

SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER 2025

Island Business

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includes Isle of Wight Chamber member news and events

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Mountbatten

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Strings

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Editor

Amber Beard
amber.beard@iwchamber.co.uk

Sales

Amber Beard
amber.beard@iwchamber.co.uk

Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce

Unit S1, Branstone Business Park,
Stockmans Close, Branstone,
Isle of Wight. PO36 0EQ
Telephone: 01983 520777

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

It has certainly been a summer to remember and not just for the heatwaves. From the Expo at Ryde School in July to the Cowes Week barbecue in August and with any number of networking breakfasts, brunches, and opportunities to get together, it's been busy. In this issue, we look back at all the events that the Chamber has been instrumental in putting on, so see if you can spot yourself.

Along with our packed social schedule, we have said farewell to Steven Holbrook as CEO and welcomed Rob Johnson, who has joined us. We look forward to seeing what he will bring to the Chamber, and you can read about one of his first official outings with the Chair of the British Chambers of Commerce, Sarah Howard.

I sat down to chat with the founders of Strings to hear about how they've become one of the most popular independent live music venues in the country and to learn about their plans and expansion via the BBC. The Wight Brand is also featured, and there's the opportunity to see their film trailer via the QR code on the page, which celebrates all that's best about the Island.

Lots to read, so enjoy 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.

Isle of Wight College celebrates student success

The Isle of Wight College proudly hosted its Annual Student Awards Ceremony on Friday, 4th of July, celebrating the remarkable achievements of its students and their strong connection to the community.

The event, held at the Riverside Centre in Newport, recognised the hard work, dedication, and outstanding accomplishments of students across various disciplines.

The awards presented were for the following achievements: Progress Award, Dedication to Learning, Peer Support and Leadership Award, and an Outstanding Award for overall achievement. The afternoon ended with higher education awards and the presentation of the Student

of the Year Award. This was awarded to Christian Rogers (Business) for his dedication and determination to his work and leadership qualities.

Principal Ros Parker expressed immense pride in the students' achievements, saying, "Our students have shown incredible resilience and dedication. The celebration on Friday was a testament to their hard work and the unwavering support of our staff and wider community. The Isle of Wight College is committed to providing an environment where our students can develop their skills, confidence, and independence whilst making a positive contribution within our local community. We are extremely proud of our Student of the Year finalists, who are an inspiration to others." ■



New physio clinic opens in Wootton

Husband and wife team, Marie and Tom Brown, have officially launched Haven Physiotherapy, bringing expert musculoskeletal care to the community. The new private clinic, located on Brannon Way in Wootton, is led by Chartered Physiotherapist Marie Brown, and offers a range of services including soft tissue and joint mobilisation, taping, post-operative care, and personalised rehabilitation programmes.

Marie brings over 10 years of experience from both the NHS and private healthcare sectors and has been working on the Island as a First Contact Physiotherapist alongside GPs and allied health professionals. Having held clinical leadership roles at Nuffield Health and Halsa Care Group, opening her own clinic was the natural next step.

"Our goal is to create a welcoming and professional environment where patients feel truly listened to," said Marie. "We're excited to help people get back to achieving their goals and feeling stronger." Passionate about making physiotherapy accessible, Marie is also available for corporate wellbeing events in addition to one-on-one care. There is availability for remote consultations and home visits by pre-arrangement through phone or email.



Co-founder Tom Brown added: "Our family lives in Havenstreet - hence the name. Wootton was the perfect location as it has become a health hub on the Island. In addition to existing healthcare services there is now a physiotherapy clinic on the high street." ■

New Client Director at NOSY



Dan Carley is ready to 'hit the ground running' in his new Client Director role at NOSY.

Boasting a wealth of business leadership and life experience, Dan is hopeful he can help continue the company's growth over the coming year.

"I am really happy to be joining NOSY at this time," said Dan. "I've known the team for a while and watched with interest as the company has grown and developed over the last few years. Meeting and interacting with people is something I feel brings the best out of me, so I'm really excited by this role. There's so much potential for us, both with new and existing clients, and I'll be working as hard as I can to help us explore and fulfil it."

"We're excited to welcome Dan," added NOSY founder Matt Greg. "He will be focused on client success, strengthening the relationships we've built, and helping us grow the business in a thoughtful, strategic way. In a world of AI and fast-moving tech, human connection often gets left behind. We're building NOSY to be a relationship-first agency, and Dan's the perfect person to help us deliver on that promise." ■

Lifeline extends new electric vehicles to fleet

Lifeline Alarm Systems is proud to announce the addition of three new VW ID Buzz electric vehicles to its vehicle fleet. This initiative highlights the company's ongoing commitment to sustainable practices, reinforcing the belief that eco-friendly solutions are integral to modern business operations.

As the company celebrates 35 years of exceptional service in the fire and security industry, this step represents their dedication to not only enhancing the efficiency of their operations but also minimising their environmental impact. The introduction of these innovative electric vehicles aligns with their mission to integrate sustainability into everyday practices wherever practical and possible.

"We are excited to take this important step forward by incorporating additional electric vehicles into our fleet," said Cindy Newnham, General Manager of Lifeline Alarm Systems. "This decision not only reflects our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint but also reinforces our position as a leader in adopting sustainable technologies both within our industry and as a local business. The vehicles' stylish and modern design aligns perfectly with the ethos at Lifeline, where we adopt modern technology and remain dedicated to exploring more sustainable options as the company grows and evolves." ■



Challenging current thinking



The Island Business Think Tank continues to grow, supporting leaders across the island's many and varied businesses. "Leadership Under Pressure" was explored in a second Think Tank on 16th

June, addressing both external business pressures and internal stress responses these can create.

This topic was explored from various angles, from less familiar strategies (such

as vagus nerve activation, archetypes, and embodied self energy), alongside practical planning and prevention tools to anticipate moments of pressure within the business.

One attendee said, "This forum offered a safe space for a group of professionals to explore our reactions to pressures in the workplace. I came away with some discreet but effective methods of preventing stress responses in the body, and I look forward to the next session."

The Think Tanks are designed to challenge current thinking and encourage alternative approaches to leadership and management. Organisers Ali Thorogood, Zoe Irvine, and Ed Grey said: "Our intention is to encourage interaction in a supportive environment, share knowledge and experiences, and try new ideas that push the boundaries." ■

Step out and network with a difference

Networking is an important part of business life these days, and a Freshwalks netwalking event creates closer business connections and promotes wellbeing to boost resilience, inspire creative thinking, and bring balance to busy working lives.



Claire Beasley is bringing the Freshwalks concept to the Island, adding to the existing excellent calendar of business networking events in our vibrant business community, with two walks a month planned. In other parts of the country, Freshwalks has already proved popular, organising country walks, city tours, and gastro hikes.

The first netwalk on the island was in July, and Claire selected a popular route in the West Wight, from the meeting point at Yarmouth Pier, to Freshwater. Contact details are shared after the walk so that conversations can be followed up.

Claire, who runs her own executive and career coaching businesses, said: "We offer a relaxed, informal and healthy approach to networking in stunning locations. Feel free to come alone - most Freshwalkers do - and you'll be warmly welcomed, or invite a colleague or client along for company." Her co-leader on the walks in the coming months will be another IW businesswoman, Rachel Richards, a fitness and wellbeing specialist. ■

Red Squirrel celebrate double wins at national awards ceremony

Red Squirrel Property Shop Ltd, under the leadership of CEO Charlie Panayi, celebrated their remarkable success at the Agents Giving Summer Ball 2025, taking home two prestigious awards: Best Creative Fundraising and Best Company Fundraising. Additionally, Charlie earned personal recognition by winning the Best Social Media Campaign award.

The event, held to celebrate outstanding contributions to charity fundraising within the property industry, showcased Charlie & Red Squirrel's dedication to innovative and impactful charity efforts, reinforcing its commitment to making a meaningful difference.

Charlie said, "Winning both Best Creative Fundraising and Best Company Fundraising is a testament to the passion and creativity of our entire team. At Red Squirrel, we believe that fundraising and community work should not only generate vital support but also inspire and engage our community in meaningful ways. These awards motivate us to push the boundaries even further. Charity isn't just about giving money; it's about building connections, giving hope, and creating lasting impact. It's deeply rewarding to know that our efforts are resonating and making a difference." ■



RSPCA IW launches new corporate scheme

The RSPCA Isle of Wight has launched a new corporate scheme in tandem with a heartfelt appeal for urgent community support. This as the charity faces growing pressure to meet the increasing demand for its services.

