

Island Business

JANUARY | FEBRUARY 2026

features | interviews | articles | news
including Isle of Wight Chamber
member news and events

FROM COWES TO THE WORLD

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

I'm not sure if it's too late to wish you all a happy New Year, but what the hell! May 2026 bring you, your families, and your businesses all the successes deserved. This issue is jam-packed with successes, from award winners to companies onboarding new staff and apprentices, and an invitation to compete in the 200th Cowes Week Regatta. And talking of awards, IW Chamber Awards entries are open until the 30th of January, so get writing and let us see how your business has shone in 2025.

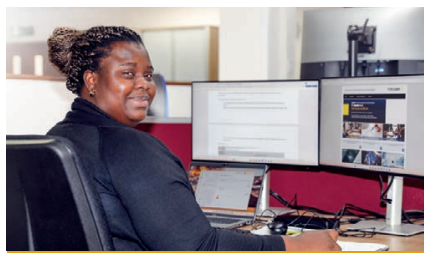
One of the things I love about this job is that I get to indulge my inner nosy self, meeting interesting people and getting to see behind closed doors. The doors of Yokogawa Marex opened, and I had an

amazing insight into how the company is growing its own talent, encouraging young people into apprenticeships and graduate programmes to boost the Island's talent pool, and provide unique opportunities. You can read all about it on page 10.

Having just clocked up my first year as editor of the magazine, I'd like to thank all of you who have sent in news, bought ads, contributed to features, and generally been super supportive. It's much appreciated. Let's move forward into a new year with more of the same. ■

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.

Developing legal careers on the Island

Eldridges Solicitors has reported strong early interest in its newly launched Careers in Legal Service Guide, a free 12-page publication designed to raise awareness of the wide range of legal careers available to Island students. Released in July, the guide has already gained the backing of schools, colleges, and recruitment agencies, prompting invitations for the firm to attend careers fairs across the Isle of Wight.

Associate Director Joni Ade, who led the initiative, said many young people "are not aware of the wide range of career opportunities" within legal services. She noted that the sector includes roles in administration and finance, as well as apprenticeship pathways starting at GCSE level. "Our guide highlights the opportunities available and encourages students to consider legal careers on the Island."

Copies have been distributed to secondary schools, colleges, independent schools, and organisations involved in career development. A digital version is available via the Eldridges' website, and printed guides will be handed out at events over the coming months.

Joni described the public response as 'amazing', confirming that a second print run was required to meet demand at events including the Island VI Form, Isle of Wight College, and the IOW Construction Group Roadshow. Eldridges is also offering work experience, internships, trainee solicitor roles, and solicitor apprenticeships as part of its wider commitment to supporting local career pathways. ■



25% Boost in education tourism

Education tourism on the Isle of Wight has risen by 25%, according to specialist school tour operator Education Destination, despite wider reports of falling summer visitor numbers and reduced tourist spending. The company says schools and colleges across the UK and overseas are increasingly choosing the Island as a cost-effective way to support curriculum learning and offer practical, fun educational experiences.

The Rookley-based operator also reports record forward bookings, with confirmed trips for 2026 already exceeding £1 million. Only limited availability remains for that year, and bookings for 2027 have begun. The growth is being driven by repeat visits and national marketing to more than 30,000 schools, promoting "great value trips that can't be booked directly or with other providers."

The rise in educational groups is providing year-round revenue for accommodation providers, attractions, shops, catering outlets, and transport operators, particularly outside the main summer season. Typical school stays have now increased to four nights.

Education Destination currently works with 30 accommodation providers and over 60 attractions, but says demand is at times exceeding capacity. Managing director Jon Carter said: "The Isle of Wight has clearly established itself as the premier destination for school trips," urging more providers to get in touch.

The company remains the Island's only dedicated school tour operator protected by ABTOT. ■

Lifeline strengthens commitment to fire and security excellence

Lifeline has strengthened its commitment to fire and security excellence, following significant investment in staff training and compliance across summer and autumn 2025. The company's fire alarm specialists have completed advanced training on the updated BS 5839-1:2025 standard, the benchmark for non-domestic fire detection and alarm systems. Delivered by industry-recognised trainers, the programme covered changes to the standard, system design, installation best practice, commissioning and maintenance, forming part of Lifeline's ongoing CPD-accredited development.

With over 35 years of industry experience, Lifeline remains one of the Isle of Wight's longest-established providers of electronic fire and security systems. The firm has built a strong reputation for tailored, compliant installations across businesses, heritage sites, and public sector facilities, earning two national awards for its work.

Managing Director Mark Lee said the latest training investment reflects the company's "unwavering commitment to specialist expertise" and determination to remain at the forefront of industry standards. "Fire safety and property security are not an add-on for us – it is our core mission. Clients trust us because we combine decades of experience with a professional approach and a high-quality 24-hour service that prioritises life safety and security."

Lifeline continues to focus exclusively on fire and security technologies, providing advanced detection systems, security installations, and integrated solutions designed to protect people and property. ■





Wight Brand supports charity AND asks for help itself!

On 20th November 2025, the Wight Brand, a project run by Steve Edmonds of island TV production company TVMI and supported by businesses across the Isle of Wight, presented a cheque to WightAID chair, Geoff Underwood, for £12,453 for funds raised through the Wight Brand Film Premiere Evening at Cineworld.

"We are delighted to have been able to help WightAID, which supports such a great range of charities across the Island. This donation is largely thanks to the generosity of our stakeholders, who are all passionate about our Island community." The Wight Brand is a video marketing campaign focused on helping promote the Isle of Wight as a great place to Live, Work, and Play. It brings together a range of high-quality video content that is viewable on its new YouTube channel.

"We have just finished building our new YouTube channel, but we need help to give it a kick start. So, we're asking everyone to visit the channel, and PLEASE SUBSCRIBE. This will help boost the profile of the channel and put the Island on the map. ■

Last chance to make your Green Impact pledge this New Year.



Island businesses- don't miss this unique opportunity to lead the way in sustainability and gain recognition for your efforts. The Green Impact Programme, fully funded by the Isle of Wight Council, is your chance to take meaningful action for our local environment and community while unlocking real, effective business benefits.

The deadline to submit your toolkit actions towards an award is 15th March 2026. Therefore, this is your final opportunity to join a programme that helps you cut costs, collaborate with your teams, improve efficiency, strengthen your reputation and network, and attract customers who value sustainability, all at no cost to you.

As part of Green Impact, you will also gain access to awards and networking events as well as workshops, including our Business Bid Writing workshop on 16th January. This session is perfect for learning how to secure funding and grow your business sustainably.

Act now, be part of a greener Isle of Wight and showcase your leadership in sustainability! ■

New Holi-inspired fundraiser

A new annual fundraiser supporting Mountbatten and the Dementia UK Admiral Nurses (IW) Appeal will take place at Lakeside Hotel on 7 March 2026, celebrating the spirit of Holi, India's vibrant festival of colours. Holi marks spring, love, new life, and the triumph of good over evil, recalling the stories of Holika and Prahlad and the love of Krishna and Radha.

Hosts Jessy and Arun Gulati, both recently retired from St Mary's Hospital, promise that while no coloured powders will be thrown, guests may choose a small token of colour on the forehead or cheek.

The evening opens with a spectacular classical Indian dance performance by Shree Dance Academy, followed by a 6.30 pm cocktail reception and 7.30 pm seating for a lavish three-course Indian meal. Guests can then enjoy Bollywood-style dancing, with a little English dancing mixed in.

A silent auction will raise further funds, and additional entertainments include henna painting and a photo booth with Indian headgear. Dress code is colourful or black tie, in either Indian or English style, guests can even mix and match.

