

MAY | JUNE 2025

Island Business

THE BUSINESS OF MAYHEM: DISRUPTION WITH HORSEPOWER

PATRICK BUCKLAND SHARES HIS GAMING CAREER

IOW Chamber Awards 2025

Stainless Games

Island Roasted

WightFibre

Wildheart Animal Sanctuary

IW Chamber Expo 2025

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
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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Spring has definitely sprung, and with lovely weather and emerging greenery everywhere comes a sense of newness. Here at the Chamber, we've welcomed Richard Winter to the team, and there is palpable excitement in the office about the upcoming awards and our well-known host. New to the magazine are smaller advertisements aimed at micro and small businesses that don't have large budgets, offering them the opportunity for affordable marketing. These have been partly funded by Innovation Wight to support their commitment to SMEs on the Island.

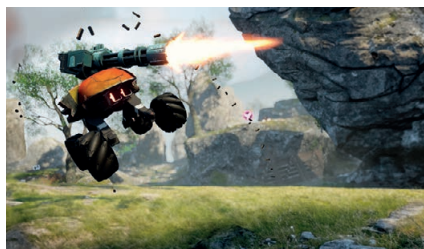
In this issue, I also spoke with Patrick Buckland about his lifelong gaming career and his receipt of the King's

Award, as well as with Island Roasted to discuss their ongoing efforts toward sustainability. You'll find all the Chamber Award nominees and details about our host and entertainment for the night, which promises to be one great big party that we're all looking forward to. Congratulations to the businesses that have been nominated, and we look forward to seeing the winners on the 9th of May.

Enjoy this issue of your Chamber magazine and remember to send me your good news stories and successes. ■

AMBER BEARD
EDITOR

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**IW CHAMBER'S
VISION**

To bring the Island business community together. Helping organisations of all sizes achieve more than they could alone.

Quiz night for Heartbeat raises over £1,200



The Beat the Heat quiz night was the first of its kind on the Island and was held at the Ryde Castle Hotel on 6th March. The sell-out event saw teams of six compete against each other, putting their general knowledge to the test while raising vital funds for the Heartbeat charity.

Winning team 'The Old Ryde Round Table' took home the coveted trophy, with only a point difference from runners up, 'Beating Not Broken'. There were plenty of superb prizes up for grabs in the raffle with 7 excited winners.

Tanya Harder, Community Fundraising and Marketing Manager, commented:



"We are absolutely thrilled with the success of the first-ever Beat the Heat quiz night on the Isle of Wight.

"The incredible support from the community has helped us raise just over £1,200 for Rotary Heartbeat House to continue supporting cardiac patients' relatives from the Isle of Wight in their time of need. It was fantastic to see so many teams coming together for a night of fun, competition, and generosity. Congratulations to 'The Old Ryde Round Table' for their victory and to all who took part, donated, and made the evening such a triumph. We can't wait to do it all again next year!" ■

Transforming logistics on the Isle of Wight

Keert, the Isle of Wight's only e-cargo bike logistics provider, is proud to highlight the success of its partnership with WightFibre, the Island's full-fibre broadband provider, in transforming equipment delivery and collection services. The collaboration, which began in early 2024 as a small-scale trial in Cowes, has since expanded to cover the entire Isle of Wight. In 2025, Keert will be handling both the collection and delivery of WightFibre equipment, ensuring seamless, pre-configured setups for customers.

Keert and WightFibre share a commitment to quality service and sustainability. WightFibre's tagline, 'Because We Care' reflects its support for local businesses like Keert. "It's great that WightFibre supports local services and recognises the benefit we bring both financially and in helping them meet their corporate responsibility targets," said Matthew Whittaker, Keert's director.

John Irvine, CEO of WightFibre, praised the partnership saying, "Keert's professionalism has exceeded our expectations. Together, we are reducing vehicle journeys and CO2 emissions, making the Island a more sustainable place. We highly recommend Keert to any business seeking a reliable green logistics partner."

This partnership represents a major step forward in reducing emissions and supporting local green initiatives while ensuring excellent service for WightFibre customers. ■



A celebration of IW College apprentices



Seb Norsworthy won Marine apprentice of the year (left in photo) and Jamie White received a certificate for completing his Metal Fabricator Level 3 apprenticeship.

The Isle of Wight College proudly celebrated the remarkable achievements of its apprentices on Thursday 13th February, at the prestigious Royal Yacht Squadron. The event brought together apprentices and employers from various sectors, ranging from Business to Engineering. Apprentices who had completed their programmes since March 2024 received certificates and special awards. These were presented by notable figures such as Susie Sheldon, Lord Lieutenant; Graham Biss, High Sheriff; Carron Snagge Esq, OBE DL from the Royal Yacht Squadron; Captain Jon Kidd, Cowes Harbour Commission; and Sara Weech, Chair of Governors at the Isle of Wight College. The awards included:

Apprentice of the Year

Apprentice Resilience Award

Outstanding Contribution by an Apprentice

Employer of the Year

Small Employer of the Year

Employer Ambassador Award

Captain Jon Kidd also presented the Marine Apprentice of the Year Award, generously sponsored by Cowes Harbour Commission.

Ros Parker OBE, Principal and CEO of the Isle of Wight College, expressed immense pride in the apprentices and their accomplishments: "We are exceptionally proud of all of our apprentices and their great achievements; it was an honour to celebrate with them! We are particularly grateful to the Royal Yacht Squadron for hosting this event in such a fabulous location, making it an even more special occasion, and to Cowes Harbour Commission for kindly sponsoring the Marine Apprentice of the Year." ■

Keeping safe in the sun



Kim Fuller Fundraising and Impact coordinator, Charlie Panayi CEO of Red Squirrel Property Ltd, and Gary Kurth Head of Watersports

UKSA is delighted to announce that Red Squirrel Property Ltd has become its official Sun Safety Sponsor for the next three years. Understanding the importance of protecting young people from the sun, their generous support will ensure that all students and visitors to UKSA have access to sunscreen and dispensers across their site, helping to keep them safe both on and off the water.

As a charity committed to inspiring and transforming young lives through the power of the sea, UKSA provides life-changing experiences and training to thousands of children and young people every year. With many activities taking place outdoors, sun safety is a key priority, and they are proud to have achieved Sun Safety Code accreditation in partnership with the Melanoma Fund.