Dedicated to helping the Island's most vulnerable animals, the independent branch is currently caring for a rising number of animals with complex needs. "It costs £750,000 every year just to keep the centre running," said Steve Backhouse, Branch Director. "Our medication and veterinary bills alone total around £76,000 annually. Many people are surprised to discover that while we are linked to the RSPCA nationally, less than 5% of our income comes from them."

The corporate scheme asks Island businesses to partner with them to make a local impact, and they are being asked to:

- Support rescue, rehabilitation and rehoming
- Fund vital veterinary care and rehoming efforts
- Contribute to neutering, microchipping, vaccinations, and more
- Get a team together for one of our events, like the Fire Walk Challenge.

"Every animal we help has a story, and often, a long road to recovery. With the community's support, we can give each one a haven and a happy ending."



UKSA receives President's Award

UK Sailing Academy (UKSA) has been awarded the prestigious President's Award for collaboration at The Seafarers' Charity Annual General Meeting. The award recognises UKSA's leadership and commitment to address issues impacting the welfare and mental health of professional yacht crew, including the launch of a dedicated welfare hub in Antibes and fostering collaborative working groups.

Amy Sweeting, Director of Development and Impact, accepted the award, which was presented by His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, President of The Seafarers' Charity.

The accolade celebrates the work of UKSA and its leadership of the Changing Tack initiative, a multi-sector network that brings together maritime industry

leaders, including The Seafarers' Charity, Nautilus International and ISWAN. Together, they are driving forward a sector-wide commitment to improve mental health support, establish clear reporting mechanisms and ensure the safety and wellbeing of professional yacht crew.

Cat Dixon, UKSA CEO, said, "This President's Award recognises UKSA's innovative approach to addressing one of the maritime industry's most pressing challenges. By fostering collaboration across the sector and developing practical solutions, UKSA continues to lead the transformation of crew welfare standards, ensuring the yacht industry becomes a thriving sector where the safety and wellbeing of all crew members remains the top priority." ■



Amy Sweeting, Director of Development and Impact, accepting the award from His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, President of The Seafarers' Charity.



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A Royal award and event for PC Consultants

Osborne House was the venue for a very special event, which saw PC Consultants presented with The King's Award for Enterprise by The King's Representative for the Island, Lord Lieutenant Susie Sheldon, with Jonathan Thornton, CEO, receiving the award on behalf of the company.

The event saw over 200 guests, some of whom had travelled to Osborne House by helicopter, enjoy a champagne reception and specially prepared canapes, whilst a classical string quartet played music chosen specifically for the occasion.

The King's Award for Enterprise is the most prestigious award that can be bestowed on a company and was awarded to PC Consultants for 'Promoting Opportunity', one of only ten UK businesses to receive the award in this category. Reflecting the company's focus on providing IT opportunities for individuals irrespective of personal circumstances and academic achievement, where individuals are fully supported as they determine their own career pathway.

An award made more unique by the fact that this is not an adjunct to the core business, but part of the company's DNA since it was founded in 1993 by Mike Parsons and Sean Colson, from whom the company takes its name. ■

Tidal turning four

Tidal Family Support is marking four years of supporting families across the Isle of Wight. As an award-winning child-focused, not-for-profit charity, Tidal provides a safe, neutral space for families navigating separation or divorce, helping children maintain meaningful relationships with the people who matter most.

As the Island's only Enhanced Accredited Centre under the NACCC, Tidal continues to grow its reach, offering supervised and supported contact, handover services, virtual and community-based support, and practical resources for parents, carers, and young people.

Quiz Night boosts Youth Trust

The Isle of Wight Youth Trust recently received a £730 boost to their funds thanks to a Quiz Night Fundraiser held by Eldridges Solicitors at Café Isola, Newport.

The quiz night was fully booked, with almost 60 people joining The Youth Trust and Eldridges Team alongside Mike Cox as compere and quiz master, taking everyone through several rounds of questions within this two-and-a-half-hour social event including a fun and fast paced 'head and tails' round.

Jo Dare, CEO and Head of Counselling and Wellbeing at the Isle of Wight Youth Trust, said, "We're thrilled to share the success of the Eldridges Quiz Night fundraiser in support of the Youth Trust. The event brought together colleagues, partners, and community members for an evening of fun, friendly competition, and heartfelt generosity. Thanks to everyone's enthusiasm and support, we raised vital funds that will directly benefit our young islanders. I would like to extend my deepest thanks to Eldridges and all who participated, donated, and helped organise the event. Together, we're making a meaningful difference."

Joni Ade, Associate Director at Eldridges, who heads their fundraising, added, "As an Island-based law firm, we understand how important the work of the Isle of Wight Youth Trust is, which is why we made them our charity of the year for 2025." ■



In October 2023, flooding forced the temporary closure of Tidal Family Support's centre. At that time, 42 families relied on its structured, consistent contact environment. While the building closed, the need for safe contact did not. Behind the scenes, the team worked tirelessly to restore the space, and in March 2024, the centre reopened.

Since then, Tidal has supported 201 contact families and expects to exceed the target of 250 by the end of 2025. Tidal is more than a contact centre. It's a calm, child-focused service built on structure, compassion, and trust, where families are supported to reconnect, rebuild, and move forward. ■



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Getting to the bottom of bowel cancer awareness

Isle of Wight organisations are being encouraged to support their employees' health with the launch of a new business toolkit designed to raise awareness of the symptoms of bowel cancer in the workplace. Developed by One Wight Health as part of the impactful Your Loo Could Save You campaign, the toolkit gives Island employers a simple and effective way to share life-saving information with staff.

Backed by the IW Chamber of Commerce, the campaign was officially launched at the Isle of Wight Chamber Business Expo. Members of the campaign team met representatives from local businesses and answered questions about a subject that all too often gets flushed aside.

The free toolkit includes:

- A ready-to-use PowerPoint presentation for team briefings or staff meetings
- Digital posters and flyers for noticeboards or internal communications
- An article for staff newsletters
- A pre-written email to send to employees
- A short awareness film featuring local GP Dr David Isaac on recognising the symptoms of bowel cancer

Dr Isaac said, "Bowel cancer is one of the most common types of cancer, yet it's still a subject many people feel uncomfortable discussing. This campaign is about breaking that silence, and the workplace is a great place to start." ■



A Toolkit for sustainable business

Green Impact is a free sustainability and awards programme designed to help Isle of Wight businesses improve their environmental performance and reduce costs. It offers a practical online toolkit full of simple, impactful actions across themes like biodiversity, water, and communications - each linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

By completing actions, businesses earn points that lead to a Green Impact award, presented at an annual celebration of local sustainability achievements. The programme supports organisations at any stage of their environmental journey, with guidance and support available throughout.

Participants also benefit from networking opportunities and the chance to share ideas with other local businesses, building a stronger, greener business community. Communicating your environmental efforts through Green Impact can also boost your reputation and build trust with customers who value sustainability.

Getting started is easy: register online, join or create a team, and begin making positive changes. Whether you're looking to cut waste, save energy, or engage your staff, Green Impact provides a clear roadmap for action.

Join the growing network of Island businesses working towards a cleaner, greener future and register online for free. ■



Charity quiz to raise vital funds



Heartbeat, the charity dedicated to supporting people living with heart conditions across Wessex and beyond, is excited to announce its upcoming fundraiser, the 'Beat the Heat' IOW Heartbeat Quiz.

Taking place on Thursday, 16th October 2025 at the Royal Solent Yacht Club in Yarmouth, Isle of Wight, this fun-filled evening promises a perfect mix of brains and spice. Kicking off at 6:30 PM for a 7 PM start, guests will enjoy a lively quiz followed by a delicious curry, all for just £25 per person. Teams of up to six people are welcome to join in the challenge. Proceeds will go toward Heartbeat's life-changing cardiac support services, helping individuals and families receive vital care and education. Come along for a night of fun, friendship, and fundraising in support of a truly vital cause. ■



Go for Growth

The Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce is partnering with Go for Growth once again this year to ensure businesses across the island have access to help, advice, expertise, support, and training, funded by the council. In addition to providing businesses with one-to-one specialist advice, Go for Growth is running a series of workshops from 25 September through to 10th December.