"We hope this becomes an annual event," said Arun. "We want to support these two wonderful causes close to our hearts." Tickets are £80, including drinks, dinner, and all entertainment. ■



Keert named founding member of SUFA



Keert, the Isle of Wight's e-cargo bike delivery service, has been announced as one of 18 founding members of the newly launched Sustainable Urban Freight Association (SUFA), a national body dedicated to accelerating low-emission logistics across the UK.

Funded by Impact on Urban Health, SUFA brings together operators, suppliers, and innovators to promote cleaner, more efficient urban freight. The organisation aims to remove barriers such as inconsistent regulation, high start-up costs, and limited infrastructure while helping shape national policy for sustainable delivery.

Keert's inclusion recognises its pioneering role in community-based freight solutions. Operating solely with ultra-low-emission cargo bikes, the company has proven that clean delivery models can thrive even in mixed urban-rural environments like the Isle of Wight.

"Our values align perfectly with SUFA's mission," said Matthew Whittaker, Director and Rider at Keert. "Freight doesn't have to mean more pollution or congestion. Becoming a founding member allows us to share what we've learned on the island and help influence national change."

As part of SUFA, Keert will share operational data on emissions savings, payloads, and route efficiency to inform future UK freight planning. Its community work, reducing CO₂, improving air quality, and supporting local organisations, will also help guide scalable models for sustainable logistics nationwide. ■

Entries open in January for the Cowes Week Bicentenary Regatta

2026 marks an extraordinary milestone; 200 years of competing on the Solent, securing Cowes Week as one of the world's oldest and most iconic sporting events. The story began on 10th August 1826, when seven cutters gathered off Cowes Castle to race for a £600 gold cup, an event that sparked a sailing tradition that has captured imaginations around the world.

The Bicentenary Regatta will honour this remarkable past while delivering a refreshed, exciting experience for competitors and visitors alike. Expect a dynamic anniversary race programme, commemorative moments and exhibitions, with the return of some of Cowes Week's most loved traditions, possibly including Royal visits, Fireworks & Red Arrows. Shoreside Cowes Yacht Haven and Cowes Parade will come alive with live entertainment, food, drinks, family zones, and brand activations to make this year unforgettable.

Sailors eager to take part can submit their entries on the Cowes Week website, whilst spectators should mark the 1st–7th August 2026 in their diaries for what is set to be a spectacular week in Cowes.

This Cowes Week is more than a regatta; it's a rare chance to be part of a 200-year sporting legacy. ■



New UKPAC App frees up police time

A crime-fighting app supported by Police and Crime Commissioner Donna Jones has been launched. The UK Partners Against Crime (UKPAC) app, launched in June 2025, is also expanding to support pubs and clubs by enabling quicker reporting and information-sharing on barred or problematic individuals.

More than 540 businesses have already joined the platform, with their first year funded by the PCC. UKPAC allows shops and venues to submit incident reports and intelligence directly to police, reducing paperwork and enabling quicker action against prolific offenders.

PCC Donna Jones said, "This is

about tackling shoplifting and making communities safer. Thanks to UKPAC, over 66 offenders have been brought to court in the last six months, resulting in more than 45 years of prison sentences. Over 787 hours of police time have been saved, allowing officers to be out on the streets more. Our partnership with UKPAC is taking shoplifters off the streets and making our high streets and communities safer."

Following its success in retail settings, UKPAC's rollout into the night-time economy aims to help tackle issues such as drug dealing, violence, and drink spiking, supporting safer nights out for everyone. ■



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Freshwalks puts best foot forward into 2026

Isle of Wight business folk who are planning a fitness first New Year Resolution can book in for two Freshwalks early in 2026.

This year has been the first for Freshwalks on the Island and has proved a big success, according to organiser and businesswoman Claire Beasley. Open walks and Walks for Women have taken place in Bembridge, Wootton, Godshell, and West Wight. Claire said: "The Freshwalks concept has been warmly embraced by Islanders, and we have had some lovely strolls and great conversations. The walks offer a chance to get some fresh air and meet new people, and I am delighted the Isle of Wight has taken Freshwalks to its heart."

The walks are about 1.5 hours long, and there is always the opportunity to stay on after the walk to continue conversations in selected cafes or pubs. Next year, two business community networks are planned every month, between January and April; the second Fridays will be open walks and the last Wednesdays are Walks for Women. Other routes being planned for 2026 include Yarmouth, Seaview, Shalfleet, St. Helens, Chale, Bembridge, and Wootton. The cost is £18 including VAT and Eventbrite fees. ■

Meridian 3 invest in new machinery due to growing popularity of their products



Meridian 3 has recently invested in a Roland EU-1000MF flatbed printing machine to meet growing demand. The investment helped the company keep up with its custom jigsaw puzzle and notebook orders in the run-up to the busy Christmas period. Co-founder Barry Smith said "We purchased our first flatbed in 2021 when we decided to start producing personalised jigsaw puzzles. It immediately took off far greater than we expected, but we also decided to expand into producing other kinds of promotional products, like personalised notebooks". During their busiest times last year their workload got so high that they were working 24-hour days, so improving their capacity and productivity this year was a must!

Installed in early November at their Freshwater premises, the impact was noticeable straight away. Barry said: "We can print a lot more in one go and it's so much faster. It's increased our output significantly". The new machine is also helping with their line of wooden products, of which more of their B2B and B2C clients are finding the benefits. Barry continued "We're producing more and more of our wooden items, like medals, badges and key rings (they produce the name badges for Expo and some of you may remember the egg and bacon key rings they gave away there last year.) "It also gives us the potential to take us into new avenues – we can't wait to experiment with it!" ■

Vectis Radio wins four national Community Radio Awards



Newport-based Vectis Radio CIC scooped four national honours at the Community Radio Awards in Bradford, triumphing in every category for which it was nominated.

The station's acclaimed 4Ps Radio Training School secured two Gold Awards: Celebrating & Championing Community Radio of the Year and Community Impact Project of the Year. The Mid-Morning Show added a Silver Award for Specialist Content Show of the Year, while Vectis Radio also earned a Bronze in the coveted Station of the Year category, competing against more than 300 entrants.

Awards chair Rebecca Steers praised the achievements, saying: "As we celebrate 20 years of community radio, it has been fantastic to share and celebrate the sector's success." Station Manager Ian Mac credited the young people involved in the 4Ps programme: "Their success is what drives ours. None of this would be possible without their talent or the support of our funders. These opportunities simply wouldn't exist otherwise."

Training School Trustee Louise Gambling said the national recognition "cements the work the school does to build confidence among young people and adults through the magic of radio." Representatives from the Isle of Wight Council also praised the programme for offering vital skills, confidence-building, and inclusive opportunities for young people. ■



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WRS Celebrates national award win and new payments partnership

WRS has been named Business Enabler of the Year at the 2025 British Business Excellence Awards, while simultaneously announcing a major new partnership with Lloyds Merchant Services to deliver fully integrated payment solutions for hospitality and retail operators nationwide.

WRS won its national award at London's Grosvenor House Hotel, where judges praised the firm for redefining what business enablement means, helping companies operate more efficiently and deliver better customer experiences through its innovative POS technology. The ceremony, hosted by ITV's Ranvir Singh, celebrated outstanding UK businesses and highlighted WRS as one of the evening's standout successes.

Founded and headquartered in Newport, WRS has grown into a leading national provider of POS systems, supporting bars, restaurants, universities, ferry operators, retailers, and major brands, including Costa Coffee, Cornish Bakery, Southampton FC, Wightlink, and Red Funnel. Judges commended its customer-first mindset, continuous innovation, and long-term partnerships.

"This award is a tremendous honour for everyone at WRS," said CEO David Jackson. "We're incredibly proud of our Isle of Wight roots. Our growth stems from hard work, innovation, and a commitment to enabling our clients to thrive."