Charlie Panayi, CEO of Red Squirrel Property Ltd, commented: "Raising awareness about sun safety is something incredibly close to my heart due to my personal connection with Zoe's Law. Skin cancer is preventable, and through initiatives like this, we can help educate and protect young people from unnecessary risks. Partnering with UKSA aligns perfectly with our mission to support important community initiatives, and we're proud to play a role in keeping the next generation safe while they enjoy the water." ■

Simplex and IW College team up for a practical bookkeeping course

Want to get better at managing money for your business or career? The Isle of Wight College and Lucy Johnson, director of Simplex Accounting, are offering a bookkeeping course to help you gain confidence with financial records. This two-day course runs on 7th and 8th May and is designed to be clear, practical, and beginner friendly.

You'll learn the basics of bookkeeping, including keeping financial records, understanding financial statements, and managing accounts. It's perfect for small business owners, aspiring bookkeepers, or anyone wanting to improve their money management skills.

Lucy Johnson, a multi-award-winning accountant and bookkeeper, is excited about the course: "I'm excited to work with the Isle of Wight College to support individuals in strengthening their financial skills. This course will offer practical insights into essential bookkeeping concepts."

The course includes hands-on workshops where you'll practice recording transactions, managing invoices, reconciling bank statements, and understanding taxes like VAT and payroll. No complicated jargon—just real skills you can use right away.

By the end of the course, you'll feel confident handling bookkeeping tasks, whether for your own business or a new job. You might even be inspired to take the next step with an AAT qualification. ■



Brightbulb and IOW College launch 'Bright Start' programme



Brightbulb, a design studio based in Brantstone, has teamed up with the Isle of Wight College to launch the BrightStart programme, offering second-year Graphic Design students valuable industry experience. The initiative provides a one-week placement at Brightbulb's studio, where students will collaborate with local businesses on live design projects. This hands-on experience helps build portfolios, enhance CVs, and develop crucial career skills.

"Graphic design is a challenging field, especially on the Isle of Wight, said Matt Jeffery, Managing Director of Brightbulb. After hosting work experience students, we saw the chance to give young designers a head start. This is personal for me; I started

at the Isle of Wight College 25 years ago, as did many of our team. This is our way of giving back."

The programme will involve local businesses such as Real Employment Law Advice, IsleofWight.com, and Medtec Design Services. Students will meet clients, receive briefs, and showcase their work by week's end, mimicking the workflow of a professional studio.

Louise Downer, Course Leader, said, "Work placements are vital for students. This programme offers them the chance to work in a leading studio, gaining skills and confidence for their future careers." The initiative bridges the gap between education and industry, empowering young designers for success. ■



Stella Developments invests in new Merlo lifting equipment

Stella Developments has expanded its fleet with the addition of a powerful new Merlo telehandler, designed to deliver increased lifting capacity and efficiency across its projects. This state-of-the-art machine can lift up to 4 tonnes to a height of 10 metres and reach an impressive maximum height of nearly 17 metres, making it ideal for a wide range of construction and development tasks.

The decision to invest in this equipment reflects Stella Developments' commitment to enhancing site operations through modern, safe, and efficient solutions. "We purchased the Merlo to support our teams on various sites where lifting heavy materials safely and quickly is a daily requirement," said Mike Treadwell, Owner of Stella Developments. "It allows us to streamline processes, reduce downtime, and ensure a safer working environment."

In addition to internal use, the Merlo telehandler is also available for hire. The equipment can be leased with an experienced driver, offering other contractors and developers access to its capabilities without the need for additional training or staffing.

With this new investment, Stella Developments continues to demonstrate its focus on innovation, safety, and supporting the wider construction industry. ■

Platform One College collaborates with Wessex Cancer Support

Arts Aid 2025 will return on Friday, May 9th, at GG's Restaurant and Bar. All proceeds will benefit Wessex Cancer Support, which helps Islanders affected by cancer.

Annabella Brown, a Platform One student, states, "Wessex Cancer Support offers personalised emotional and wellbeing assistance for Islanders impacted by cancer. They have a support centre located on Lugley Street in Newport, as well as a Daisy Bus service to transport Islanders to appointments at mainland hospitals," said Platform One student Annabella Brown. "We are thrilled to raise as much as we can to support the charity while hosting a fantastic night for the community and completing our final assignment for our BTEC course."

The evening promises to be unforgettable. It will feature live music composed and performed by Platform One students, a gala theme with formal attire encouraged, the Arts Aid 2025 album launch, token casino tables, a raffle with some incredible prizes, and more to be announced.

As part of their final project, year 02 BTEC students studying Music at Platform One are putting all their efforts into every aspect of the evening, including decorations, lighting,

marketing, sourcing raffle prizes, and backstage logistics. This marks a significant milestone in their educational journey as they prepare to graduate and pursue further studies, so they're eager for the community's support.

GG's Bar and Restaurant, Widget Productions, and WightJack Fun Casino have contributed to the evening to ensure its success, along with many local businesses that have donated raffle prizes. ■



Practising art mindfully



Yuliya Dan is a visual artist and the creator of Mindfully Art, a practice that merges creativity with mindfulness to foster emotional well-being. Her work is emotionally rich and blends precision with fluid, organic forms and her international career spans exhibitions in London, New York, and Cape Town, as well as collaborations with galleries, fashion projects, and charitable initiatives.

"With a background in art, fashion, wellness, and psychology, my work is designed to inspire meaningful connections, whether through original artwork, creative experiences, or mindful art workshops. I specialise in helping businesses integrate creativity and mindfulness into their brand through bespoke artwork, immersive collaborations, and corporate wellness programs. My Mindfully Art workshops offer

a unique approach to team-building and employee well-being, using creativity as a tool for stress reduction, problem-solving, and deeper engagement.

"My art is not just a visual statement. It's an experience that aligns with brands looking to create thoughtful, immersive environments. From hospitality and luxury retail to wellness spaces and creative industries, I collaborate with businesses that value artistry, mindfulness, and intentional design.

By bringing Mindfully Art into professional spaces, I help brands elevate their environments, inspire creative thinking, it's an art of feeling better. Through commissioned pieces, curated experiences, and mindful art programmes, I offer businesses a powerful way to connect with their audience through art, emotion, and presence." ■



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BAILEYCS Limited supports environment agency in coastal defence project



Island-based creative team, BAILEYCS Limited, recently worked with the Environment Agency (EA) and provided detailed illustrations for crucial coastal defence projects. Their latest work was showcased at public consultations in Sandown and Shanklin in February, helping local residents understand planned reinforcements along the Bay area.

Following their previous success working on the Pevensey Bay to Eastbourne Coastal Management Scheme, BAILEYCS was commissioned to create visuals illustrating both the final project and the construction process. These images clearly depict how the work will affect the sea wall, promenade, and beach areas during development.