In the new year, there will be two full-day summits: one on sales and marketing automation, and the other on the practical use and implementation of artificial intelligence by small business owners.

A new standalone programme is also introduced this year for sole traders on the island who have started their business within the past three years, called Ready to Grow.

FREE BUSINESS WORKSHOPS AT BUILDING 41

**Wednesdays and Thursdays,
1pm – 3.30pm | 25 Sept – 10 Dec**

Just a £2.50 booking fee per session

This autumn, we're hosting a powerful programme of 10 expert-led business workshops at Building 41. Designed for small business owners and founders, these sessions are practical, focused, and full of ideas you can apply straight away, and they are exclusively for business owners on the Isle of Wight.

Each workshop is free to attend (just a £2.50 booking fee) and led by a specialist with real-world experience in helping businesses grow. Whether you need to sharpen your digital strategy, improve sales, streamline operations, or get your finances on track, there's something here for you.

Join us from 25 September to 10 December. Come to one or come to them all!

Register for these workshops by scanning the QR code.



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WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

25 September Digital marketing strategy

with Effie Moss

Learn how to build a digital marketing strategy that cuts through the noise and brings the right customers to your business.

2 October AI tools for small business

with Mary Kemp

Discover the latest AI tools that can help you save time, generate content, automate tasks, and boost productivity.

9 October Social media and content planning

with Zoe Stroud

Create a content plan that works across platforms and keeps your social media active, engaging, and aligned with your goals.

16 October Pricing and sales strategies

with Tash Rebuck

Explore ways to price your products or services confidently—and convert more leads with a smarter sales approach.

READY TO GROW

Ready to Grow is for sole traders on the Island, trading for less than three years, who recognise there is still a lot to learn... particularly when it comes to sales and marketing success.

We can support a maximum 10 people, who will participate in a series of connected workshops in November, receive 10 hours of one-to-one expertise from a business advisor, and be given priority access to book the Open workshops being organised as part of the Go for Growth programme.

The Ready to Grow workshops:

Wed 5 Nov. 10am - 12.30pm
Welcome / Introductions / Action Plans / Strategy
Gavin McWhirter

Wed 12 Nov. 10am - 12.30pm
Digital marketing strategy
Effie Moss.

Wed 19 Nov. 10am - 12.30pm
Transforming your business with AI
Gavin McWhirter

Wed 26 Nov. 10m - 12.30pm
Action Plan reviews
Gavin McWhirter

Anyone interested in finding out more details should email:
hello@digitalislands.org





Mike, Hadley and Harry

At Stella Developments, building homes is only part of the story; we're just as committed to building careers. Since 2023, two standout apprentices, Hadley and Harry, have been proving exactly why investment in young talent is essential to the future of construction, not only on the mainland but increasingly here on the Island.

Hadley, an apprentice bricklayer, and Harry, an apprentice carpenter, joined us just over a year ago and have quickly become indispensable members of the Stella team. Both have brought with them not only a genuine enthusiasm for the trades but also an impressive appetite for learning and a level of dedication beyond their years.

Hadley's journey with us has already spanned a variety of projects, showcasing his adaptability and attention to detail. A highlight of his experience so far was a complex new build in Newport, where he worked on a brickwork skin surrounding an insulated concrete form (ICF) system, specifically

the Nudura system, known for its energy efficiency and durability. More recently, Hadley has been immersed in blockwork and constructing brick walls on a residential development in Ryde.

His commitment to developing his skills has paid off. Through the Isle of Wight College, Hadley has now completed his Level 1 certificate in bricklaying. In parallel, he has undertaken a series of important safety courses, including manual handling, abrasive wheels, and asbestos awareness, delivered in collaboration with the Isle of Wight Building Safety Association (IWBSA). He's due to complete his working at heights training later this month, further strengthening his credentials.

Harry, meanwhile, has carved out a path for himself, quite literally, in the world of carpentry. One of his first major contributions was assisting in the creation of a hand-cut roof on a mainland project, an experience that set the tone for what has become an impressive early career. Since then, he has been refining his craft across various renovation sites, developing strong competencies in timber stud work, wood flooring, door installations, and finishing details like skirtings.

Currently holding a Level 1 carpentry qualification from the Isle of Wight College, Harry is now working towards his Level 2. His skill and attention to detail were recently recognised when he secured second place in the London regional qualifiers of the prestigious Skill Build competition, an incredible achievement for someone still early in their apprenticeship. Like Hadley, he has also completed a suite of essential safety training with IWBSA and Stella Developments.

"At Stella, we don't just look at what someone can do today, we invest in what they can become," says Mike Treadwell, Director at Stella Developments. "Hadley and Harry are fantastic examples of the kind of talent we're proud to nurture. Their work ethic, commitment to learning, and growing confidence have made a real impact. It's young professionals like them who are shaping the future of our industry on the Island. We're proud to have Hadley and Harry on our team and look forward to continuing this journey with them, building not only homes but a skilled future for construction on the Isle of Wight and beyond." ■

stelladevelopments.co.uk

CHRISTOPHER SCOTT

CHRISTOPHER SCOTT CELEBRATES 25 YEARS WITH THE CHAMBER

This July has marked the 25th anniversary of Christopher Scott joining the Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce as a Company. Over this period, Chris has served on the Main Chamber Board for over 11 years, initially from 2009 to 2015 and then again from 2016 to 2022.

During that time, he served as:

- Chair of the Economic Group,
- Chair of the Eco Group
- Vice Chair of the Construction Hub.
- Vice Chair of the Agents Forum (which is a body that provides an interface and working relationship with the IW Council in improving economic and planning performance on the Island).

Chris has worked closely with the Chief Executives over this period, including Kevin Smith and Steve Holbrook. "We have been very proud to have been an active Member of this Island business organisation, offering valuable networking opportunities and gaining many friends along the way. We worked closely with the Chamber to assist in relocating their office to the current premises in Branstone, which will provide a bright future for the Chamber going forward.

Many close friendships have been forged over the years, including those with John Owen, Steve Porter, Morris Barton, Geoff Banks, Russell Qew, Geoff Underwood, Simon Dabell, Sarah

Chatwin, and many others. Over the years, sister companies have also joined the Chamber, such as the Planning & Development Hub, Rainey Petrie, The Wight Book, and Element Housing.

This organisation has had many people who have moved on and set up their own thriving businesses to the benefit of those who live on the Island. We are very proud of these wider contacts, including Henry Murray-Smith, Coleman Cotter, David Long, James Attrill, Charles Spence, Duncan Willard, and others.

We hope to commit to the Chamber and continue to work with Island Business, particularly in such projects as the Wight Brand Film and the Construction Collective, for many years to come." ■



L to R: Chris Scott, Simon Craddock, Kate Palfrey, Mark Dickson and Robert Biggs.



SMALL BUSINESS PLAN 'IMPORTANT STEP FORWARD'

"The reality of British business is hard, it's relentless, it's knacker, it's being endlessly creative, it's seven days a week... and it's absolutely essential for the UK's future prosperity." Shevaun Haviland, British Chambers of Commerce Director General.

"This is a much-needed step forward in recognition and support for SMEs, which are the backbone of the UK economy. Late payments, access to finance, and business support are all issues that have held back many smaller firms," said Alex Veitch, Director of Policy at the BCC, responding to the launch of the Government's Small Business Plan

"Late payments are a well-established barrier to economic and business growth, which hits the smallest companies hardest. Our research shows that three-quarters of firms have, at some point, been paid late, with 28% saying that this had an impact on their operations. But it is important to get the balance right, and we welcome plans for consultation.

"The online Business Growth Service will also be a valuable signpost to support and advice for firms. It will make it easier for them to connect with their local Chambers of Commerce, which play a crucial role in delivering business support and creating opportunities across their communities. It is welcome to see the plan featuring exports, as trade will be a key driver of growth going forward. However, more will be needed to help SMEs capitalise on the opportunities.