In a further boost to its national profile, WRS has announced a strategic partnership with Lloyds Merchant Services, one of the UK's leading payment providers. The collaboration will deliver an end-to-end POS and payment processing solution, offering businesses faster service, secure transactions, and a seamless customer experience. The integrated system is designed to scale from single-site traders to large multi-site operations.

"Our partnership with Lloyds Merchant Services strengthens our commitment to providing complete, future-ready solutions for our clients," said Tom Scovell, WRS Project Director. "By bringing together our leading POS technology with trusted payment services, we're helping operators deliver the seamless experience today's customers expect."

WRS currently processes over 100 million transactions per year across more than 5,000 UK sites, offering POS tills, back-office tools, and real-time dashboard reporting. The new partnership creates a shared route to market and opportunities for additional future solutions.

"We're thrilled to be working with WRS to launch a truly end-to-end solution that removes everyday pain points and delivers a one-stop platform that empowers growth," added Justin Schuil-Brewer, Head of Partnerships at Lloyds Merchant Services. ■



Winners all round at the Beautiful South Tourism Awards

At the Beautiful South Tourism Awards in December at The Grand Hotel, Brighton, two of the Island's hotels came away with top honours.

The Royal reconfirmed its position in the top 3 restaurants in the South of England for the 4th year in succession, despite stiff competition from across the region. In new ownership, the hotel has retained its unique four-silver-star AA hotel status and the 2 AA Rosette award for culinary excellence it has held for over 30 years. Its new, more relaxed Lunch menu and seasonal Dinner, Sunday Lunch, and Afternoon Tea menus feature the best of Isle of Wight produce.

Mohamed Bathich, owner of The Royal, said, "We are proud to have won in The Beautiful South's Restaurant of the Year category for a fourth year in a row. The dedication and skill of The Royal's kitchen team, led by Head Chef Jacob Gough, as well as our restaurant service team, continue to create highly memorable dining experiences daily for all of our guests."

There were prizes too for Luccombe Hotels, reflecting the team's commitment to making every guest feel at home, whether they have two legs or four, with directors Steve Wells and Clare Farrelly commenting, "We are absolutely over the moon to have been awarded bronze for Small Hotel of the year for Luccombe Hall and Gold for Dog Friendly Business of the year for Luccombe Manor in the Tourism Southeast Beautiful South Awards."

To be successful against such amazing competition stretching across Southeast England confirms how committed the entire Luccombe Hotels team is to ensuring our guests enjoy first-class experiences with us, whether they have 2 legs or 4!

We are also thrilled to see other island businesses and attractions so well represented and recognised for their industry-leading success, which helps raise the profile of our island as the destination of choice. ■



YOKOGAWA MAREX: GROWING GLOBAL TECH TALENT

In Cowes, behind an unassuming façade, sits one of the Isle of Wight's most globally connected and technologically advanced businesses. For many residents, Yokogawa Marex is one of those island mysteries; passed daily, rarely noticed. As Wayne Matthews puts it with a smile, "People have gone past our door many times and thought, what the hell do you get up to?"

What they 'get up to' is world-class industrial software development. Yokogawa Marex forms part of the Yokogawa Group, an 18,000-strong, Tokyo-based corporation with a turnover of \$4 billion. Their work underpins some of the most complex and safety-critical industries on the planet: oil refining, chemical plants, water purification, power generation, and increasingly, renewable energy.

At its core, the Cowes team develops ExaQuantum, advanced software that gathers and analyses vast quantities of live data from industrial processes. Temperatures, flow rates, tank capacities, safety system performance, and the intricacies of industrial life are captured, stored, and transformed into meaningful insights. With around 4,000 systems installed worldwide, Yokogawa Marex supports operations from Australia to the Middle East, making the island office a genuinely global hub.

The company's roots stretch back nearly 60 years to an era of marine exploration. Originally known as Marine Exploration, its early work involved designing offshore data buoys to help oil companies build safer rigs. Over time, the company developed expertise in handling telemetry and statistical analysis, skills that naturally evolved into industrial software development. Since being acquired by Yokogawa in 1997, Marex has become a centre of excellence for process information systems, firmly establishing the Isle of Wight as a home for high-tech innovation.

But running a global tech operation from an island comes with challenges, particularly when it comes to attracting experienced staff. "The island is a unique place in terms of trying to recruit people: relocating, schools, family commitments, there are barriers you don't get on the mainland."

Yet recent years have brought unexpected success, with several experienced professionals choosing to relocate and join the Cowes team. Even more transformative, however, has been the company's strategic investment in

Wayne Matthews – Divisional Director



apprenticeships. The apprenticeship programme began almost by accident. A young candidate interviewed for a role lacked the technical background but showed real promise. "We thought, would he be willing to do an apprenticeship scheme? He said yes and became the first one."

Recognising the value of 'growing their own', the company now runs a continuous three-year rolling apprenticeship scheme. Three apprentices, one in each year, learn hands-on alongside experienced developers, graduating into a structured graduate programme upon completion. The results speak for themselves. "Two of the biggest modules in our major release were done by two of our apprentices, and we're not scared to give them serious work." Beyond the immediate business benefits, the apprentices bring an energy that the whole team feels. "There's an energy amongst them; I remember when I started at 22, it's that vibe of being part of something."

Yokogawa Marex's commitment begins long before apprenticeship age. The company works closely with Island schools, offering careers events, industry insight days, work-experience programmes, and now T-Level placements with the Isle of Wight College. The aim is to build a genuine pathway: early engagement at ages 12–14, work experience, T-Levels, apprenticeships or internships, and finally the graduate scheme. Several current apprentices first stepped through the door as Year 10 work-experience students. The philosophy is simple: "Be the best you can be. If that's on the island, great. If it's off the island, great too. The most important person in that equation is them."

In a world where technology evolves rapidly, with AI being the current wave, continuous learning is essential. Yokogawa Marex dedicates around 5% of working hours to training and has previously won the Chamber Training and Development Award. "Can we afford to train people and they leave? Can we afford not to, and they stay?" Wayne says, echoing the well-known sentiment.

Yokogawa Marex may operate on the world stage, but its long-term success is rooted firmly in the Isle of Wight, its people, its culture, and its future talent. And thanks to a clear, authentic commitment to nurturing young people, the next generation of global tech innovators may very well get their start behind that mysterious door in Cowes. ■





KING'S AWARD

KING'S AWARD CELEBRATES INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP

The King's Award for Enterprise has been formally presented to HTP Apprenticeship College and the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, celebrating the success of a groundbreaking initiative that is transforming career opportunities for young people on the Isle of Wight.

Both organisations received the prestigious national honour for their joint Careers for Young People (CfYP) Programme, which was founded in 2022 as a partnership between the NHS and HTP. The scheme offers 16- to 18-year-olds a direct pathway into careers within the Island's health and care sector, including roles across the NHS. The programme won the King's Award for Enterprise in the Promoting Opportunity (through Social Mobility) category in 2025.

The official presentation took place in December at Newport Minster, led by HM Lord-Lieutenant of the Isle of Wight, Mrs Susie Sheldon. The citation was read by Deputy Lieutenant Mrs Claire Locke as invited guests, staff, and learners gathered to celebrate the achievement.

"It is a real honour to present these awards on behalf of His Majesty The King," said Mrs Sheldon. "The Careers for Young

People programme is a truly innovative example of social mobility. It's a real success story for the Isle of Wight, and everyone should feel very proud."

Learners who have progressed through the CfYP programme since its launch attended the ceremony, including some who have already moved into full-time employment in Island healthcare services. Apprentices Nell O'Brien and Roxy James addressed the audience, sharing how the programme has shaped their future.

