New defibrillator for Pathways

The college's Work Train shop, run by our Pathways learners, sells donated clothing, bric-a-brac, shoes, bags, toys etc.

All money raised in the shop goes towards good causes/ charities chosen by the learners. For example, in July 2019 £1000 was awarded to 'Friends of the Animals'.

Over the past year or so the Work Train shop has been raising money for other charities as well as a



portable defibrillator for the Pathways department. This a fabulous achievement and it is great to have a portable machine available onsite in case of emergency.



Throughout lockdown #3, **Public Services students** have attended several online training sessions with **Don Howden from the London Metropolitan Police**, who has talked extensively about his experience as an officer in the current modern climate, as

well as his previous experience of how he joined the Met. The students have thoroughly enjoyed hearing about Don's exciting and varied career, which has opened their eyes to the vast array of opportunities available to them.



Five of our **hospitality and catering students** have successfully completed the opening round of the hospitality industry's most prestigious competition, the **2021 Nestlé Professional Toque d'Or®**. They are all now busy preparing for the national heats on 15th April.

A reminder that **free training for adults** is available in:

Accounting and business, Construction, Digital technologies, Engineering,
English and maths, Health and social care, Leadership and management.

For information please email AEB@iwcollege.ac.uk or phone 01983 526631 quoting 'AEB'.

The Isle of Wight Foodbank is marking 10 years of supporting local people in crisis. Since we were established in 2011, more than 28,000 adults and 18,000 children have received a three-day emergency food parcel.

Foodbank Manager, Hannah King says, "For the past 10 years I have consistently felt humbled by the commitment, dedication and generosity that has enabled the foodbank to support those who have come to us. For all who have donated food and finances I thank you. I have absolute admiration and respect for our teams of volunteers who give their time in so many ways in assisting us in helping those in need within our local community and without them, we would not be able to achieve the level of service we offer.

Over the last couple of decades, foodbanks across the UK have provided incredible, practical support to people in poverty. However, we are acutely aware that this kind of response shouldn't be needed and so our goal is to have an Island that has no need for a foodbank."

The Isle of Wight Foodbank began with just a handful of volunteers in a Cowes warehouse, providing necessary food to up to 50 people each month, and now distributes from five centres around the Isle of Wight. At our maximum, before the pandemic, we were operating with almost 200 volunteers and, during our busiest month we provided over 900 emergency food parcels.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the generous Island community who have shown ongoing support over the last 10 years enabling us to continue. Thank you to all the volunteers, staff and trustees who have made the foodbank what it is today. Thank you to the churches and YMCA who host our foodbank centres. Those who use the foodbank are signposted to professionals who provide necessary help and opportunities to move forward. Thank you to all the agencies and charities who partner with us to provide this necessary service. #morethanjustfood.

Thank you also to the many churches, shops, schools, businesses, fundraisers, ambassadors, groups, and individuals who continually show their support by donating their time, expertise, food, and funds, without which we would not be able to continue.

DUE TO THE **GENEROSITY** OF THE PUBLIC
WE HAVE PLENTY OF:

COOKING SAUCES
BAKED BEANS
TINNED SOUP
TINNED MEAT
TINNED FISH
BISCUITS
CEREAL
PASTA
RICE
TEA



SPONGE PUDDINGS
COOKING OIL
SHAVING FOAM/GEL
TAMPONS
BUBBLEBATH
GRAVY

PAR-BAKED BREAD
AT LEAST 2 WEEKS SHELF LIFE
CLEANING PRODUCTS
KITCHEN/BATHROOM

TOOTHBRUSHES - SINGLE
TINNED MIXED VEGETABLES
NOT SWEETCORN/MUSHY PEAS
FEMALE & MALE DEODORANT
WASHING CAPSULES/POWDER

One of our highlights during our 10 years was being awarded the Queens' Award for Voluntary Service, which is the highest award given to volunteer groups across the UK to recognise outstanding work done in their own communities.

We are thankful to be part of the Trussell Trust who not only provide us with needed resources and outstanding support, but also campaigns to end the need for foodbanks in the United Kingdom.

To find out how you can support local people in crisis, please visit our website: isleofwight.foodbank.org.uk or follow us on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.

Hannah Hood (PR & Events Coordinator)

IW Chamber of Commerce

THE ISLE OF WIGHT LOTTERY - A WIN FOR EVERYONE!

By providing interest free loans to businesses, the Isle of Wight Lottery and the Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce offers a unique helping hand to local businesses. The Isle of Wight Lottery was incorporated in 2000 and continues to be based in Newport. The lottery fund has provided interest free loans (£988k to date) to more than 100 Isle of Wight businesses and created or sustained hundreds of jobs.



In excess of £2.5 million has been paid out in prize money to date! To play it is just £1 per number per week. By playing the Isle of Wight Lottery you are helping to support Island businesses, protecting local jobs and helping to create new opportunities and employment.