"Recognition around supporting businesses with technology adoption is also key. The BCC has been involved in the SME Digital Adoption Taskforce,

and we look forward to taking that work forward to help smaller firms embrace AI and technology. But businesses are still struggling with a mounting wall of costs and will want to see longer-term reform of business rates and no further tax increases heaped upon them.

"For the government to achieve its Growth Mission, people need to stay in work and firms need to invest. The various strategies and plans published by the government over the last few months have set the strategic direction of travel. Now we need to see funding and real-world support to implement these policies, drive growth, and reduce the cost of doing business." ■



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Samantha Blake, Retail Sales Manager at Isle of Wight Tomatoes, and Joe, Level 3 Business Administration Apprentice



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A GOODBYE FROM STEVEN HOLBROOK



It is hard for me to believe it was seven years ago that I sat down to write my first article in this magazine as the new CEO of the IW Chamber. So much has changed and happened in the world in that time, I certainly never envisioned challenges such as COVID and all the global instability that has spiralled since then.

I also hope the Chamber is now a very different beast from the one I walked into all those years ago, not least that we are now operating out of our new offices in Branstone Business Park.

When I arrived, the IW Chamber had just recorded a year of significant losses, and I felt it had lost its primary focus of being a membership organisation that was committed to living and breathing for the benefit of that membership. From the start, it was my goal to go back to just that; everything needed to be about our members and serving them in a new way.

I wanted the Chamber to be fun, inclusive, relevant, vibrant, and offering value. This focus then became the measuring stick for all our decisions going forward. If we weren't all these things, then we wouldn't do.

These changes wouldn't have been possible without an incredible team around me, both in terms of the Chamber staff but also the Board. I want to express my thanks and admiration to the most amazing and supportive team I could ever have wished for. They have been terrific, and it has been a joy and privilege to work alongside them.

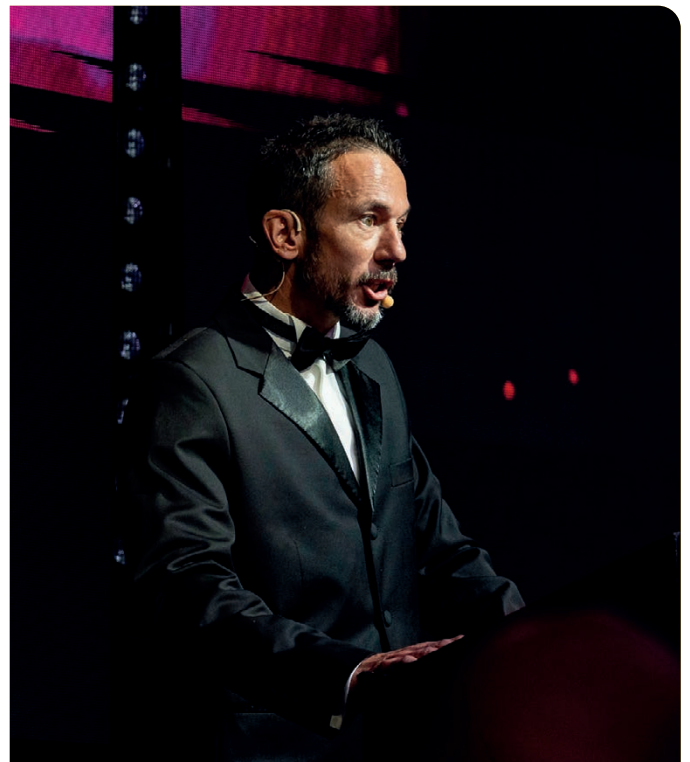
When I attend our breakfast and other networking events, it is so great to see that usually significantly more than half the attendees are ladies, and at the last breakfast event I went to, I realised I was probably the second oldest in the room. I was so pleased to be leaving the Chamber with our members being representative of such a wide demographic of the Island; no one can say we were an old men's club anymore, and that alone is fantastic. The Board is also reflective of our event attendees, with more women than men and represented by leaders in their twenties upwards.

I very much hope people will look back at what the Chamber now offers in terms of large-scale events and think 'that it is a group I want to be a part of'. I am told the Awards are up there with some of the best Awards events offered in the country, something we can be very proud of for a small Island. Cowes Week Barbeque has become an iconic event that people don't want to miss, and Expo has gone from strength to strength since moving to Ryde School and is set to be able to continue to grow much more in the years ahead. Most of all, I hope people who attend these events find them to be fun, inclusive, relevant, vibrant, and offering value. If they do, then I have achieved the goal.

A personal favourite has been the construction and delivery of the Patron groups. It has given me the chance to get to know some great Island leaders well and to develop wonderful friendships. I will really miss my time with these people. Having the opportunity to learn and share so honestly with each other has been a real privilege and something I will miss.

To you, our members, I want to thank you for your support of me and my team. I am truly humbled to have had the opportunity to be a custodian of your Chamber for the past 7 years. I hope you will feel I am passing that custodianship on to Rob in a strong and healthy place and that you have both enjoyed and gained value from your time in the Chamber. Thank you, thank you.

And to my Team. Thank you for the amazing journey; you have all been and are truly immense. ■



A LASTING LEGACY

"I'm not going to let go. I can't. Even though I won't be at the heart of Mountbatten, it'll always be there and part of who I am," reflects retiring Mountbatten hospice group CEO, Nigel Hartley.

Nigel Hartley

After a life-changing decade in one of the Island's most recognised roles, Nigel will step aside in September, handing over to incoming CEO, Becky McGregor. It is a time of reflection for Nigel, who, when he arrived in 2015, found a very different hospice. Nigel's first impressions were a 'little bit of a baptism by fire, following quite a difficult period.'

Characteristically, Nigel embraced this head-on. He loved the challenge and used it to roll out ideas to drive the organisation forward, pushing the limits of what hospice care can achieve. "It's too easy to ignore people at their most vulnerable."

This belief is at the heart of what Nigel does, which has included caring for people with HIV/AIDS at London's Lighthouse Centre and learning from the founder of the hospice movement, Dame Cicely Saunders, while working with her at the world's first modern hospice: St Christopher's in London. As a nurse, Dame Cicely was moved to find a better solution for dying people after witnessing death on the new NHS hospital wards of the 1940s. To this day, Nigel champions her legacy.

The development of 24/7 care in the community, meeting growing demand, and ensuring hospice services reach the many, not the few, is one of Nigel's major achievements. Visits to care homes, nursing homes, and private homes are all in a day's and night's work for Mountbatten Isle of Wight's staff. Over 2,300 people are now looked after in any one day; ten years ago, it was just 300.

"It has been a rollercoaster ten years, but overwhelmingly positive. I'm not very good at looking back. I'm always looking forward to the next thing."

Nigel Hartley

Oscar

Expansion has also meant developing extensive rehabilitation services and domiciliary care (free at the point of delivery for those eligible, ensuring dignity in the last weeks of life). An early referral process has been introduced to plan end-of-life care more effectively and ensure people become connected and comfortable with Mountbatten's services and staff. Nigel is proud to have carved out a strong relationship with the NHS over the years. Mountbatten Isle of Wight has become the NHS's preferred local supplier of palliative and end-of-life care. Although complex (like any relationship), this working partnership has proved so successful that hospices across the UK have replicated Mountbatten's model.

Alongside a team of committed and expert trustees, Nigel has created a lean and stable organisation. The cost to the NHS? More than affordable. Meanwhile, staff on Mountbatten Isle of Wight's home-from-home 16-bed inpatient unit continues to deliver top quality care, not just in death, but also in pain management and complex care solutions. Many who come onto the ward return home again. Around four years after Nigel took over, he welcomed Countess Mountbatten Hospice into what has become the Mountbatten Group. It had opened in 1977 in Southampton. Until 1982, it was the only option for Islanders. They had to cross the Solent to use it. In 2020, the NHS-run Countess Mountbatten Hospice was rebranded Mountbatten Hampshire. It now operates as a separate charity to Mountbatten Isle of Wight, sharing a board of trustees and senior managers, including Nigel.

When Covid-19 hit, one of the most challenging times in the history of modern healthcare, Nigel's leadership saw Mountbatten through. "It has been a rollercoaster ten years, but overwhelmingly positive. I'm not very good at looking back. I'm always looking forward to the next thing."