The EA praised their efforts, stating, 'The illustrations were very well received at our consultations and beautifully capture the essence of the locations we are working to better protect from coastal erosion and flooding.'

Mark Bailey, of BAILEYCS, commented, 'It was great to combine traditional technical illustration with digital techniques to create accurate and engaging imagery.'

With further coastal defence projects in the pipeline, BAILEYCS has already prepared a fourth set of illustrations, set to be revealed at upcoming public consultations. Their involvement highlights the importance of clear visual communication in large-scale environmental projects. ■

Island primary schools offered a fully funded trip to London



Every primary school on the Isle of Wight will soon offer Year 5 students a free day trip to London, thanks to a programme by Diamond Adventures, supported by WightFibre and Red Funnel.

The initiative aims to broaden the horizons of local children, many of whom have never left the Island. For some, London has always seemed like a distant, intimidating place. "This programme will expose them to

London's history and culture, providing a new perspective on life beyond the Island," said Keiran O'Toole, Managing Director of Diamond Adventures.

The trips will include coach travel, Red Funnel ferry crossings, and admission to major attractions, all at no cost to the schools or families. The programme will serve every Year 5 group on the Island, at an annual cost of tens of thousands of pounds, making it a

unique opportunity.

Josh Harris, Director of Diamond Adventures, highlighted the impact on local children, "With over 35% living in poverty, this trip will provide invaluable experiences and opportunities."

The programme will run annually, offering every Isle of Wight primary school the chance to send their students to London for an unforgettable adventure. ■

The Bay Business Association launches

The Bay Business Association (BBA) will officially launch on 30th April at the Wildheart Animal Sanctuary aiming to unite and support businesses across the Bay area. Founded by passionate industry leaders, the BBA will act as a hub for collaboration, offering members access to networking events, advertising discounts, promotional opportunities, and connections with a strong network of business leaders.

The association also seeks to amplify business voices in shaping the Bay Place Plan - a strategic vision to channel investment and growth in the area. Open to businesses of all sizes and sectors, it promotes inclusivity through facilitated introductions and shared resources to help every member thrive.

"Our mission is to seek out and drive opportunities for Bay businesses that help them to thrive. In a tough field of operations currently,



collaboration is key to unlocking such opportunities and creating the momentum needed for significant change," said the Association's Chair Lawrence Bates.

While the Bay area spans from Yaverland to Luccombe, all Island businesses are encouraged to join and attend the launch event to learn more, contribute ideas, and help shape the association into a valuable resource for the entire community. ■



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Your Body Knows the Answer

What if the key to unlocking creativity, confidence, and resilience wasn't in your mind, but in your body?

Joy Borman, founder of The Smiling Coach, brings Embodiment Facilitation to Island businesses after expanding her expertise with 18 months of advanced training. These powerful sessions help professionals break through creative blocks, dissolve tension, and access authentic leadership presence.

Participants say, "If you ever have the chance to experience Joy's work, take it. You will leave feeling lighter, stronger, and more in tune with yourself than ever before."

Available for team-building days, leadership retreats, and workplace initiatives across the Isle of Wight and mainland, Joy's sessions enhance confidence, release stress, and foster meaningful connection between team members.

Described as 'one of the most incredible things I've done in my business', her work leaves clients more focused, deeply aligned, and re-energised, both personally and professionally. Ideal for businesses seeking stronger teams, or individuals wanting 1:1 coaching, Joy offers a unique, transformative experience creating tangible results. ■



Working together to achieve sustainable solutions

Gurit (UK) Ltd Isle of Wight and Vectis Refrigeration have both felt the benefit of working closely over the last year.

Vectis has been supporting Gurit with maintaining the water chillers, refrigeration, and air conditioning systems at its Newport base.

The equipment must be closely regulated, as it contains fluorinated gases, known as F-gases, which have a high Global Warming Potential (GWP).

With the Isle of Wight being Gurit's production hub for its global supply of advanced composite materials, it's essential that the equipment is in good order.

"Sustainability is important, and we wanted a partner that would help us ensure our systems are reliable with no leaks or issues, to minimise any emissions to the atmosphere. Vectis Refrigeration has taken on all the maintenance and inspection of this equipment and is very pro-active in flagging issues and highlighting to us anything that is not performing as well as it should be," said James Daws, Site Manager at Gurit. ■



IW Business Think Tank Makes Waves

The new learning and development collaboration with Alison Thorogood, Edward Grey and Zoe Irvine has quickly gathered momentum. The inaugural IW Business Think Tank, 'Navigating Change in Business' was held at Building 41 on Weds 26th March. The session challenged conventional thinking about organisational change and was highly interactive, with participants exploring the topic through frameworks including the Wheel of Change and Nudge Theory.

"As the Think Tank evolves, we will be creating a genuine community of practice for Island business leaders" explained Zoe Irvine. "We picked navigating change as our initial topic as research shows only 30% of C-suite leaders feel confident about their change capabilities. We designed an environment where leaders could reflect, challenge and grow together." Ed Grey said: "This event marks an important step in how island business leaders share their knowledge, support each other and generate new thinking."

Mark Lee, MD of Lifeline Alarm Systems, felt that the event was 'the conceptual basis for a very successful forum'; Dale Howarth, award winning business mentor, commented that the event was 'thought-provoking' and 'refreshing'.

The next Think Tank sessions are June 16th, September 17th and December 10th, continuing the forum's mission to develop leading-edge thinking in leadership and organisational development for island businesses. ■



James Daws and Geoff Day from Gurit with Vectis Refrigeration's Will Overton

Early inspections carried out by Vectis Refrigeration at the Gurit site detected some issues, though quick action has led to major improvements in emissions.

Will Overton, Vectis Refrigeration Director, commented, "It's great for us to be associated with Gurit as they are keen to work as sustainably as possible, and that aligns with our work. together, we're trying to lead from the front on the Isle of Wight when it comes to sustainability." ■

PROFILE:

STAINLESS GAMES: DECADES OF INNOVATION AND THE KING'S AWARD

For over 30 years, Stainless Games has been a trailblazer in the gaming industry, known for its creativity, controversy, and ability to adapt in an ever-changing market. The company remains independent and resilient, from the groundbreaking Carmageddon to its latest achievements. In this exclusive interview, CEO Patrick Buckland spoke to Amber Beard to discuss the company's legacy, the challenges of the industry, and the prestigious King's Award for Enterprise.