Rachael Randall, founder of HTP Apprenticeship College, described the day as "the high point of HTP's 25th anniversary year," adding, "The CFYP clearly demonstrates that Apprenticeships are the route to great careers, and our Island young people have huge potential."

Nicola Longson, representing Hampshire & Isle of Wight Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, said the award marked a milestone for the whole partnership. "The idea for the CFYP was always to 'grow our own' and offer new opportunities for young people on the Island. These talented young people are already making a real impact. It's a win for everyone." ■



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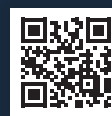
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AN AWARD WINNING 2025 AND 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS IN 2026

A Year of Incredible Recognition

It's been an outstanding year for the WightFibre team, with national and local recognition for our work, our service, and our commitment to the Island. From awards celebrating technical excellence to those recognising the difference we make in the community, it's been a year that highlights the dedication, skill, and passion of everyone at WightFibre.



Thank You!

We're incredibly grateful to our 28,000+ customers. Without your support, trust and feedback, none of this would be achievable. You help shape what we do and how we grow. Together, these awards celebrate not just the business, but the wider community that stands alongside us and inspires us to keep delivering worldclass full-fibre broadband to the Isle of Wight.

INCA Awards

At the INCA Awards we proudly took home two wins. Best Social Value and Customer Acquisition. A brilliant achievement for everyone working hard to bring full-fibre to our community.

ISPA Awards

Another huge highlight this year was being awarded Best Fibre Infrastructure and Best Rural ISP at the ISPA Awards. These national accolades recognise not just the technology we deliver, but the hard work and dedication of our fantastic team in bringing full-fibre broadband to every corner of the Isle of Wight. Being acknowledged on a national stage for the difference we make locally is incredibly rewarding and reinforces why we do what we do. Connecting our community with reliable, ultrafast and future-proof broadband is at the heart of everything we do. It means homes, schools, and businesses across the Island can work, learn, and stay in touch without interruption; helping people make the most of the digital world every day.

Isle of Wight Chamber Business Awards

We were thrilled to take home three awards which were:

- **Customer Service Award**
- **Creative Impact Award**
- **Business of the Year**

These awards are a real reflection of the hard work, passion and dedication of everyone at WightFibre. From our engineers and customer service team to the planners, installers and all the people working quietly behind the scenes, it's the combined effort of the whole team that makes achievements like this possible and keeps us moving forward.

Further Accreditation & Shortlists

- **Achieved ISO 14001 accreditation (August 2025)**
- **Awarded ICS ServiceMark with Distinction (Nov 2024–27)**
- **Finalists in two categories for the UK Customer Satisfaction Awards 2026**
- **Shortlisted in three categories for the Investors in People Awards 2025**
- **Awarded Investors in People Gold Award (March 2025) - Independent validation that WightFibre is a great place to work**

These accreditations and shortlisting's reflect the hard work of our team and our ongoing commitment to quality, service, and supporting the Island community.



Celebrating 25 Years of WightFibre

2026 marks a huge milestone for WightFibre as we celebrate 25 years of keeping the Island connected. What began as a small, local cable company has grown into a world-class full-fibre network reaching tens of thousands of homes and businesses, all while staying proudly rooted in the community we serve. To kick things off, we're rolling out our official 25-year campaign, celebrating our journey, our people, and the Island that made it all possible.

Explore the Journey

We're launching a brand new anniversary micro website featuring an interactive timeline that charts the full story of WightFibre. From our early cable days right through to today's Island-wide full-fibre network. It highlights key milestones, the people behind the progress, and some of the community moments that helped shape who we are. It's a simple, engaging way to look back at how far we've come and how much the Island's digital landscape has evolved over the past 25 years.

Spot the Stickers!

You'll start to see some of our vans sporting 25-year anniversary stickers as they travel around the Island. It's a small way to mark our milestone and celebrate 25 years of keeping the community connected. If you spot one, feel free to give the team a wave!

Special Offers & Giveaways

We're starting off the celebrations with a year full of exclusive 25-year treats. Throughout 2026, we'll be sharing special anniversary offers, competitions and surprise giveaways across our social channels. There'll be multiple chances to win some fantastic prizes. ■

WightFibre
because we care

ISLE OF WIGHT DONKEY SANCTUARY

There is a particular warmth that greets you at the Isle of Wight Donkey Sanctuary, part gentle bray, part human welcome. "It was like having a personal welcoming committee," one visitor recently remarked, and it's a sentiment that General Manager Stephen Tobitt hears often. For a free-to-enter sanctuary that relies almost entirely on public generosity, that warmth matters.

*New arrivals at the
Isle of Wight Donkey Sanctuary –
Gabby and Stephen Tobitt.*



A NEW CHAPTER FOR THE ISLAND'S DONKEY SANCTUARY



Stephen stepped into the role at the start of 2025, calling it 'A big learning curve, but such a brilliant organisation to join' as he swapped a career in finance and operations for the world of donkeys and community care. What he found was a sanctuary quietly thriving: 121 animals currently call the site home, including 106 donkeys, 12 ponies, a mule, and a horse, all meticulously cared for by a small staff and a roster of over 100 volunteers without whom the Sanctuary wouldn't be able to run.

While island tourism has struggled more broadly, the sanctuary has bucked the trend. "Our visitor numbers are comparable to 2024. In fact, September and October were up. Many visitors are local families drawn in by the affordability of a visit - free entry, free parking, and the simple joy of walking among donkeys. "You haven't got to worry about a £20 fee to get in. You can think, oh, we've got an hour to kill. Let's go and see the donkeys."

This sense of ease is intentional. The sanctuary has recently reshaped its visitor operations, including hiring a dedicated Visitor Experience Host, ensuring that every guest is met with genuine hospitality. It's an approach that pays dividends not just financially, but in community goodwill.

Beyond casual visits, the sanctuary has widened its social impact. More than 2,000 children a year now take part in structured educational programmes that explore donkey welfare, enrichment, feeding cycles, and environmental learning. The outreach doesn't stop there: therapy visits to care homes and hospices are becoming more frequent, delivered by the now-famous 'Donkey Bus'. "When a donkey rests its head in someone's lap, it's worth more than money," Stephen reflects. It's a reminder that while donkeys are hardy, humble animals, their emotional impact can be profound."

Perhaps the most significant development is the long-awaited new equine treatment centre, which broke ground before Christmas. Years in planning and now fully redesigned, the centre will transform the sanctuary's veterinary capabilities. From the outside, it will resemble a traditional barn, sympathetic to the Sanctuary's rural setting. Inside, however, it will house specialist spaces: quarantine and isolation pens, flexible partition buddy pens, a medical treatment room designed to be fully blacked out, and even a padded recovery chamber for donkeys emerging from anaesthetic.

At present, bonded donkeys often need to share treatment limitations

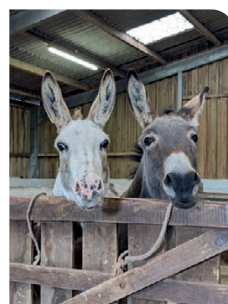


such as fasting, because they refuse to be separated. The new design solves this. "The patient donkey would be on one side and the buddy donkey the other. They can still see each other and comfort each other."

The project has been partly funded through a public appeal, raising over £125,000, all of which Stephen emphasises has been ring-fenced for its intended use. If all goes to plan, the centre will be operational by summer 2026, a transformative milestone for both staff and animals.