Retirement must be about looking back and making sense of the past, and perhaps Nigel's greatest achievement has been to instil the organisation's values: expertise, kindness, innovation, and being bold. Walk the corridors (painted in a warm 'Mountbatten white' shade, covered in vibrant and meaningful artwork, and frequented by the hospice's oversized ginger cat, Oscar, who lives mainly on Nigel's desk and who comforts all who encounter him), and you find these values are always present. "We talk about them a lot, and they are critical to us. It's that and expertise. We have to be at the top of our game." His focus is centred around supporting those for whom Mountbatten exists, vulnerable people dealing with a life-limiting condition or a terminal diagnosis, and their family and friends. "There is endless possibility in the Mountbatten community. People understand and support us. In this way, we can make the biggest difference".

Retirement will see Nigel hand over the reins to current Deputy CEO, Becky, who has worked at Mountbatten for over 20 years, against a backdrop of proposed funding cuts and with income for 2026/7 far from certain. "The overwhelming feeling I got when I heard Becky had been offered the role was one of incredible relief." Becky has a five-year plan to develop the Group still further: "Something tangible that drives us forward and keeps us on track. From Nigel, I've learned to be bold and not always stay in the safe space".

Nigel pledges to continue to talk about death and dying and the need to do this much earlier in our lives. Through Advance Care Planning, he urges us to think about what we want and to share those wishes with family and friends. "I hope no one ever loses out on what Mountbatten can give them, including myself." ■

www.mountbatten.org.uk



THE WIGHT BRAND

TELLING THE ISLAND'S STORY THROUGH COMPELLING VIDEO MAKING

Three years ago, amid the unease of post-COVID uncertainty, Steve Edmonds stood at a crossroads. Decades of international broadcast work, including high-profile projects for Rolex, had ground to a halt. "Things were looking pretty bleak," he recalls. "A lot of my business went away, so I found myself with time on my hands thinking, OK, how can I use it constructively?"

That question sparked a transformative idea, one now taking shape as The Wight Brand, a new, collective vision for the Isle of Wight's future, its identity, and its voice. The seed was planted by The Wight Book, a glossy, visually rich publication that told stories of the Island's beauty and entrepreneurial heart. "It's a fantastic coffee table book," Steve says, "and within it are these great stories about how amazing the island is... how entrepreneurial we are... that can-do sense of island culture." The limitation? Accessibility. A beautifully bound volume can only travel so far.

For Steve, who runs Island TV production company TVMI, the solution was obvious. "People want video," he says. "YouTube has 2.5 billion users. That's where audiences are. So, you've got to go and meet them on their platform of choice." And The Wight Brand was born, not as a website or brochure, but as a YouTube-first video movement with a distinctly local heartbeat. "It's a collaborative Video Marketing Campaign - designed to boost the profile of the Island and the Stakeholder businesses that support it. It's all about telling

THE WIGHT BRAND.





the Island's story through ultra-high-quality video, creating engaging stakeholder video content which can be repurposed to benefit the Island as a whole". That's it in a nutshell."

The Wight Brand film called The Island is a culmination of two years of dedicated filming across the Island. Supported by ten founding partners, including Spence Willard, WightFibre, Vestas, and the National Trust, it showcases the full spectrum of island life, from innovation in manufacturing to stewardship of the environment. The hour-long documentary is more than a highlight reel; it's a narrative arc that reflects the Island's layered identity. "It's not really a year in the life of the Island," Steve says, "but it spreads a story, a narrative that links and connects all of our different partners in a way that's easy to watch and digestible."

And there's an urgency to this story. Despite the Island's known charm as a tourist destination, much of its innovation has flown under the radar. "People just don't know this about the Island, how amazing it is, with a legacy of engineering, from

hovercraft and wind turbine blades to electric vehicle design. Alongside the beauty of the island, you've got this thriving entrepreneurial community of people doing incredible things." The project's collaborative spirit has been its defining trait. As Steve puts it, "It's not about exclusivity, it's about inclusivity. This is the opposite of silo marketing. It's collaborative working between companies, creating added value that benefits us all."

One key innovation is the reuse of content. Each participating business receives custom video content to support their marketing. But behind the scenes, that same footage is repurposed to tell broader stories: of education, environment, entrepreneurship, and heritage. "We've ended up with this amazing archive of footage that can promote the Island in many different ways."

Steve is currently building the Wight Brand YouTube channel, and its launch will coincide with the official premiere of the Documentary film in early October, which will play host to over 250 guests, from partners to island dignitaries and press. "It's a feel-good film. A positive story that reflects who we are."

This first edition, which Steve calls White Brand v1, has been a learning experience. Looking forward, he envisions a second cycle with even more emphasis on social media content, behind-the-scenes snippets, and encouraging the participation of the next generation of island filmmakers. "There's almost an infinite number of stories to tell about the Island, and hopefully, once businesses see what we are doing, they too will want to be a part of it. I'd love to do more"

The brand's YouTube channel will be the central hub, offering on-demand access to the full body of content. "You'll search 'Isle of Wight' on YouTube, and up will pop The Wight Brand. That's how people will discover us." Ultimately, the project isn't just about video; it's about vision. "It's all about showcasing the Island at its very best and getting our story out there to a global audience." And if the response so far is any indication, the Island is ready for its close-up. ■

www.youtube.com/@wightbrand



WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO AT THE CHAMBER



Summer brought fresh opportunities to connect and collaborate, and the Chamber took members to new venues. Chamber members enjoyed a fantastic breakfast event at the Isle of Wight Steam Railway and a networking ride on a heritage steam train. Later in June, Chamber members were joined by the Benedictine Monks for an afternoon cream tea in the beautiful grounds of Quarr Abbey.

In July, members were treated to brunch at Richmond's Coffee & Cake Co. in Newport. The smells of fresh ground coffee were the perfect start for a morning of business pitches in a private room, while August hosted the Chamber at the first event in The Heron's new Smokehouse restaurant at Robin Hill.



The Chamber was also honoured to host Sarah Howard, Chair of the British Chambers of Commerce, during her visit to the Island. Her itinerary featured stops at prominent Island businesses, including IOW Tomatoes, The Garlic Farm, Mermaid Gin, and Adgestone Vineyard. She dined with the Chamber's Silver Patrons at Robert Thompson's Café Grill - experiencing the rich diversity of quality local produce, and why the Island is becoming a travel destination for foodies – read more on page [insert].



The academic year finished with a celebration of the Island's young talent. The Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce wrapped up a busy week of education-focused events, reinforcing the Island's dedication to nurturing local talent. A key highlight was the Youth Trust's innovative reverse interviews, where young adults interviewed business professionals. The outcome was impressive, and three individuals secured valuable work opportunities from a single session.

Elsewhere, the Education, Careers & Business Summit showcased the role of the Island Careers Partnership in connecting schools, families, and employers. Brightbulb Design's 'BrightStart' initiative further illustrated how businesses can inspire and empower the next generation. The week concluded with the Isle of Wight College Awards, honouring top achievers across all disciplines and celebrating the Island's rising stars.



In addition to local events, the Chamber continued to build connections beyond the Island. At the Utilita Bowl, the home of Hampshire Cricket, the Island was represented by the WRS, Cherry Godfree, and the Chamber. From the Shane Warne Stand, overlooking Hampshire Vs Nottingham, the Island made an impact on an event with national reach. Strengthening ties with Solent-area partners and exploring opportunities for Island businesses on the mainland.

From education to enterprise, networking to national recognition, the past few months have reflected the Chamber's commitment to driving growth, innovation, and creating real value for members.

To explore upcoming Chamber events and opportunities, visit:

www.iwchamber.co.uk/event-directory ■





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STRINGS

PUTTING THE ISLE OF WIGHT ON THE UK MUSIC MAP

Island Business Magazine sat down with Claydon Connor and Andy Booth, the musicians-turned-entrepreneurs behind Strings Bar & Venue in Newport. With a growing national reputation and a deep commitment to local talent, we talked about how Strings came to life, what drives their success, and where they're heading next.



Q: Can you tell us about your musical backgrounds and how that led to the creation of Strings?

Claydon: "We're both musicians and products of Platform One College of Music. When I left, I opened a recording studio in Northwood. Then, in 2017, a couple of us opened Strings. So, we're now eight years in."