Stainless Games has been around for over three decades, which is a rare feat in the gaming industry. What's been the secret to your longevity?

We've always been adaptable. The industry has changed massively since we started: technology, trends, and even how games are made. We've had to stay ahead of the curve while staying true to what we enjoy doing. I started out doing freelance work, but I realised if I wanted to build something for the future, I needed to create a company with a solid foundation. That's how Stainless Games was born. We've been through ups and downs, but our flexibility and ability to work on diverse projects have kept us going.

Carmageddon was a huge hit and stirred up a bit of controversy. Looking back, how do you feel about the game's impact?

It was definitely groundbreaking, and yes, it caused quite a stir. People misunderstood it at the time, thinking it was just about violence, but we had a strict rule in development - violence had to be funny. We took inspiration from slapstick humour, like Monty Python and classic cartoons. It was never meant to be disturbing or realistic. Ironically, our biggest innovation with Carmageddon wasn't the controversy, it was the freedom we gave players. It was one of the first games where you could just go off and do what you wanted. That was revolutionary at the time and has now become a staple in open-world gaming.



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by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of other realms and Territories King, Defender of the Faith etc.

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The gaming industry has seen rapid evolution. How has Stainless Games managed to stay relevant?

The industry has changed exponentially. What's more surprising to me is how the level of in-game violence has escalated over the years, often without the self-awareness we had. We've always been careful about how we approach content, ensuring it serves a purpose beyond shock value. But beyond that, staying relevant is about innovation. We've worked on a range of projects, from Carmageddon to Magic: The Gathering, and now we're developing new games, including a major British IP. The key is diversifying while keeping our core values intact.

What does winning the King's Award for Enterprise mean for Stainless Games?

It's a huge honour, especially given our roots on the Isle of Wight. The award recognises our contribution to international trade, which we're really proud of. Over the years, we've brought in millions of dollars in export revenue, working with companies like Amazon and Crytek. But beyond that, it's also about our impact on the local community. We've helped bring high-tech jobs to the Island, attracting professionals and

contributing to the local economy. Growing up here, I saw how the decline of aerospace and other industries affected the area. We're helping to bring back a thriving tech scene, and that's something we take immense pride in.

The industry is currently facing a difficult period. How is Stainless Games navigating the challenges?

It's brutal right now. The worst I've seen in the industry. There are mass layoffs happening weekly, and investment is drying up. Right now, companies need to be lean and smart with their resources. We've stayed independent for over 30 years, which isn't easy when you're up against industry giants. We're looking for private equity investment to help with future projects, but it's a tough time for everyone. Survival is the name of the game at the moment.

If you had to give advice to aspiring game developers, what would it be?

Honestly? Right now, I'd say don't do it! But in all seriousness, it's a tough industry. People see a hit game and think, 'I can do that', but they don't see the thousands of others that failed. Success is often about luck as much as skill. If you're serious about it, you need resilience, a strong understanding of the business side, and a backup plan.

What's next for Stainless Games? Anything exciting on the horizon?

We've got a major new project in the works - a British-themed collectible card game. We can't say too much yet, but it's something we're very excited about. We're always looking for ways to push boundaries while staying true to what we love about game development. Watch this space!

With 30 years under their belt and a King's Award to their name, Stainless Games is a testament to adaptability and innovation in an unpredictable industry. Despite the challenges, Patrick and his team remain committed to creating groundbreaking games while supporting their local community. The future may be uncertain, but one thing's for sure, Stainless Games isn't slowing down anytime soon. ■



The Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce was delighted to host a series of LSIP (Local Skills Improvement Plan) roundtable discussions at the Isle of Wight College on the 20th and 21st of March. These focused sessions brought together a wide range of local stakeholders, educators, and recruitment from across the Hospitality, Construction, Logistics, and Health & Social Care sectors to discuss the Island's current and future skills needs.

The roundtables formed a key part of the ongoing work led by Hampshire Chamber of Commerce as the designated Employer Representative Body (ERB) for the Solent area. As part of

the government's national LSIP initiative, these events gave employers the opportunity to share real-world insights into recruitment challenges, emerging trends, and skills gaps affecting their sectors. The feedback gathered will directly inform the next phase of the Solent LSIP, which is designed to ensure that education and training provision is better aligned with employer demand.

The sessions also provided attendees with a useful update on the progress of the LSIP since it was first launched in 2022. Now in its implementation phase, the plan sets out six broad priorities and 14 actionable goals, ranging from employer-education engagement to

specific skills interventions. Funding for this next phase has been secured from the Department for Education, and the LSIP is now being embedded as core business within the Chamber's wider economic development work.

Importantly, the Isle of Wight continues to play a central role within the LSIP area, with projects such as immersive classroom upgrades at the IW College already demonstrating positive outcomes in response to local employer needs.

The full LSIP Progress Report, including input from the March roundtables, will be published in June. ■

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: Isle of Wight's Fight Against Digital Exclusion

In a world where technology is the key to education, employment, and everyday life, digital exclusion remains a stark reality for many. On the Isle of Wight, where strong broadband infrastructure is available, thousands of residents still find themselves on the wrong side of the digital divide lacking the devices they need to stay connected. Now, a new initiative led by Richard Quigley, MP for Isle of Wight West, in partnership with the Digital Poverty Alliance (DPA), aims to change that.

The campaign calls on local businesses to donate unused laptops and tablets, ensuring they find new homes in schools and community groups. The mission is clear: equip those in need with essential technology, helping them access vital services, education, and employment opportunities.

"The Digital Poverty Alliance has done great work around the country, and I'd like to thank CEO Elizabeth Anderson for quickly taking up the challenge for the Island after our meeting," said Richard. "The low levels of digital engagement they have found is worrying, and as more services move online, I am so pleased that this campaign asks for laptop

donations from local businesses to help our schools and communities stay connected."

Despite the Isle of Wight's digital infrastructure, financial hardship keeps many households offline. Over 6,600 households face educational deprivation, while more than 3,500 struggle with employment barriers - challenges exacerbated by a lack of access to digital devices. Without the right tools, opportunities for learning, job-seeking, banking, and even healthcare remain out of reach.

To tackle this growing issue, businesses are being encouraged to donate surplus laptops, tablets, and other devices. Each donated piece of technology will be securely wiped, refurbished, and redistributed to schools and community organisations, allowing more people to connect with the digital world.