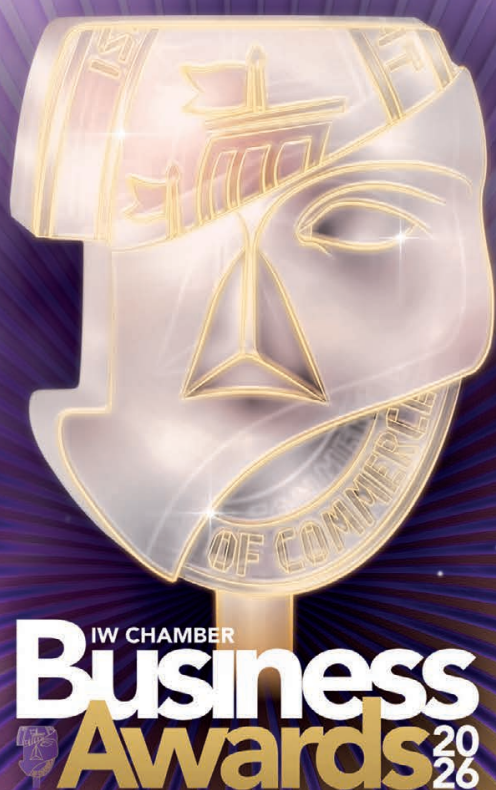
With the sanctuary's 40th anniversary approaching in 2027, Stephen hopes to use the moment to deepen Island-wide engagement. "It's such a great opportunity to celebrate an Island institution." Plans range from special events to a collaboration with the Isle of Wight Gin Company to create an anniversary flavour.

From its humble beginnings with a postman called Charlie taking in Dillon, a single unwanted donkey, the sanctuary has grown into one of the Island's most beloved spaces. Today, it is a place of refuge, education, connection, and increasingly, innovation. And as Stephen says, "on even the hardest days, you can go out and see the donkeys, and you can't not smile." ■



ENTER NOW!

FOR THE ISLAND'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS CEREMONY



It's that time of year again, time to reflect on how 2025 was for your business. Did you have a brilliant year? Do you have successes you want to celebrate? If the answer to those questions is yes, then you should be entering the IW Chamber Business Awards, entries for which are open now and close on the 30th of January 2026.

The awards will be judged by a panel of business experts who are wholly impartial and independent and will score businesses entirely on their submissions. There will be three categories, which, new for 2026, will be out for IW Chamber members' votes: Customer Service Award, Hospitality Business of the Year, and Tourism and Leisure Business of the Year. The vote for those categories will be open until the 28th of February 2026.

There will also be a new award: Young Entrepreneurship Award, sponsored by Joedan Windows & Doors. This award recognises outstanding young entrepreneurs (aged 14–30) on the Isle of Wight who have demonstrated entrepreneurial flair, innovation, initiative, and sustained growth. Judges will reward ambition, creativity, resilience, and real business impact. Entries should focus primarily on activity during the calendar year of 2025.

All entries must be received online, and before the deadline of January 30th. The shortlist will be published in March, when tickets will go on sale.



THE CATEGORIES IN FULL:

Start Up Business of the Year

Sponsored by PC Consultants

Young Entrepreneurship Award

Sponsored by Joedan Windows & Doors

Entrepreneurship Award

Sponsored by Red Funnel

Customer Service Award

Sponsored by RPL Construction

Community Award

Sponsored by Moore (South) LLP

Employer of the Year

Sponsored by Glanvilles Damant Legal Services

Training and Development Award

Sponsored by Yokogawa Marex

Environment and Sustainability Award

Sponsored by IFPL

Technology and Innovation Award

Sponsored by Lifeline Alarms

Tourism and Leisure Business of the Year

Sponsored by Visit Isle of Wight

Hospitality Business of the Year

Sponsored by Cherry Godfrey

Manufacturing and Export Business of the Year

Sponsored by GKN Aerospace

Creative Impact Award

Business Social Impact Award

Growth Business of the Year

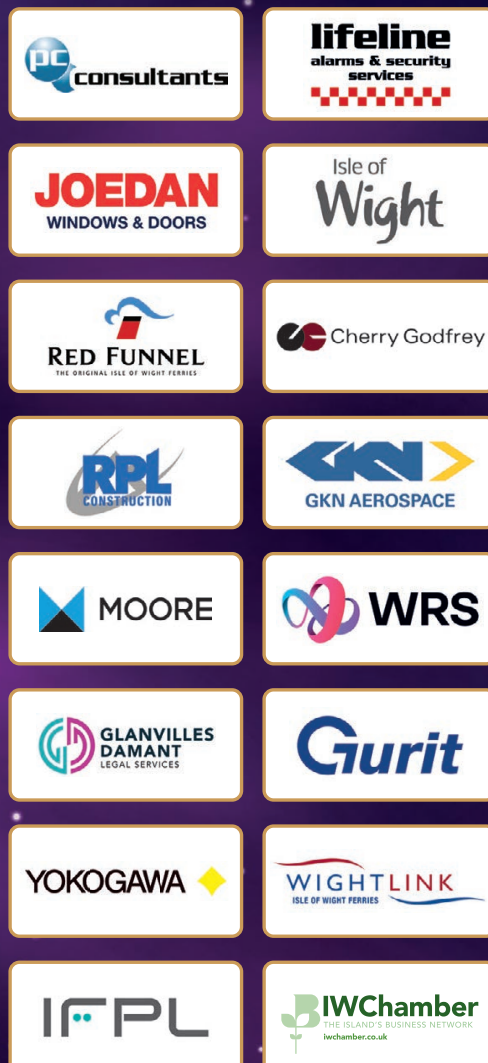
Sponsored by WRS

Micro Business of the Year

Sponsored by Gurit

Small Business of the Year

Sponsored by Wightlink



"Every year we bring the Island's business community together for its most anticipated gathering, and this year will be no different, says the Chamber's Chief Executive, Rob Johnson. "It's our moment to recognise and celebrate the exceptional achievements of the brilliant businesses based here on the Island. Being shortlisted is a significant accomplishment, and taking home one of these sought-after awards can be truly transformational.

We're looking forward to this year's awards, and the Chamber team is putting thoughtful care into every detail. While the event will look and feel different from past years, in all the right ways, it will continue to reflect the spirit and ambition of our business community. We've set the bar high before, and we're committed to raising it again with an experience that is welcoming and worthy of the remarkable people it celebrates."

Visit our website
for further details.

iwchamber.co.uk

Back in October 2025, at the Chamber AGM, new directors were appointed to the Board. We thought we'd introduce them all to you, new and old, ask them what they'll be bringing to those roles, and what their superpower is.



KATY TAYLOR:

CEO of Wightlink, balancing the needs of different people who all want Wightlink to provide something specific to them: customers, MPs, Island residents, employees, and investors.

My superpower is linking things together with a bias to action, so when everyone else is talking, I'm thinking about how we get something done!

SARAH CHATWIN:

Director and Chartered Surveyor, ERM, focusing on capital investment strategies that deliver real impact, underpinned by creative thinking and a longstanding commitment to the principles of the circular economy.

I connect the dots, bringing public and private partners together, de-risking procurement, and turning complex briefs into practical, deliverable outcomes. I thrive on creative problem-solving and champion sustainable approaches that unlock investment and deliver long-term value for communities.

MARK LEE:

Managing Director at Lifeline Alarm Systems Ltd, where I lead a team dedicated to protecting lives and property through innovative fire and security solutions.

My superpower is turning complexity into clarity. In a world full of regulations, risks, and rapid change, I have a knack for simplifying challenges and finding practical, actionable solutions. At the Chamber board, I hope to offer experience, clarity, and continuity, helping shape strategies that make a real impact for local businesses and our community.

DARREN TOOGOOD:

Editor and Publisher, Island Echo, rooted in the core values of community focus and entrepreneurial instinct.

Turning ideas into action, fast. I thrive in high-pressure environments, make decisions quickly, and know how to cut through noise to focus on what really matters. I'll bring that same energy, clarity, and digital know-how to the Chamber board.