Andy: "We both played in bands locally. I moved off-Island for a while, worked with a few record labels and music companies, then came back to Platform One to teach. I joined Claydon officially in April 2024, so just over a year ago now."

Q: What kind of changes or progress have you seen since you began working together full-time?

Claydon: "We're both very driven, and with Andy coming on board, we've really been able to grow the business faster than we thought possible. It's been a great combination."

Andy: "I'd been booking acts for Rhythm Tree Festival, so I already had relationships with agents and bands. Now we've combined our networks, and it's opened up opportunities to bring big acts here that the Island hasn't seen before."



Q: You were recently mentioned by BBC 6 Music. How did that come about, and what was the reaction?

Claydon: "That was Steve Lamacq, actually. I think his partner has family on the Island, and he came to see The Bluetones here. He told us afterwards that he hadn't expected to find a venue like this on the Isle of Wight. He sees so many venues across the UK and was really impressed."

Andy: "We've seen him a few times at music industry events now, and he's always been really supportive. He's such an advocate for grassroots music, so it's a big deal to get a nod from him."

Q: What would you say is the core ethos or mission behind Strings as a venue?

Claydon: "We want to give people an experience they can't get anywhere else. We always say Strings is run by musicians, for music lovers. It's not about one genre, it's about quality, variety, and passion. Post-COVID, people crave live music more than ever, and we're trying to meet that demand."

Andy: "Supporting local talent has always been a big part of what we do. There wasn't anywhere for young bands to play original music before Strings. We're filling that gap."

Q: Do you still have strong links with Platform One and the Island's younger musicians?

Claydon: "Absolutely. Platform One uses the space every week for workshops and student showcases."

Andy: "We also host their Saturday Rock School gigs for 12 to 16-year-olds. They've sold out every time. It gives those kids proper stage experience and inspires them to pursue music further."

Q: For Islanders who can't always get to the mainland, how important is it to have access to top-tier live music here?

Claydon: "It's a huge deal. Travelling off the Island for gigs is expensive and inconvenient. People often say, 'Thanks for bringing that band here, we'd have had to go to London otherwise.'"

Andy: "And it works both ways. We've had fans come to the Island just for shows. When we hosted Six60, a band from New Zealand, we had people travel from Dubai, Europe, and Scotland. 80% of that audience was from off-Island. It was amazing."

Q: What new ventures or plans are in the works for Strings?

Claydon: "We're currently preparing to launch our first outdoor music event at Robin Hill this September, which represents a strategic step into broader event programming. It's part of a long-term goal to diversify our offering and explore new revenue streams, without compromising the quality or intimacy that Strings is known for. And we've announced a new partnership with BBC Introducing Solent that will bring rising stars of the southern music scene to the Isle of Wight. It's called Sounds of the South, and we'll have monthly live events, offering audiences the chance to hear some of the most talked-about emerging artists from across the region."

Looking further ahead, we're exploring the potential for a second site. But for now, our focus is on strategic growth, expanding our influence in the live music industry while

maintaining a financially resilient core business. It's about building on our momentum sustainably and smartly."

Q: Finally, how are you making sure Strings stays relevant and inclusive for all music lovers on the Island?

Andy: "We're always looking to offer something for everyone, across genres and generations. From daytime parties to niche music nights, we're keeping things diverse."

Claydon: "And we're part of the national scene now. Bands and promoters see us as a serious venue. We're helping to put the Island on the music map, not just for festivals, but as a year-round destination for live music."

To see what's on: www.stringsbarandvenue.com ■

IWChamber BUSINESS EXPO 2025

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One of the standout moments of the year was Expo '25 sponsored by WightFibre, the Chamber's flagship networking event. Under sunny skies, hundreds of businesses, their customers, and the public came together to showcase products, services, innovations, and to network. Lifeline Systems and PC Consultants transformed their stand into a tropical beach and treated attendees of the hot tent to ice creams from their beach hut. Snow's BMW made the journey across the Solent and displayed the new generation of cutting-edge electric vehicles, proof of the Island's successful business community, which draws attention from mainland firms. Aside from the usual pens and mug giveaways, Nosy had a stand full of plants to take home and nurture, whilst Eldridges had the most popular freebie of the hot day – a fan. The marquee was filled with chatter and laughter, and the day, with positivity.

Photography: The Media House
and Nosy Creative Agency





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Main sponsor WightFibre's CEO John Irvine was delighted with the day, "The team at WightFibre is thrilled to have been a part of the successful 2025 Chamber Business Expo. It was an incredible opportunity to connect with local businesses and showcase WightFibre's commitment to making the Isle of Wight one of the best-connected places on the planet. We look forward to continuing our support and collaboration again next year."

And outgoing Chamber CEO Steven Holbrook echoed John's words, saying, "This year was our biggest event yet, and the energy showed it. The support from our sponsors WightFibre, Biscoes, and Meridian 3, the fantastic turnout, and the incredible hospitality from our hosts have been second to none. The momentum is undeniable, and as demand continues to grow, we're committed to evolving, expanding, and making next year's event even more impactful."

CHARLIE PANAYI

A MARKET OF MISSION AND MOMENTUM



Charlie Panayi doesn't do average. As CEO of Red Squirrel Property Shop, he's as likely to be seen trekking up Mont Blanc for charity as he is negotiating house sales on the Isle of Wight. But whether he's scaling mountains or market share, one thing is constant: a purpose-driven ethos that defies the conventions of the estate agency world.

"We started Red Squirrel because of estate agents," he says with a wry smile. "We knew there was a better way to do it: honestly, transparently, and with real community involvement. That's still our mission."

Despite a national narrative of sluggish housing markets, Charlie paints a more nuanced picture of the Isle of Wight's current property landscape. "It's inconsistent, but that doesn't

mean it's bad. People keep saying the market's dead, but sales across the UK are up 6.5%, and even here we're seeing a rise of just under 3%."

The key, he says, lies in pricing. "If homes are priced correctly, they're selling. We've had our best-ever first half of the year at Red Squirrel. But the higher end of the market, properties above £450,000, is more turbulent. That's partly due to people returning to office-based work, but also because of local policy decisions, mostly the controversial 100% council tax on second homes. It's pushing people out, even those who were spending more time here than in their 'primary' residences. That kind of short-sighted decision affects supply and demand across the board."

The local rental market, meanwhile, remains fiercely competitive. "There are about 90 rental properties listed each



month, and if ten landlords exit because of new legislation, that's a huge hit. It's still cheaper than the South Coast, but prices have risen sharply, from £450 for a one-bed flat to £775 in six years. It's not easy for tenants." Government regulation changes are adding pressure. "Some landlords are just saying, 'Forget it, I'll put my money elsewhere.' But that's dangerous. Fewer rentals mean more housing insecurity, so there needs to be collaboration between tenants, landlords, and the council. Everyone wins when we work together."

It's this big picture thinking that's shaped Red Squirrel's growth. Over the past year, the company has expanded by acquiring letting agencies and building a dedicated team for international markets like Dubai. But growth, for Charlie, is not just about profit. "Our model is twofold. One: improve service so more people get the outcome they deserve. And two: the more we grow, the more we can give back."

That giving back is no small side project. From monthly charity days to year-round fundraising, Red Squirrel's community footprint is hard to miss. "We support everything from Mountbatten to Wight Brainy Bunch to UKSA. We're getting better at talking about it, but we've been doing this every year, quietly, for a long time."

This year alone, Charlie has completed a 30-mile weighted walk, a 60-mile bike ride, and summited Mount Toubkal, all in support of Zoe's Law, which commemorates his sister who died from melanoma in 2020, and local hospice care. In August, he summited Mont Blanc for charity, and in September, he'll climb Slovenia's Mount Triglav and host the Zoe's Law Ball, which is already sold out. "If we sell or let a 100 more homes, imagine what else we can do for the Island. That's the goal, not just more sales, but more impact. If we make a pound, how can we use it to give back to the community? That's always in the equation." ■



BRITISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE VISIT

The Island's success was showcased for a very special visitor. Chair of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), Sarah Howard, visited to explore the Island's unique business landscape. The high-profile visit offered an opportunity to highlight local innovation, sustainable practices, and global ambition.