Elizabeth Anderson, CEO of the Digital Poverty Alliance, emphasised the importance of the initiative: "We are thrilled to support Richard Quigley's initiative to address digital poverty on the Isle of Wight, and this donation drive represents crucial steps towards bridging the digital divide. Ensuring local schools and communities have access to the technology they need to thrive is crucial in today's digital world. Empowering individuals with laptops and devices creates equal opportunities for education, employment, and access to vital services."

To find out more about this scheme and to donate devices go to: www.digitalpovertyalliance.org/donate-devices ■





WIGHTFIBRE

WightFibre, the leading broadband provider on the Isle of Wight, has been awarded the highly coveted Investors in People (IIP) Gold accreditation, an achievement earned by only a select number of organisations. The Gold award serves as independent validation that WightFibre is a great place to work, recognising not just the policies in place but the commitment of everyone, from the CEO to apprentices, and bringing those values to life.



WightFibre Is Awarded The Prestigious Investors in People Gold Accreditation

Investors in People highlight that 'the success of any organisation begins and ends with its people. By making work better for everyone, we make work better for every organisation, and in turn, we make society stronger, healthier, and happier'.

WightFibre is currently undertaking a £110 million investment to deliver full-fibre broadband across the Island, with the project already providing access to over 72,000 properties and targeting more than 80,000 homes and businesses upon completion.

Paul Devoy, CEO of Investors in People, praised the company's achievement. "We'd like to congratulate WightFibre. Achieving Gold accreditation in We invest in people is a remarkable effort for any organisation and places WightFibre among a host of companies that truly understand the value of their people."

Investors in People found that WightFibre has one single value: 'Because We Care'. This value is at the core of everything they do and is branded across the organisation, and there is robust evidence that WightFibre truly cares for its people through the employee benefits package it offers.

Commenting on the accreditation, WightFibre CEO John Irvine said: "WightFibre's company ethos is 'because we care'; we care about our customers, our people, and the Island community we serve. WightFibre invests in its people through ongoing training to achieve qualifications and industry accreditations, providing competitive salaries and benefits, and fostering an enjoyable team working environment.

We aim to make WightFibre a great place to work and ensure that work is enjoyable and rewarding. The Investors in People Gold accreditation is external validation that WightFibre is, indeed, a great place to work." ■



About Investors in People

Most of us will spend around 80,000 hours at work in our lifetimes. For something that takes up that much of our time, we think people deserve to get more out of it than just a regular pay cheque. That's why we've already helped more than 11 million people across 75 countries to make work better. And you know what? We're just getting started...

We're a community interest company, which means we put our purpose before our profits. That means everything we do and every direction we take is done to make work better.

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IW CHAMBER
BUSINESS AWARDS 2025
PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



The nominees have been published, and the host is revealed for this year's IW CHAMBER BUSINESS AWARDS 2025



IW CHAMBER
Business Awards 2025

IN ASSOCIATION WITH **WRS**

Taking place on Friday, 9th May at Cowes Yacht Haven, the glitzy awards night promises red carpet moments, inspirational stories, and a celebration of the Island's finest businesses.

This year, the awards will be bringing serious star power and will be hosted by none other than TV and radio sensation Jamie Laing, just weeks after his heroic Comic Relief challenge that saw him run five ultra marathons and raise over £2 million for charity.

"I'm really looking forward to hosting these prestigious awards," says Jamie. "The Isle of Wight is one of my favourite places. I've had some great times there, including arriving on a speedboat whilst being chased by a helicopter when we were filming a TV show! As an entrepreneur and business founder myself, I love celebrating business success. We're going to have a brilliant night."

David Jackson, CEO of WRS, agrees. "We are thrilled that Jamie Laing will be hosting this year's ceremony," he says. "As a renowned TV and radio personality, successful entrepreneur, and podcast host, Jamie's charisma and energy will bring something really special to the event. We can't wait for what promises to be a fantastic evening!"

And the sparkle doesn't stop there...

Host
Jamie Laing



IW CHAMBER
BUSINESS AWARDS 2025
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IW CHAMBER
**Business
Awards** 2025

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



Joining Jamie is a powerhouse of musical theatre - Kerry Ellis, star of *Wicked*, *Les Miserables*, and *We Will Rock You*, will take to the stage with a show-stopping performance. With leading roles on both Broadway and the West End, Kerry brings big-stage magic to the Island.

"I can't wait to perform on the Isle of Wight again, and at such an important event," Kerry says. "I love spending time on the Island, and I'm really looking forward to bringing the sound of Broadway and the West End to the Isle of Wight Chamber Awards. It's a night of glamour and spectacle, and the songs will match the occasion!"

40 Island businesses were recognised in 59 nominations, and the team of judges made up of 23 business experts, more than two-thirds of which are based off Island, and some internationally, were impressed by the quality of entries and worked hard to select the shortlist.

"Once again, our nominees represent a wide range of businesses from across our community, of all sizes and sectors. After some years of economic uncertainty, it's great to see some real consistency here, with some well-recognised names returning to our shortlist, as well as welcoming many new businesses, either newly established or engaging with this event for the first time, says Steven Holbrook, Chief Executive of IW Chamber. We've really pulled out all the stops to raise the bar for the Island's biggest business celebration. Bringing Jamie Laing and Kerry Ellis to our show will make for an incredible night, with huge thanks to our headline sponsors WRS for their support in making this happen."



Kerry
Ellis



THE NOMINEES ARE:

Start Up Business of the Year – SPONSORED BY PC CONSULTANTS

Diamond Adventures
Pinnacle Suites Hotel
Simplex Accounting Limited
Wight Vets

Tourism and Leisure Business of the Year – SPONSORED BY VISIT ISLE OF WIGHT

Blackgang Chine
Isle of Wight Studio Glass Ltd

Growth Business of the Year – SPONSORED BY WRS

Island Echo
Strings Bar & Venue
Superior Bespoke Furniture & Kitchens
Wight Coaches Ltd

Creative Impact Award – SPONSORED BY MEDINA PUBLISHING

Isle of Wight Studio Glass
Quay Arts
Spence Willard
WightFibre

Entrepreneurship Award – SPONSORED BY RED FUNNEL

Charlie Panayi
Guardian Technologies
Island Echo
Pinnacle Suites Hotel

Employer of the Year – SPONSORED BY GLANVILLES DAMANT LEGAL SERVICES

Brightbulb
WightFibre
Yokogawa Marex

Community Award – SPONSORED BY MOORE (SOUTH) LLP

Isle of Wight Youth Trust
Mountbatten Isle of Wight
Natural Enterprise Ltd
Sight for Wight