MATT GREG:

Founder of NOSY, a purpose-driven creative agency.

I started my business on the Isle of Wight at 20, and I want more young people to know they can build something here, too. I'll bring that drive to the Board to help make the Island a more inclusive, entrepreneurial place to grow.

KAREN LUCAS:

Managing Director at Vikoma International Limited, an SME on the Island, manufacturing reliable and innovative oil recovery and environmental solutions and exporting worldwide.

I have a strong finance background, experience in business turnaround, and have completed two management buyouts and fundraising. I am passionate about keeping business on the Isle of Wight, developing the next generation, and taking steps to improve our impact on the environment and sustainability.

JONATHAN THORNTON:

CEO of Kings Award Winning Isle of Wight IT Company, PC Consultants.

I can deadlift a 1270kg Skoda Fabia, so I can lift the entire board table if needed.

MATT JEFFREY:

Managing Director of Brightbulb.

I bring new energy and innovation to the board. I'll be able to help articulate the Chamber's purpose, advocate for its mission, and energise others around me to develop and push the Chamber's strategy forward.

ALISON COLLEY:

Managing Director and Founder of Real Employment Law Advice and a Solicitor specialising in employment law and HR.

My superpower is looking at things objectively and finding solutions quickly, as well as providing ideas that may seem outside of the traditional approach. I bring to the Board clarity of complex issues, challenge traditional thinking, and propose fresh, actionable solutions so that the Chamber and Board stay relevant to its members and the changing business environment.

EMMA BRADLEY:
Director, Spence Willard.

Seeing and creating opportunities for business and community collaboration, combined with strategic and creative vision. I have seen firsthand when people and businesses work together, everyone thrives, and I hope to encourage even more of that spirit throughout the Chamber.

DOMINIC WRAY:
Managing director for Vectis Ventures and responsible for ensuring the continued growth and success of Blackgang Chine, the UK's oldest theme park.

I turn ideas into aligned action. I'm a connector and simplifier who listens carefully, finds common ground, and shapes clear, practical strategies that people can rally behind and deliver. I'll bring a growth lens grounded in what genuinely moves the needle for local businesses, a partnership-first approach that strengthens collaboration across sectors to unlock influence and delivery, and a focus on clarity, pace, and accountability so we stay centred on a few high-impact priorities with measurable outcomes.

FRAN COLLINS:
Chief Executive Officer of Red Funnel.

I bring a wealth of maritime experience and an infectious enthusiasm to every project I undertake. My strategic vision and dedication to fostering collaborative working relationships have been instrumental in driving Red Funnel forward. My superpower? Probably my ability to manage multiple tasks, but I'm also pretty good at baking gluten-free bread!

TRACY OSBORN:
Director of Fundraising and Operations, Quarr Abbey.

I am passionate about doing what's best for Chamber members and the Island to ensure it's a great place to work and live. My superpower is quite unusual... I can dance the Paso Doble to a professional standard. Strictly professionals – watch out! ■



CIARAN O'DONNELL



"Do you think a member of staff will say anything to us when we leave?"



Ciaran O'Donnell

THE RECURRING CUSTOMER

I'm having a coffee with a friend, and we've been talking about returning or recurring income. I've been listening to him share a challenge with his business. To date, most of his income has come from project work. At times, his business is stretched with one too many projects running in parallel. Between projects, he struggles with dips in income and cash for payroll and other payables. Perhaps there is another way to build a more resilient business?

The coffee in front of me is aromatic, and the room and setting have plenty of character. I wouldn't call myself a regular, but in the late afternoon, half the tables are taken, which reflects well on how they are trading.

However, I'm still curious if a member of staff will say something on our way out, only to make a point about building repeat or recurring relationships. This place has competition, just like most businesses. When I walked in, I was greeted politely with a smile, the coffee was served up with grace, and tasted great, but the final moment can plant a recurring seed.

"I'd be surprised if we get a 'Thanks – see you soon'. Imagine I get a 'See you tomorrow, Ciaran!'"

There is always an opportunity to let a customer know you value their custom and also make it repeatable. Be that a coffee, in retail, or a business-to-business sale. The start of a relationship is important. But how the relationship is managed can drive retention and loyalty. Are the two guys sitting by the window a one-off or a recurring opportunity?

Back to sipping my frothy coffee, our conversation moves to how he can build recurring revenues and relationships. Turn a new or existing

customer into a returning customer. Turn a returning customer into a recurring customer. Turn a recurring customer into a lifetime customer. It helps to be able to describe an ideal customer profile in detail (you might hear the acronym ICP) and target only them.

Recurring incomes can stabilise and boost the revenue line, the profit line, and bank balance. They can also boost a business valuation. In some sectors, a business's recurring revenues are valued at 3-5 times more than one-off revenues. Knowing your customer metrics adds value – for as long as you are running it (i.e., profits) or come the day you'd like to sell it (i.e., enterprise value). Recurring propositions still need to solve a recurring problem to create recurring income from recurring customers.

Our coffee cups are empty, and my friend's got a draft plan to migrate some of his existing customers onto a new recurring proposition. Just to test the water.

We zip up our coats before we head out into the sideways rain and late afternoon darkness. As I pull to open the door, I hear "Thank you so much!" from both ladies who are behind the counter in tidy-up mode. Natural and genuine. It makes me smile. I'd love for it to happen more often on this plot of land. It creates a lasting and recurring impression.

A question for you – how do you and your team think about starting or nurturing recurring relationships with your customers?

Ciaran is a finance director for startups. He's passionate about numbers, cash flow, and telling stories. He's lived on the Isle of Wight since 2015. ■

PRESERVING THE ISLAND'S PAST – BUILDING ITS FUTURE

by James Tregoning, Founder, WightLife

"I've worked in property for more than 20 years, and as much as I enjoy developing new spaces, I don't like to see our fields and farms being lost to new development when so many beautiful historic buildings in our town centres sit unloved and under-utilised. Not every property can or should be saved, and new building development will always have a place, but where we can restore and repurpose our historic built environment, we should.

Buildings are more than bricks and mortar. The places where we live, work, shop, and spend time with friends and family fundamentally shape our lives. In the same way that a safe and comfortable home is more than just a shelter, a thoughtfully designed workplace should be more than where we go to earn a living. And buildings don't just provide the backdrop to our stories; they have their own.

St Thomas' Chambers has stood in the heart of Newport for more than two centuries. It's Grade II listed and was originally built as a gentleman's residence, subsequently used as a school and, since the 1930s, as offices. When I first stepped inside, I knew its restoration was a project that I wanted to be involved with. Fate played a role. It sold to

another party at auction, but the sale fell through, and we didn't hesitate when the opportunity reemerged.

Our original plan was to return it to residential use. But the more we began to understand and appreciate the building and its period features, the more we started to realise that this was where we wanted to grow our business. So, we changed direction and set about transforming St Thomas' Chambers into our HQ, together with a boutique serviced offices for Island businesses.

We've removed stud walls and glass partitions, giving back the building its Regency proportions and sense of space and flow. We've exposed long-hidden features and significantly reduced the visual clutter that had made it hard to appreciate the building's historical character. But we're not creating a museum piece. The building needs to perform as a modern workplace. We've substantially rewired it, installed dedicated gigabit fibre broadband, creating flexible office suites that people can organise to suit their needs, and the building's improved energy efficiency.