Find out more via <https://isleofwightlottery.com/loans>

Emma Spinelli

News from Southern Water

Further to my previous email of 5th November last year, I am pleased to advise that the new Essentials tariff threshold of £21,000 per annum has been extended until 31st March 2022. This household income includes Housing Benefit.



Rather than our customers who have an annual household income of less than £16,105, we have now increased the threshold to £21,000 per annum.

For example:

<i>Income</i>	<i>Tariff Band</i>	<i>Bill Discount %</i>
£6,100 - £21,000	1	20%

All customers who are accepted onto the new Essentials tariff 20% discount criteria will be reviewed and / or removed next March / April 2022.

Please forward all applications with supporting I & E to myself until further notice. I am more than happy to discuss individual cases or participate in Zooming etc.

Stuart Bailey (Vulnerability Liaison Officer)

(Tel. 0800 027 0800 Mob. 07775 407017 or www.southernwater.co.uk)

#HereToHelp

www.southernwater.co.uk/payless

Just wanted to provide everybody with an update on the works at Appley beach - we undertook preliminary investigations into the cause of the collapse on 25th and 26th March.

The intention was to camera the sewer from a shaft, however, this search has now been abandoned on health and safety grounds due to the presence of large boulders inside the sewer. It is thought these 500mm sized boulders have entered into the sewer at the collapse location from the ground above. Removing these boulders safely whilst maintaining integrity of the sewer and surrounding ground will take careful planning and consideration. ~

Our next stage is to construct a shaft to the West of the sink hole location to gain access to the sewer at a location where it is unlikely there will be any boulders. During this time, pedestrian access will be maintained, but the road remains closed to vehicles.

We apologise for any inconvenience caused, whilst we carry out these essential works.

Laura Moran (External Liaison Co-ordinator (Isle of Wight))

Changes to Southern Vectis Timetables

From April 11th any services that have not already returned to their full, normal, level will do so, with the exception of Route 1 which will continue operating every 10-minutes with double-deck buses, in order to continue to offer increased capacity.



On April 12th, the popular Needles Breezer open-top bus, Island Coaster East to West connection and Route 27 connection to Tapnell Farm will commence operation.

In mid/late May, The Downs Breezer and Shanklin Shuttle will also return.

Social-distancing remains in place onboard, as do our regular touch-point cleans, and the provision of hand sanitiser.

As previously mentioned, we have a new 'Southern Vectis' app launching in the next couple of months offering mobile ticketing, journey planning and real-time bus tracking. Later in the summer we're also launching Tap-on, Tap-off - a system similar to what you'd find in London where you just tap your contactless device as you get on and off a bus, and you'll be charged the best value fare for your journey - or indeed across an entire day.

Richard Tyldsley (General Manager)

News from Red Funnel

Red Funnel is pleased to announce it will be expanding its Red Jet timetable alongside reinstating its Quayconnect bus service from Monday, 12 April. Coinciding with the end of lockdown and the easing of government restrictions, the expanded Red Jet service means a return to all-day coverage, offering customers 12 departures from each side of the Solent, Monday to Friday and 11 departures on weekends.

redfunnel.co.uk



Red Funnel also announced the return of its Quayconnect bus service, which offers transport from its Southampton Red Jet terminal at Town Quay, taking passengers into the heart of the city with stops including West Quay Shopping Centre and Southampton Central Train Station. The Quayconnect will remain available to all Red Jet passengers as normal and will be free of any additional charge.

Fran Collins, CEO of Red Funnel, commented: "We are absolutely delighted to share this positive news with passengers and to see the Red Jet service back to a more frequent schedule in line with the easing of government restrictions. Whilst we're starting with a one-boat service, we will be closely monitoring customer demand and will adapt our operations and timetables accordingly, to ensure we continue to support our customers in line with the latest government guidance and safety advice."

In line with this change, pricing for individual tickets will revert to the standard structure, with the reintroduction of the operator's super-off-peak, off-peak and standard fares. The Red Jet service has been operating to a lifeline, 'commuter' timetable following a significant reduction in demand for travel services during the latest lockdown period, alongside Red Funnel's need to maintain operational resilience.

In continued support of social distancing and the company's 'Sail Safe' program, Red Jet capacity will remain at a reduced maximum capacity of 148 passengers (53% of normal capacity) with restricted seats, and enhanced cleaning and sanitisation between crossings. By law, face coverings continue to be mandatory for all travellers, except in specific cases of exemption as outlined by the government.

For more information visit www.redfunnel.co.uk

Whilst the passenger numbers at Hovertravel still remain dramatically down, we are seeing a steady increase as the lockdown restrictions are gradually eased. We are delighted to see Island residents taking advantage of the relaxation of the rules which allows them to visit their friends and family.