Environment and Sustainability Award – SPONSORED BY IFPL

GKN Aerospace Services – Cowes
IOW Group
WightFibre

Technology and Innovation Award – SPONSORED BY LIFELINE ALARMS

Brightbulb
Guardian Technologies
IFPL Group Limited
Yokogawa Marex

Customer Service Award – SPONSORED BY RPL CONSTRUCTION

Preziosa Dachshunds
The Royal Hotel
WightFibre

Manufacturing and Export Business of the Year – SPONSORED BY GKN AEROSPACE

Diverse Marine
IFPL Group Limited
Isle of Wight Tomatoes

Training and Development Award – SPONSORED BY TOP MOPS

WightFibre
Willets and Doig Optometrists
Yokogawa Marex

Hospitality Business of the Year – SPONSORED BY CHERRY GODFREY

The Blacksmiths
The Chequers Inn
The Island Holiday Company
The Seaview Hotel

Business Social Impact Award – SPONSORED BY WIGHTFIBRE

Medina Publishing Limited & Medina Bookshop
Red Squirrel Property Shop Ltd
RenoDrain
Right at Home, Isle of Wight

Micro Business of the Year – SPONSORED BY GURIT

JR Zone
Silver Arch Property Solutions Limited
Superior Bespoke Furniture and Kitchens
Wight Coaches Ltd

Small Business of the Year – SPONSORED BY WIGHTLINK

Diverse Marine
Eldridges Solicitors
IOW Group
NFU Mutual Isle of Wight
The Seaview Hotel

ALSO PRESENTED ON THE NIGHT:

Member of the Year

**President's Cup – Outstanding Contribution
Business of the Year**

Sustainability is no longer an afterthought. It's the driving force behind businesses that care about the future. Here, Island Roasted is proving that eco-conscious decisions can go hand in hand with quality and productivity. From packaging and sourcing to waste reduction and renewable energy, they are taking a thoughtful approach to sustainability while delivering exceptional coffee.

BREWING A GREENER FUTURE: How Island Roasted is leading the way in sustainable coffee

One of the biggest challenges in the coffee industry is packaging waste. Traditional single-use bags are an environmental nightmare, so Island Roasted came up with a solution: reusable BPA free plastic tubs for wholesale customers. Instead of producing thousands of disposable bags, they introduced a closed-loop system where the tubs are collected, sanitised, and reused. "If you stop them being there in the first place, surely that's the most sustainable solution," says Dan Burgess. "It's a simple yet impactful change: an estimated 30,000 fewer single-use bags per year, regardless of whether they are recyclable or compostable"

Convenience is another challenge. Coffee pod machines have become a staple in many homes, but they generate significant waste. While some pods are technically recyclable, most people don't return them. So, Island Roasted developed fully biodegradable coffee capsules. "It took a lot of effort," says Dan. "At the time, we could only get them filled abroad, but with Brexit and all the extra paperwork of sending coffee abroad, we looked for UK solutions."

Takeaway cups present a similar issue. While reusable cups are a great idea, many people forget them. To bridge the gap between practicality and sustainability, Island Roasted is developing an affordable alternative: a cost effective reusable cup that has had its whole life cycle considered, that cafés can sell for just £1. "People like the idea of reusable cups, but in reality, they forget them," says Dan. "If we could come up with a cup that had eco credentials but was cheap enough, people could have a few at work, in the office or the car and it would give them an affordable and convenient solution."



Sustainability also means ethical sourcing. While much of the coffee industry operates on mass commodity trading with little transparency, Island Roasted takes a direct trade approach, ensuring farmers are fairly paid. "We buy all our coffee through fairly direct routes. We've got a link back to the farm, so we know exactly where it's coming from. The difference between direct trade and traditional commodity coffee is clear. With commodity coffee, you don't always know where it's come from. Our coffees are more expensive because we're paying farmers fairly for higher-quality beans, if trading is based on quality it is truly sustainable."

The company has also made big moves to cut its carbon footprint. Solar panels cover their facilities, generating around 30% of their electricity needs. Meanwhile, their delivery fleet is transitioning entirely to electric vehicles. "We've been in electric vans for years. We're on our third generation now, and honestly, they're way better than diesel. By June this year, our whole fleet should be fully electric. We're always thinking about what more we can do. Even little things like reusing coffee sacks for packaging or giving coffee waste to local farms; it all adds up."

The global coffee market is shifting, with extreme weather affecting harvests and increasing global demand. "Climate plays a big factor. Brazil had a lower harvest, and that's pushed global prices up. Market speculation has also driven up costs but for once, though, the farmers are actually benefiting, as they've been able to sell their coffee at the right time for a competitive price."

In a world where convenience often wins, Island Roasted is proving that eco-friendly choices can be practical, affordable, and beneficial for everyone involved. Small businesses don't just have a role in global sustainability, they have the power to set the standard. ■

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vital work at the Sanctuary 

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WILDHEART ANIMAL SANCTUARY

In May 2024, the Wildheart Animal Sanctuary embarked on its most ambitious project yet: to rescue two European Brown Bears, Benji and Balu, from a tiny concrete cage in Azerbaijan. Now, 12 months later, the project is nearing its conclusion, and we're thrilled to announce the imminent arrival of the bears, following a monumental build project made possible by the incredible support of Island businesses and community.



THE END IS IN SIGHT FOR BENJI AND BALU!

For over a decade, Benji and Balu were imprisoned in a tiny cage on the side of a restaurant, their only purpose to entertain tourists. When concerned locals raised alarms about the bears' welfare, they were moved to another tiny concrete cage in a forest, very much out of sight and out of mind. Once the Wildheart team learned of their heartbreaking plight, they knew they had to intervene.

After months of campaigning, the Sanctuary has raised over £210,000 to create a new, 3,500m² home for Benji and Balu. This huge state-of-the-art habitat, one of the best in the UK, is designed to help the bears recover and restore their natural behaviours. For the first time in over 13 years Benji and Balu will be able to feel grass under their feet, swim, dig, and relax. Perhaps most importantly, the hope is that once they have regained their confidence, they will be able to hibernate—something they have never done in their entire lives and something that is critically important to help them fully recover from their previous traumas.

These 2 bears will make Island history as the first bears to call the Isle of Wight home in over 35 years, making their arrival all the more remarkable. They will also be the only Bears on the South Coast, the next nearest being at Wild Places

near Bristol, making this new home a major attraction for both residents and tourists alike, offering a unique opportunity to see these majestic animals in an environment that closely mirrors their natural habitat. Plus, thanks to multiple webcams placed around their outdoor habitat, you'll be able to witness their journey unfold 24/7 as they settle into their new life.