We're not absentee owners. We work here too and, as with every building in our investment portfolio, we take a long-term stewardship approach. We've sought to create a high-quality environment where people enjoy coming to work, feel inspired, and can appreciate

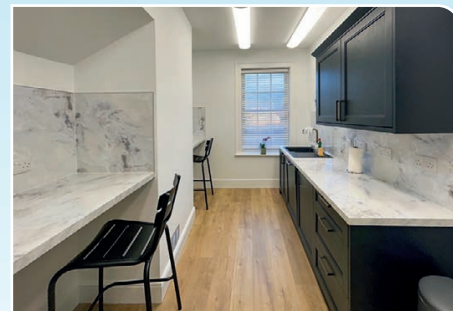
heritage as part of their everyday experience, not something to admire from afar. We've also made it easy to be here, with flexible terms and a simple all-in monthly fee.

Our first tenant has already moved in, and over the coming weeks, more offices will become available as we complete the internal refurbishment works. If you're upsizing, downsizing, looking for a workplace with character, or are just curious, please come and take a look. We'd love to show you around.

To find out more or to arrange a viewing, please get in touch with James or Megan (both WightLife Group) or Rebecca Wheeler (Wheeler & Lai Chartered Surveyors). ■

WightLife Group: 01983 684725 – info@stthomaschambers.com

Wheeler & Lai Chartered Surveyors: 01983 210335 – info@wlsurveyors.co.uk



CONNECTED: THE CHAMBER NETWORKING UPDATE

Richard Winter looks back at the last months of 2025 and ahead to a new year.

The Isle of Wight's business community welcomes 2026 with a renewed sense of ambition and celebration. After a winter marked by collaboration, local businesses are stepping into the New Year with focus and confidence. The Chamber is leading by example with fresh initiatives, new partnerships, and a schedule packed with networking events for 2026.

The last months of 2025 were as much about the festive traditions as they were about innovation for the future; the Chamber started with an insightful business lunch at The Isle of Wight College, where Florence Hubert of the Bank of England delivered a clear and timely assessment of the UK's shifting economic climate ahead of Rachel Reeves' budget. Against a backdrop of evolving forecasts and accelerating financial pressures, her analysis provided members with essential context for where the UK was, and where it is heading.

The following week, the IOW College continued the momentum when students hosted a networking brunch that quickly became one of the year's most memorable gatherings. A stunning menu and confident hospitality showcased the skills and professionalism of the Island's emerging talent, proving the ambition of the next generation.

In November, Chamber members were welcomed to breakfast networking at the Seaview Hotel for an event inspired by Talk Money Week. Ben Silk, of Rouse Financial Planners, encouraged employers to adopt practical, proactive approaches to financial well-being in the workplace. He emphasised the importance of open dialogue regarding pensions, tax-efficient schemes, and the benefits of long-term planning.

The festive season was launched with Coffee & Mince Pies, hosted by Caffè Isola. The relaxed gathering delivered early holiday warmth. There was a surprise opportunity for members, with a chance to meet Hampshire Police & Crime Commissioner Donna Jones, who shared details of a new crime-reporting app designed for businesses to instantly report community concerns.

The year drew to a close with a networking finale at the Royal Hotel, with elegant seasonal décor providing a fitting setting for celebrating 2025 together, and where even Santa put in an appearance. As attention shifted to 2026, the Ride x Drive showcase at the IW Chamber office, delivered with Solent Vehicle Leasing and Tesla, gave members hands-on experience with electric vehicles, while raising funds for WightAID.

Finally, the Chamber launched its first Quarterly Feedback Survey. We want to thank members for getting involved and assure you that the feedback has already begun to influence decisions made for events in the New Year. Donna, from Biscoes', entry was selected in the prize draw and will be celebrating Christmas with a bottle of Mermaid Zest Gin courtesy of the IW Chamber.

The next Quarterly Feedback Survey has gone live, scan the QR code to take part.

The Isle of Wight's business community begins 2026 with confidence, ambition, and an unwavering commitment to collaboration. Armed with strengthened networks, fresh initiatives, and a clear vision for growth, Island enterprises are set to make this a year of exciting achievements, pioneering ventures, and shared success, firmly establishing the Island as a hub of innovation and opportunity.



QUARTERLY FEEDBACK SURVEY

Scan the QR code or visit this link
www.tinyurl.com/2wwyp72x





BUILDING A PURPOSE-LED BUSINESS WITH HELP FROM THE IW LOTTERY

NOSY is a creative agency that has been part of the Island's business community for seven years. From newly opened offices in Newport, the team works across branding, websites, video, and campaigns, with a growing focus on supporting organisations that prioritise sustainability and ethical practice. This shift has shaped both the type of work they take on and the way the agency has developed internally.

The Isle of Wight Lottery Business Loans scheme played a valuable role at a point where the agency needed space to grow and adapt. The Lottery is well known on the Island for providing interest-free finance to local businesses. Since 2001, it has supported more than one hundred companies with over one million pounds of lending, helping to create or sustain hundreds of Island jobs. For NOSY, that track record mattered. It felt like a trusted, community-focused route to responsible financial support.

The interest-free structure was a key part of the appeal. For a small business, being able to borrow without additional costs makes a meaningful difference. It allows every pound to go into equipment, training, or infrastructure rather than being lost to fees. That clarity made the Lottery loans the right choice for the agency.

NOSY secured two loans in total, both of which have now been repaid in full. The funding helped the team invest



in new IT equipment, replace ageing hardware, and improve internal systems. It also supported staff development by making training more accessible during a period when the team was growing.

The loans were also important for a major strategic shift. Over the past three years, NOSY has moved towards working mainly with sustainable and ethical organisations. This decision reflected the team's values, although it required time, investment, and confidence to make it work. Developing a clearer niche meant refining services, introducing new processes, and accepting that some earlier clients would not remain a natural fit. The stability provided by the Lottery Loan helped the team focus on making the transition properly without compromising the quality of their work or delaying essential improvements.

Matt Greg, Founder of NOSY, said:

"Focusing our agency on sustainable and ethical work felt like the right move,

but it also required real commitment. The Isle of Wight Lottery gave us the confidence to take that step. The interest-free support helped us invest in equipment, training, and new systems at exactly the time we needed it. I would recommend the scheme to any Island business looking for a supportive and practical way to grow." ■



SIGN UP TODAY!

ISLEOFWIGHTLOTTERY.COM/JOIN-NOW

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.

THE IW LOTTERY'S LATEST 10K WINNER

It's brilliant to win something just before Christmas, a hamper perhaps, a box of Quality Street, or a bottle of fizz. But for Katharine Dancy, there was a bigger prize in store when she scooped the £10,000 December prize.

"I've played the Isle of Wight Lottery for the last 4 years. I like that you support island businesses and how much of a difference the funding makes! Winning means the world, and for me, it's a life-changing amount. I've had a tough few years, and I'm genuinely blown away that I've won. It's giving me a level of security I've not had before, and I'm so, so grateful (and still in shock to be honest)." ■



£118,000

PAID OUT IN PRIZES EVERY YEAR

YOUR £1 A WEEK ISN'T JUST A GREAT WAY OF WINNING PRIZES!

YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS ALSO GO TOWARDS CREATING AND SUSTAINING JOBS ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT.

★
JUST £1
PER
WEEK
★

ISLE OF WIGHT
LOTTERY

★ JOIN NOW ★

NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

Business and industry, like all parts of Island life, can play a vital role in nature recovery. Whether you run an office, hotel, shop, factory, or work from home, you can take action for wildlife. This isn't just about meeting obligations; it's about making smart choices for your business, joining a growing movement that is reconnecting the human and natural worlds in the places we share, and showing the everyday commitment to wildlife now expected by regulators, investors, insurers, and customers.



NATURE NEEDS YOU!

Ian Boyd, The Common Space said: "Simple changes to everyday business life and spaces can make all the difference to the survival of wildlife – planters and plant choices, bird or bat boxes, reducing or switching off office lighting for darker skies and nocturnal wildlife, when or where you mow...right through to pocket-parking your carpark, making nature provision in new development and on to advocacy and knowledge-sharing beyond the Island. We have a plan on the Island to help all sectors identify priority species and actions through the government's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Network. The LNRS filters across the Island's Growth and Prosperity Plan too, with a new focus on nature-based routes to employment and nature investment zones."