The Island's success was showcased for a very special visitor. Chair of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), Sarah Howard, visited to explore the Island's unique business landscape. The high-profile visit offered an opportunity to highlight local innovation, sustainable practices, and global ambition.

The British Chambers of Commerce represents thousands of businesses across the UK, with local Chambers acting as the link between the Island's organisations and national government. For Island businesses, the visit underscored the importance of that connection - and how the BCC can support growth, advocacy, and visibility on a larger scale.

Sarah's journey began with a crossing on HoverTravel's Island Flyer. As the only year-round commercial hovercraft in the world, it was certainly a novelty for those who don't visit the island regularly. Sarah was met by the Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce team: CEO Steve Holbrook, Carl Joyce, and Richard Winter, with an electric vehicle supplied by Leslies Toyota.

The busy itinerary began in Arreton, hosted by Isle of Wight Tomatoes. Business Manager, Daniella Voisey, provided insight into the challenges facing growers across Europe, and how the business is embracing innovation to position its premium British produce on the global stage. From the stalls of farmers' markets to the shelves of high-end international retailers, including Waitrose Dubai, their trajectory shows what's possible for Island exporters.



This was the perfect start before the delegation enjoyed lunch at The Garlic Farm, where Director Barnes Edwards spoke about the business's success, the broader challenges rural enterprises face, and the issues created by government policy. A farm tour highlighted their ethical and sustainable practices, including B Corp and Pasture for Life certification. The former ensures a company's high social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability. Pastures for Life ensures that their herds are fed exclusively on crops grown on the farm.

"Each generation is now bringing some unique to the business and seeing it blossom," Sarah said. "The care they take of their land and the technical innovation were truly inspiring".

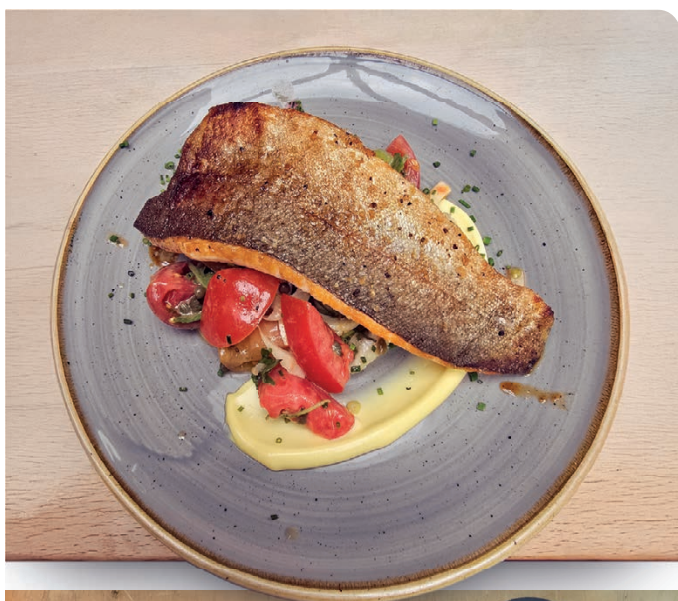
The afternoon brought a change in pace and palette at Isle of Wight Distillery. Co-founder, Malcolm McClellan, guided the group through a tasting of the award-winning Mermaid Gin range. Raising a glass to Mermaid's 10th anniversary, he shared the distillery's origin story, from American adventure to international acclaim, and led a behind-the-scenes tour of the distillation process. The experience concluded with cocktails at the on-site bar, including what Malcolm proudly declared 'the best ever Espresso Martini' using Mermaid Salt Vodka.

As the sun set, Sarah headed to Robert Thompson's Café Grill for a private dinner with the Chamber's Silver Patrons. Against the backdrop of the Solent, Sarah delivered a keynote reflecting on the evolving state of British business, offering national context to the Island's entrepreneurial spirit. A six-course tasting menu, featuring tuna sashimi en croûte and rare roast beef sirloin, perfectly captured the Island's culinary excellence.

"The Island is a hidden gem of British produce that we [the BCC] should all be shouting about".

The visit continued the next morning at Adgestone Vineyard, where owners Russ and Philipa introduced Sarah to their award-winning winemaking. A tour of the vineyard concluded with a celebratory toast of their signature Something Blue sparkling brut, marking the end of a visit that was as insightful as it was inspiring.

New Chamber CEO Rob Johnson said, "Sarah experienced the flavours, and potential, of our Island's home-grown business. Given more time, there was so much more we could have introduced her to". ■



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Cowes Week BBQ



One of the highlights of the summer social calendar, the Cowes Week BBQ sponsored by Red Squirrel at the Island Sailing Club ticks all the informal networking boxes.

With Mermaid Gin, an open bar, and a delicious buffet menu of locally sourced produce and meat, members enjoyed racing and sunshine from one of the best vantage points in Cowes.



CHAMBER CHATS

It's time for a chat. Those words may sound serious, but in truth, Chamber Chats is the ideal informal setting to find out more.

Designed as an open, informal drop-in session, Chamber Chats offers both members and non-members a relaxed environment to engage with the Chamber and one another - no appointments, no fees, and no pressure.

UPCOMING CHAMBER CHATS WILL BE HELD ON:

- 11th September
- 2nd October
- 16th October
- 30th October

No need to register – just drop in, grab a coffee, and start a conversation.

Held at the Chamber's headquarters at Branstone Business Park, these two-hour drop-in/drop-out sessions take place in the conference room and are open to all. Complimentary hot drinks help set the tone for an approachable, professional space where participants are encouraged to share ideas, ask questions, and form new connections.

The initiative supports the Chamber's core mission of facilitating connection and collaboration within the business community. Attendees have the opportunity to meet the Chamber team without the time pressures of larger networking events. Whether you're considering membership or are already a part of the Chamber, Chamber Chats provide a valuable opportunity to learn, network, and engage.

Crucially, the sessions are also helping to bridge the gap for non-members, many of whom are now choosing to join after

experiencing the Chamber's open-door approach. For those new to the organisation, these sessions serve as a friendly introduction before attending more formal events, helping to ease newcomers into networking with familiar faces and early relationships.

Existing members are also finding new value in Chamber Chats. The space has become a practical meeting ground for professionals across industries, fostering collaboration and building relationships outside of the usual networking calendar.

"These sessions are about accessibility and making the Chamber available to its members. The most common question is 'how can I get more involved in the Chamber?'" said Richard Winter, Business Development Lead at the Chamber. "We're seeing results, membership is growing, and participants, both new and existing, are telling us how useful they find this space." ■

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

IOW Lottery announces £5,000 winner

The summer £5,000 winner of the Isle of Wight Lottery has been revealed.

Only last month, the Isle of Wight Lottery revealed the annual £10,000 winner. Now it has announced the summer £5,000 winner.

Patrick O'Connor has only been playing the Isle of Wight Lottery since September 2024, and today he was presented with the cheque for £5,000. "I'm absolutely speechless! We're going on a family holiday on Friday, so we're really going to enjoy ourselves now", said Patrick.

WightFibre entered Patrick into the Isle of Wight Lottery as a benefit of his work, and to further support the Island. By playing the Isle of Wight Lottery, WightFibre, and all the other players are supporting the Island and its economy. The Isle of Wight Lottery creates Island jobs by providing 0% loans to Island businesses and start-ups, which in turn supports the economy and local families.

Since its inception in 2001, the Isle of Wight Lottery has helped to create

450+ jobs and loaned over £1,300,000 to local organisations.

Every week, Isle of Wight lottery players have the chance to win £1,000 and ten chances to win £100. Island businesses can get involved by offering lottery numbers to their staff through the Payroll scheme, just like WightFibre.

Megan Barrett, of the Isle of Wight Lottery, "It's such a treat - the Isle of Wight Lottery team are overjoyed for Patrick. What a great start to their family holiday".

Richard Winter of the Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce added, "A huge thank you to WightFibre, and all the weekly lottery players. Their continued support of the Isle of Wight Lottery means the Chamber can continue to offer loans and training to local businesses. It made my week seeing Patrick collect the £5,000 cheque."