As the project nears its final stages, the Wildheart team is preparing for Benji and Balu's highly anticipated arrival. To express their gratitude, they will host an exclusive event for all the businesses that have helped bring the bears' new home to life. Save the date emails for this special event will be sent out soon, so keep an eye on your inbox if you'd like to attend!

The sanctuary's animal manager, Marc Fox, said "we are delighted to be so close to the finish line now. The journey has been hard fought and there have been many obstacles along the way, but all that has been forgotten now as we are on the cusp of welcoming these amazing new rescues into our Sanctuary. Bears are some of the most charismatic and majestic of animals and we know they are going to be full of character and delight our visitors and members for years to come". ■



EXPO 2025

IW Chamber Business Expo 2025: Stands Selling Fast!

With three-quarters of the stands already sold, the IW Chamber Business Expo 2025 is shaping up to be bigger than ever!

Expo 2024 was a sell-out, attracting hundreds of visitors, and for 2025, we've expanded even further by adding a fourth marquee to accommodate more exhibitors.

EXCITING SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

We're not just looking for exhibitors – there are exclusive sponsorship opportunities available, including the chance to sponsor the Expo Breakfast. As a sponsor, you'll have the unique opportunity to speak directly to all attendees at the breakfast—last year, that was over 60 business professionals. Plus, your business logo will feature on all Expo 2025 promotional materials and much more!

ADVERTISING AT EXPO 2025

Thanks to Vectis Hire, we're enhancing this year's Expo experience with a large outdoor screen, creating even more advertising opportunities. Advertising packages include both event programme and screen promotion:

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Option 1: £180 + VAT

¼-page programme ad

Image advert on screen
(10-second loop)

.....

Option 2: £230 + VAT

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30-second subtitled video on screen (looped throughout the day)

With hundreds of business professionals attending, this is a fantastic opportunity to boost your brand visibility!





GET INVOLVED!

If you're interested in securing a stand, sponsoring, or advertising, get in touch today!

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Email us:
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We look forward to seeing you at IW Chamber Business Expo 2025!

IWChamber BUSINESS EXPO2025

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"We look forward to connecting with as many businesses as possible at the IW Chamber Business Expo 2025. Entry is free to visitors, and you don't have to be an IW Chamber member to attend – it's open to everyone! This is a brilliant opportunity to engage with the Island's business community and chat with people from businesses of all sizes and sectors. The Expo is back at Ryde School and proudly supported by WightFibre. It's the biggest business networking day of the year, with hundreds of attendees and a wide range of exhibiting businesses. We hope to see you there!"

John Irvine, WightFibre



For illustrative purposes only



SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES AND WIN BIG WITH THE ISLE OF WIGHT LOTTERY

Empowering Local Entrepreneurs

Since its inception, the Isle of Wight Lottery has been instrumental in supporting local entrepreneurs through its interest-free loan programme. Island businesses can access loans of up to £50,000, provided their expansion plans create or sustain jobs within the community. This initiative addresses the challenges many entrepreneurs face when seeking traditional financing methods, offering a lifeline to those with vision and drive.

Over the years, the lottery has given out over £1,300,000 in interest-free loans, creating 450 Island jobs and promoting economic growth. Beneficiaries span various sectors, from creative agencies like Brightbulb Design to local breweries such as Wight Knuckle Brewery. These success stories underscore the tangible impact of the lottery on the Island's economic landscape.

The Patron Scheme

The Patron Scheme underpins the idea that you can play your part in building the Island's economy while also giving your employees a chance to win big with more than 500 prizes a year, including a massive £10,000 draw. The scheme is based on a Gold, Silver, and Bronze tier system, and patrons not only support the Lottery's mission but also receive benefits, including editorial features in the Island Business Magazine, enhancing their visibility within the community.

Why Play the Isle of Wight Lottery?

By playing the Isle of Wight Lottery, you're not just buying a ticket; you're investing in the Island's future. Your participation fuels entrepreneurship, supports local employment, and strengthens the community fabric. ■

The Isle of Wight Lottery stands as a pioneering initiative, being the first lottery in England specifically developed to create employment opportunities and bolster the local economy. By participating, players not only get a chance to win substantial cash prizes but also contribute directly to the prosperity of the Island's business community.



SIGN UP TODAY!

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There's never been a better time to play and at just £1 a week, you'll also be helping the IW Lottery to create and sustain Island jobs.

The lottery's unique interest-free loans have nurtured hundreds of jobs with more than 100 loans to Island businesses pumping more than £1million into the Island's economy since 2001.

www.iwchamber.co.uk

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Being a member of the Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce is a great business decision! Membership starts at little more than £3 a week and entitles you to a huge range of business support, exclusive events and member discounts.

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- **ChamberHealth & Safety**
- **ChamberHR**
- **ChamberTax**
- **ChamberLegal**

These services give you unlimited access to no less than five business advice lines and a website which features over 750 free downloadable template documents. Not only that but you are protected by £1,000,000 of legal expenses insurance which includes employment cover and tax enquiry cover.

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ISLE OF WIGHT LOTTERY

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JUST £1 PER WEEK

IW CHAMBER | NETWORKING EVENTS & TRAINING COURSES

IW Chamber Networking Breakfast

Alzheimer Café - Parklands, Cowes

Friday 2nd May, 7.30am-9am

IW Chamber members - £18 per person

Non-members - £36 per person

Join us for an excellent networking opportunity at the Alzheimers Café at Parklands in Cowes, with a hot breakfast and a great start to the business day, networking with other Chamber members.

Fire Marshal Course

Delivered by Good Skills Training, Shanklin

Monday 5th May, 9am-12.30pm

IW Chamber members - £68+vat per person

This half day course is designed specifically for those who have been designated with the responsibilities of Fire Marshal or Fire Warden. The course will look at the legal responsibilities of both the company and the individual. By the end of this course learners will understand what their duties as a fire marshal are.

Emergency First Aid at Work Course

Delivered by Good Skills Training, Shanklin

Monday 12th May, 9am-4pm

IW Chamber members - £78+vat per person

This one-day course is designed to give delegates the knowledge, skills, and confidence to help those that have become unconscious, and those with minor injuries. The Emergency First Aid at Work Course also looks at the responsibilities of the Emergency First Aider. On successfully completing this course, attendees will be confident, safe, prompt, and effective emergency first aiders.

IW Chamber Networking Brunch

The Birdham, Bembridge

Wednesday 14th May 2025, 9.00am – 11.00am

IW Chamber Members – £20 per person

Non-Members – £40 per person

An ideal opportunity for informal networking at The Birdham. If you're new to networking, our Brunch is the perfect way to get connected with like-minded business people.