What's the Isle of Wight Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and how can it help?

The Isle of Wight Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), published in 2025 and regarded as a national exemplar, is a spatial strategy and roadmap for nature recovery on the Isle of Wight. The LNRS was produced by The Common Space for the Isle of Wight Council, and has been evidence and community-led, shaped by extensive review, analysis, and stakeholder engagement.

Covering 400 square kilometres of land and coastline, the strategy sets out targeted actions to protect and restore species and habitats at threat. There are 15,000 species recorded on the Island, around an astonishing 20% of the UK total. But with 14 species lost to the Island since 2000, and more at risk of extinction from the once common urban birdlife to unsung bog plants and beetles, the call is for all hands on deck to turn things around!



You can use the LNRS in a number of ways:

- Learn about the Island's natural and human history, its important habitats and species, and the opportunities and challenges for nature recovery.
- Find out what actions you can take to support nature recovery on the Isle of Wight, and how this supports other environmental benefits.
- Discover which of the Island's 15,000 species are most at risk.
- See where all the actions for nature recovery can have the biggest impact and use tools to find out what you can do on your site, on an interactive Local Habitat Map. Visit www.islandnature.org for strategy documents, maps, and the how-to videos.

The Island Nature team at The Common Space has produced an online toolkit on what action to take for wildlife at work (or at home!). Sometimes it's the things you don't do that can help the most, too. See www.islandnature.org/toolkit to get started. ■

IW CHAMBER | NETWORKING EVENTS & TRAINING COURSES

Get-Fit Networking: Yoga – supported by PC Consultants

Tuesday 6, 13, 20 & 27 January 2026

Medina Leisure Centre, Newport

11.30am – 1pm

IW Chamber Members - £12 + VAT (includes all 4 sessions)

To kickstart the year, we are teaming up with 1Leisure to bring you a programme of 4 Yoga sessions. Every Tuesday through January, IW Chamber will have our own private yoga studio and instructor for our members and after the session we will have an opportunity for participants to stay behind and network. We strongly encourage participants to commit to the full 4-week programme to see maximum benefits as the sessions will be progressive, to encourage learning, improvement, and wellbeing.

Networking Breakfast at The Chequers Inn

Friday 9 January 2026

The Chequers, Rookley

7.30 – 9.30am

£18 per person

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

After breakfast we will get to hear from David Cherry, CEO of Cherry Godfrey Group!

Networking Breakfast at Luccombe Hall

Friday 6 February 2026

Luccombe Hall, Shanklin

7.30 – 9.30am

£18 per person

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

Booking coming soon!

Coffee & Cake

Thursday 12 February 2026

Caffe Isola, Newport

3.30 – 5.00pm

IW Chamber members – FREE

Non-Members – £10

Join us for afternoon networking with a good coffee and a slice of cake. It's 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.

Networking Breakfast at Brading Roman Villa

Friday 6 March 2026

Brading Roman Villa

7.30 – 9.30am

£18 per person

Join us for an excellent networking opportunity at Brading Roman Villa, with a hot breakfast and a great way to start the business day, networking with other Chamber members.

Booking coming soon!

Networking Breakfast at The Birdham at Bembridge

Friday 10 April 2026

The Birdham at Bembridge

7.30 – 9.30am

£18 per person

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

Booking coming soon!

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IW CHAMBER | NEW MEMBERS

Experience Cowes

Charlie Egerton-Warburton
No website given
commercial@experiencecowes.org
07785323630

MB Electrical EV Ltd

Gary Gee
mbelectrical-ev.com
garygee@mbelectrical-ev.com
01983 663068



Joedan Windows & Doors

John Purcaro
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info@joedan.co.uk
01983 825055



Naturezones Wildlife Education Trust

Angela Hewitt
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naturezones@outlook.com
01983296110



Leslies Toyota

Luke Peachey
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luke.peachey@lesliesmotors.co.uk
01983 405551



Rose & Thistle Grave Care

Glenn Todd
roseandthistlegravecare.co.uk
info@roseandthistlegravecare.co.uk
07795032010



Macmillan Cancer Support

Claire Treasure, Fundraising Manager
macmillan.org.uk
ctreasure@macmillan.org.uk
07801 307078



Rotary On The Wight

Beryl Ely
rotaryonthewight.uk
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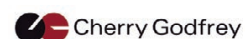


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The **Isle of Wight Lottery Business Start Up Course** is a great way to learn more about the world of business and how to get moving in the right direction. The informal environment is also a friendly place to ask questions and learn with like-minded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

Thursday 22nd January – 9.30am – 4.00pm

Thursday 12th February – 9.30am – 4.00pm

Thursday 26th March – 9.30am – 4.00pm

Thursday 23rd April – 9.30am – 4.00pm

Thursday 21st May – 9.30am – 4.00pm

at IW Chamber Office, Branstone Business Park

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IW CHAMBER PRESIDENT

Strengthening Business in 2026

By Alison Colley, IW Chamber President

As we start a new year, it's natural to pause and take stock of where we are both as individual businesses and as a collective Island economy. Over the past year, there have been mixed feelings; cautious optimism blended with understandable concern. Rising costs, evolving regulation, shifting consumer behaviour, and the continuing challenges of doing business on an Island have all shaped the day-to-day realities for businesses across the Isle of Wight.

IW CHAMBER'S MISSION

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

Yet despite these pressures, one constant has stood out, the remarkable resilience, creativity, and collaboration that defines our Island's business community. Time and again, our members have demonstrated that when circumstances change, we do not stand still. We adapt, we innovate, and we support one another. That spirit has carried us through the uncertainty of recent years, and it will continue to guide us as we move into 2026.

It is of course important to acknowledge the economic picture honestly. National forecasts suggest that growth will remain steady but modest, and many sectors particularly hospitality, tourism, construction, and retail are preparing for another year shaped by shifting demand patterns and continued cost considerations. Here on the Island, where our economy has its own distinct rhythm, these trends often feel amplified, but the challenges we face are not insurmountable. Instead of viewing them as 'challenges' why not consider them as signals pushing us to look again at how we work, how we plan, and how we collaborate.

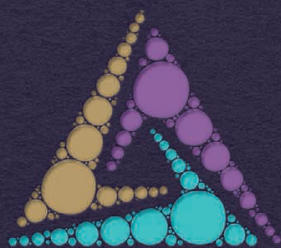
One thing that we are good at on the Island is innovating, and taking care of each other, so whilst it can often seem easier and safer to restrict investment and 'hunker down', actually it is the best time to get out and about, talk to other businesses, listen to what others are doing, collaborate and share knowledge.

The Chamber will continue to champion the issues that matter most to our members. Whether it's advocating for improved connectivity and infrastructure, supporting workforce development, or ensuring that Isle of Wight businesses have a strong voice in regional and national discussions, the priority remains the same, to help create the conditions in which every Island business can thrive.

But as much as the Chamber works to strengthen the business environment, the future also rests in your hands. The start of a new year is a reminder that each of us holds the potential to shape what comes next. Every decision you make for your business, every innovation you pursue, every partnership you build contributes to the broader strength of our local economy.

So, as we open the first pages of 2026, I encourage you to carry forward not only your ambition, but also your belief in what is possible. Let's continue to champion each other's successes, let's support the businesses that make our communities vibrant and let's remember that progress is rarely made in giant leaps but rather it is built day by day, through determination and consistent action.

I am confident that together we can make 2026 a year defined not by uncertainty, but by optimism, opportunity, and growth. ■



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