Our timetable has, since the Easter weekend, increased to offer a flight every hour, seven days a week and we remain committed, whilst the only operator on the route, to add in extra services when demand dictates. This has meant that a hovercraft has departed from Ryde every 15 minutes during the busiest periods. *Stephen Forster (SRF INTEGRATED communications)*

With the Easter Holidays starting, our dedicated additional school flights will stop after today. We have seen pupils and teachers take advantage of these extra services, although some have chosen to travel on other flights. We will be re-introducing these extra flights into the weekday timetable from 12 April and, as many more people will be travelling thanks to Government's lifting of the lockdown restrictions, we will be opening up these services to all customers.

From 29 March you should expect to see more passengers travelling with you, as we will be permitted to reconnect with our friends and families. At our busiest times (especially during commuter periods in the morning and afternoon) maintaining social distance between yourself and other passengers could become difficult. We strongly suggest you consider travelling earlier or later if you can and we will keep providing additional flights as demand dictates.

Additionally from 01 April as part of our staged recovery plan, our **weekend timetable** will be doubled with hourly departures, and that also includes all the forthcoming bank holidays in April, May and August.

Whenever you travel, you can be assured that we continue to keep your safety as our top priority for your complete journey; from arrival through to our ten minute flight to disembarkation. We ask you all to be aware of fellow passengers at all times: giving them the space and time to move at their own pace. If you feel uncomfortable at any time during your journey please speak to a member of our team.

For now, our first-come, first-served policy remains in place and our MD will be providing an update regarding the booking policy in the next few weeks.

Your Duty Managers, *Scott & Terri*

Hovertravel wins prestigious national award

Hovertravel's Island Rescue service has been recognised as 2020's best Passenger Transport project by the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport. In its 28th year, the awards ceremony was conducted virtually last night, with a thank you to all the key workers in the transport industry delivered by HRH, The Princess Royal.



Neil Chapman, managing director of Hovertravel, said: "We are humbled to be recognised for our efforts to support the Isle Of Wight NHS and the local communities on either side of the Solent. Our Island Rescue service would not have been possible without the support of Griffon Hoverwork and the Maritime & Coastguard Agency and we share this award together with all the engineers, pilots and crew of Hovertravel who continue to help save lives in this way."

The award judges praised the engineering skill and the prompt regulatory approvals which brought this innovative service into operation in less than two weeks, remarking that "positive change is not always about huge passenger volumes and sometimes a small development can deliver a big difference."

Neil adds: "The service was born out of COVID but alongside the improved outcomes for Isle of Wight patients, it delivers significant efficiencies for the Isle of Wight's Ambulance service and is a permanent facility offered by Hovertravel."

Updates from Wightlink

Wightlink's timetable will be changing from Monday 29 March 2021 in anticipation of increased demand for travel in April.



The Portsmouth – Fishbourne route will increase to an hourly service seven days a week (with the usual night-time sailings).

Sailings will resume at weekends on the Lymington - Yarmouth route. It will continue to be a two-hourly service.

The FastCat service between Portsmouth Harbour and Ryde Pier Head will remain suspended. This is because very few foot passengers are travelling at present. It will start again when there is greater demand.

Wightlink Chief Executive Keith Greenfield says: “We are pleased to increase the numbers of sailings on both our car ferry routes, including the resumption of weekend services between Lymington and Yarmouth, as restrictions start to be lifted.

“We expect to bring back the FastCats later in the spring when more travel is permitted but unfortunately the number of foot passengers travelling at present remains at exceptionally low levels. Our ticket acceptance agreement with Hovertravel will continue during April. We thank all our customers for their patience and look forward to welcoming them back as travel restrictions allow.” *Karen Woods (Communications)*

Wightlink has teamed up with the charity The Getaway Foundation to help provide a much-needed holiday for ten Island families who are living in poverty. The Foundation, which works with partners including the Isle of Wight Council to provide breaks for deserving families, approached Wightlink for assistance with travel in 2021 and was delighted to learn the ferry company was happy to provide free crossings for ten families.

“When we approached Wightlink we were only hoping for discounted travel but, by underwriting the full cost, it means we will have additional budget to expand our work providing holidays for families who really deserve a break,” says Peter Tebbutt, Foundation Chief Executive. “Already this year we have worked with Wightlink and the council to provide five breaks for families with a young carer and we are delighted to be offering more holidays for families who are referred to us by the local authority as being in poverty.” Peter adds: “We hope to increase our partnerships with more organisations on the Island in the future to further expand the holidays we can provide.”

Wightlink Chief Executive Keith Greenfield says, “It has been a tough year all round but especially so if you are also battling poverty. We are delighted to be helping The Getaway Foundation make happy memories for ten further local families - we hope those memories start when they get on board the ferry.”