Once Patrick gets back to the Island, he says that it is his wife's birthday in August, and he intends to use the winnings to treat her. ■

Richard Winter left, presenting the cheque to Patrick O'Connor



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Chamber Chat: Meet the Chamber

Thursday 11 September, 28&16&30 October 2025

IW Chamber of Commerce Office, Branstone Business Park
10am-12pm

IW Chamber members – FREE

Non-members – FREE

The Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce invites you to meet the team at our office at Branstone Business Park.

Every other Thursday the Chamber is opening its door to members to connect, discuss membership, and ask questions in a casual drop-in session.

Not yet a member? You're invited to drop in and discover the value of professional networking and explore how Chamber membership can support your business growth.

Booking not required – just drop in!

Networking Breakfast at The Heron Smoke House at Robin Hill

Friday 5 September 2025

Wildheart Animal Sanctuary, Sandown
7.30am – 9.00am

IW Chamber Members – £18 per person

Non-Members – £36 per person

Join us for an excellent networking opportunity at the Wildheart Animal Sanctuary, in the newly built bear facility, with a hot breakfast and a great start to the business day, networking with other Chamber members

Networking Brunch at Pinnacle Suites

Wednesday 10 September 2025

Pinnacle Suites, Cowes

9.00am – 11.00am

IW Chamber Members – £20 per person

Non-Members – £40 per person

An ideal opportunity for informal networking at Pinnacle Suites. If you're new to networking, our Brunch is the perfect way to get connected with like-minded business people. Attendees will all get the chance to give their minute-pitch to the room at this event.

After Brunch, attendees will have the opportunity to take a tour of the hotel.

Coffee and Cake Networking

Wednesday 17 September 2025

Caffe Isola, Newport

3.30pm – 5.00pm

IW Chamber members – FREE

Non-Members – £10

Join us for free, informal networking and a superb way to meet other members. A mid-week, late afternoon opportunity to catch up with other members over hot drinks and something sweet.

Casino Night at Snacks & Ladders

Friday 26 September 2025

Snacks and Ladders, Newport

7.00pm – 10.00pm

IW Chamber Members – £30 per person

Non-Members – £50 per person

Join us for a night of fun at Snacks and Ladders!

We're excited to invite you to a glamorous evening hosted at Snacks and Ladders, where the team from Shuffles will be setting up roulette and blackjack tables for some friendly competition.

Please note: there's no real gambling involved, each attendee will receive "fun money" on arrival to use at the tables.

This is a black-tie event, so it's time to dust off your tuxedos and party dresses!

Your ticket includes a welcome drink, and the bar will be open all evening for you to enjoy.

Come along for a memorable night of entertainment, games, and great company and networking!

Networking Breakfast at The Fishbourne

Friday 3 October 2025

The Fishbourne, Fishbourne

7.30am – 9.00am

IW Chamber Members – £18 per person

Non-Members – £36 per person

Join us for an excellent networking opportunity at The Fishbourne, with a hot breakfast and a great start to the business day, networking with other Chamber members. We will be sitting outside for this event if the weather is fine.

Networking with our Neighbours

Tuesday 14 October 2025

Solent Views, Hovertravel, Ryde

11.45am – 1.45pm

IW Chamber Members – £17+VAT per person

We are delighted to invite you to join us at Hovertravel, for the unmissable cross-Solent networking session: Networking with the Neighbours.

Hosted in collaboration with Hampshire Chamber of Commerce, this is a great opportunity of new contacts in a short time, expand your business, and most importantly, have a blast while doing so!

This is a new event for IW Chamber, but has been a success for Hampshire CoC when they have worked with other neighbouring Chambers. We aim to bring together companies from all sectors and sizes to enable them to explore new business opportunities and provide many new contacts. This event will offer you the opportunity to network with likeminded businesspeople across the two counties over networking and the unmissable opportunity to tour the ins and outs of a hovercraft, provided by the Captain!

Come along and give it a try; bring plenty of business cards for sharing and make sure to arrive nice and early... You won't be disappointed!

Spaces are limited, email Carl.Joyce@IWChamber.co.uk

BOOK YOUR PLACE NOW!

Networking Breakfast at The Seaview Hotel

Friday 7 November 2025

The Seaview Hotel, Seaview

7.30am – 9.00am

IW Chamber Members – £18 per person

Non-Members – £36 per person

Join us for an excellent networking opportunity at The Seaview Hotel, with a hot breakfast and a great start to the business day, networking with other Chamber members.

Booking coming soon!

Business Lunch with The Bank Of England

Thursday 13 November 2025

Isle of Wight College, Newport

11.30am – 2.00pm

IW Chamber Members – £20 per person

Get the inside track on the UK economy from the Bank of England, as we welcome guest speaker Florence Hubert for our annual IW Chamber briefing. Florence will outline projections for economic growth and inflation as well as taking

questions from members. Make the most of this exclusive opportunity to hear expert insight into economic policy at the UK's central bank. Our 2 course lunch will be prepared by the talented professional cookery students at the Isle of Wight College. Booking coming soon!

Networking Brunch at Isle of Wight College

Wednesday 19 November 2025

IW College Restaurant, Newport

9.00am – 11.00am

IW Chamber Members – £20 per person

Non-Members – £40 per person

An ideal opportunity for informal networking at The Isle of Wight College. If you're new to networking, our Brunch is the perfect way to get connected with like-minded business people. Attendees will all get the chance to give their minute-pitch to the room at this event.

Our brunch will be prepared by the talented professional cookery students at the Isle of Wight College.

Booking coming soon!

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Thursday September 25th – 9.30am – 4.00pm

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Thursday November 20th – 9.30am – 4.00pm

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IW CHAMBER PRESIDENT

Reflecting on Three Years of Progress

By Jonathan Thornton, IW Chamber President

As I come to the end of my three-year term as Chamber President, I'm struck by just how quickly the time has flown. It's been an immense honour to serve and support the Island's business community, a role I've always felt deeply passionate about.

From the outset, my goal was simple: to help showcase the incredible talent and diversity of Island businesses. And that mission has never wavered. Whether through networking events, the Chamber Expo, or our increasingly prestigious Business Awards, I've had the privilege of seeing our events grow into cornerstones of the Island's business calendar. What's more, they've evolved into something far greater than dates in a diary; they've become powerful platforms for connection, celebration, and collaboration.

Of course, none of this happens in isolation. The strength of our Chamber lies in its people. Our members. Our wider business community. And of course, the Chamber team itself. I've been fortunate to work alongside an outstanding group, including people like Steven Holbrook, whose steady leadership over the past seven years has guided the Chamber through both challenges and change. As Steven steps down, we're fortunate to welcome Rob Johnson as the new Chief Executive, someone I know will carry the torch with energy and vision.

The team behind the scenes has also seen fresh faces join in recent months, bringing with them new ideas and perspectives. But what remains constant is our shared commitment: to be the voice of Island business, to stand alongside our members, and to continue building a strong, resilient local economy.

These past three years haven't been without challenges. The impact of COVID-19 was deeply felt across our business community. I witnessed firsthand the Chamber's response, which provided guidance, advocacy, and, above all, empathy. Many businesses are still navigating tough times, and I want to acknowledge that reality. Yet what stands out most is the resilience, the determination, and the unyielding spirit of our local entrepreneurs. It's in those moments of hardship that the true value of community becomes clear.

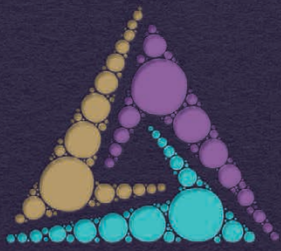
Throughout my tenure, one message has remained central: we are stronger together. The Chamber isn't just an organisation, it's a network. A collective of people who, by supporting each other, lift the whole Island. I've always believed in the power of showing up, of being open, and of sharing knowledge and support. That's what allows businesses not just to survive, but to thrive.

As I step back from this role, I do so with a heart full of gratitude for the experiences, the relationships, and the sense of shared purpose. I'll continue to champion the Chamber, and I encourage every member, new or long-standing, to stay engaged, stay vocal, and keep building this incredible community.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve. Here's to what comes next. ■

IW CHAMBER'S MISSION

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

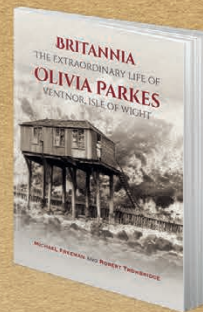


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