Coffee and Cake Networking

Caffe Isola, Newport

Wednesday 21st May, 3.30pm-5pm

IW Chamber members—FREE

Join us for afternoon networking and a superb way to meet other members informally, in the great setting of Chamber patrons Caffe Isola. If you're new to networking, it's a brilliant way to get started and promote your business.



IW Chamber Networking Breakfast

IW Steam Railway, Havenstreet

Friday 6th June 2025, 7.30am – 9.00am

IW Chamber Members – £18 per person

Non-Members – £36 per person

Join us for an excellent networking opportunity at the IW Steam Railway, with a hot breakfast and a great start to the business day, networking with other Chamber members. After breakfast members will have the opportunity to go for a train ride.

Afternoon Tea at Quarr Abbey

Quarr Abbey, Ryde

Wednesday 25th June, 2.30pm – 4.40pm

IW Chamber Members - £5 admin fee

Join us for a fabulous networking opportunity, enjoying afternoon tea in the grounds of Quarr Abbey. A hugely popular annual event, it's a unique chance to engage with Chamber members whilst enjoying the peaceful surroundings of the Abbey. You can find out more about Quarr Abbey too.

IW Chamber Business Expo 2025

with WightFibre

Ryde School, Ryde

Wednesday 9th July, 10am-4pm

Free to attend for everyone – you don't have to be a Chamber member. If you're in business on the Island, you'll want to be at Expo 2025.

BOOK YOUR PLACE NOW!

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Brading Haven Yacht Club

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THE LATEST NEWS AT BUILDING 41

Building 41 is more than just a workspace—it's a hub for innovation, collaboration, and community on the Isle of Wight.

We're excited to highlight Nicola Cornwell, founder of Hostd Homes, one of our fantastic coworkers who's making waves in the holiday let industry.

As a weekly coworker at Building 41, Nicola has **doubled her portfolio** since joining the coworking space, benefiting from its flexible, professional environment.

Founded in 2024, Hostd Homes offers a bespoke, hospitality-first approach to holiday let management, maximising bookings and guest experiences with a stress-free solution for owners.



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We'll give you an overview of running your own business, operating as sole trader or company, bookkeeping, insurance, professional services, marketing and more.

The **Isle of Wight Lottery Business Start Up Course** is a great way to learn more about the world of business and how to get moving in the right direction. The informal environment is also a friendly place to ask questions and learn with like-minded people.

The **Isle of Wight Lottery Business Start Up Course** is sponsored by **Red Funnel**, who are proud to support new businesses and help to create new jobs and employment. The one-day course is only £5 to attend, thanks to the support of **Red Funnel**. The courses are presented by the **Isle of Wight Lottery**, as part of the Lottery's work to create and sustain employment on the Isle of Wight.

Sign up today!

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Thursday July 24th – 9.30am – 4.00pm

Thursday September 25th – 9.30am – 4.00pm

Thursday October 23rd – 9.30am – 4.00pm

Thursday November 20th – 9.30am – 4.00pm

at IW Chamber Office, Branstone Business Park

Visit: www.iwchamber.co.uk/startmeup

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IW CHAMBER PRESIDENT

A Season of Change and Celebration

By Jonathan Thornton, IW Chamber President

Spring is in the air, and with it comes that familiar sense of renewal, opportunity, and fresh energy. As the days grow longer and the sunshine returns, there's a shift in mood that always brings a bit of optimism. And this year, that sense of momentum feels especially strong at the Chamber.

IW CHAMBER'S MISSION

To provide value and benefits for our members through listening, representation, support and collaboration.

One of the biggest changes in recent months has been within the Chamber team itself. We are pleased to welcome Richard Winter into the fold who many of you will already know from his involvement with business events across the Island over the years. He's been an active member of the Chamber in the past and now joins us in a more hands-on role, supporting the work we do and helping to expand our commercial and member-facing activity. His focus is more sales orientated, but the key thread running through everything he's doing is connection, ensuring our members are supported, seen, and involved.

Change reflects the evolving nature of the Chamber and the dynamic role we play within the local business community. Change can feel uncertain at times, but it also offers a valuable opportunity to refresh, regroup, and grow. In a world where many businesses are facing shifting economic pressures and rising expectations, having the right team in place to support our members is more important than ever.

Of course, spring isn't just a time for fresh starts, it's also the time when the Chamber gets to celebrate the very best of our local business community. The Chamber Business Awards are always a highlight of the year, and this year is no different. Congratulations to all of the shortlisted nominees. It's been brilliant to see such a wide variety of businesses being recognised. From innovative start-ups to seasoned industry leaders, the range and quality of this year's entries really does show how strong and diverse our local economy is.

What's particularly inspiring is seeing businesses return to the awards after a few years away. It's a reminder that excellence isn't a one-off event - it's a mindset. Many of the companies who've been nominated this year have been past winners, and their continued success proves that consistency, innovation, and community connection are what really set businesses apart in the long term.

This year's awards also bring some exciting changes of their own. We're thrilled to have Jamie Laing joining us as host. With a background spanning television, radio, and charity work, including completing an ultra-marathon that raised over £2 million, Jamie brings passion and energy to the role. His presence is a real coup for the Chamber and a fantastic reflection of the community-minded values we stand for.

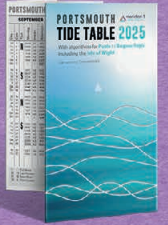
We're also grateful to WRS Systems, our new headline sponsors, helping us elevate the event to new heights. Their support behind the scenes has been invaluable, and they've worked closely with Steven to ensure his final year with us ends on a high. If there is ever a way to go out with a bang, this is it.

These moments of celebration matter. They're a chance to pause, reflect, and recognise the hard work happening all across our business landscape. But they also serve a bigger purpose: reminding us of the collective strength we have when we come together. I recently heard from one of our Bronze Patrons, who said the Chamber had helped transform their business during challenging times. That kind of feedback is powerful - it underlines the importance of what we do and the value of having a strong, supportive network.

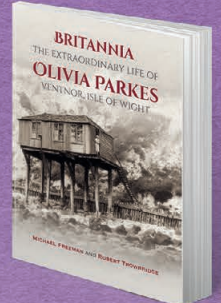
So, as we move through this season of change, let's take time to acknowledge how far we've come and look ahead to the opportunities still to come. Spring is here, and with it, the promise of growth, connection, and a renewed sense of purpose. ■



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