Island Business

NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2026

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including Isle of Wight Chamber member news and events

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

There's something about autumn that always feels like a change of gear. The summer rush is behind us; the evenings are drawing in, and across the Island, businesses are turning their attention to the final months of the year and what comes next.

For the Chamber, of course, summer ended with one of the biggest nights in our calendar, the Isle of Wight Chamber Business Awards. And what a night it was.

This year's event at Bembridge Fort provided a spectacular backdrop for a celebration of the very best of Island business. Hosted brilliantly by Denise Van Outen, it brought together businesses and individuals from across the Island to recognise achievement, innovation, resilience and success.

Huge congratulations go to all our winners and nominees. Being shortlisted is an achievement in itself and, once again, the Awards demonstrated just how much talent, ambition and entrepreneurial spirit we have within our relatively small business community. You can relive the evening and meet this year's winners in our special Awards coverage in this issue.

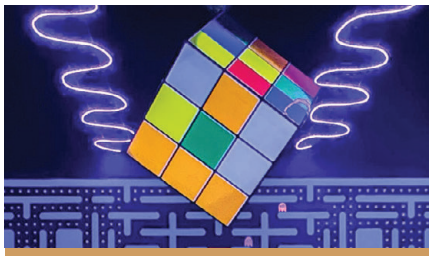
It was also a significant evening for our new Chief Executive, Helen Curel, who joined the Chamber shortly before the Awards and received quite an introduction to Island business. We're delighted to welcome Helen to the Chamber, and, in this issue, she shares some of her first thoughts on the role, what she has discovered during her early weeks and her ambitions for the months ahead. Turn to page 9 to read her column.

Elsewhere, as ever, these pages are packed with Island businesses doing interesting things, investing, growing, celebrating milestones and looking ahead.

As we move further into autumn and towards the end of another busy year, I hope you enjoy the issue and perhaps discover a business, person or idea you didn't know about before.

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.



New Chair appointed at Mountbatten

Mountbatten Isle of Wight and Mountbatten Hampshire have announced Charles Alexander, CBE, as the new Chair of the Board of Trustees, succeeding Sir Ian Cheshire following his six-year term.

Charles will take up the role on 1st December, bringing extensive leadership experience across healthcare, finance, housing and the arts. He currently chairs Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and VIVID Housing and has previously held senior roles with The Royal Marsden and King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

Charles said, "I am delighted to be taking on the role of chair of the Board of Trustees for Mountbatten Isle of Wight and Mountbatten Hampshire. Everyone facing the experience of managed and palliative care deserves the best possible 24/7 support."

Mountbatten CEO Becky McGregor continued, "Charles brings vast experience to Mountbatten Isle of Wight and Mountbatten Hampshire, at a time when hospices are negotiating extreme financial challenges."

Outgoing Chair Sir Ian Cheshire, who is leaving to become Chair of Ofcom, said: "Mountbatten has a fantastic reputation, not just locally but across the country. It really is a national asset, and it has been an honour to be its chair for the last six years."

The appointment was announced at Mountbatten's Annual General Meeting.



WRS COO joins national awards judging panel

WRS Chief Operating Officer Sophie Jackson has joined the judging panel for the Gerald Edelman Family Business of the Year Award at the Lloyds British Business Excellence Awards. The appointment follows WRS being crowned Business Enabler of the Year at the national awards in 2025.

This year Sophie experienced the awards from the other side of the table, helping judge a category particularly relevant to WRS, which has been family-owned since its launch in 2003. "As someone who is proud to be part of a family business, it was a real privilege to hear their stories and learn about the passion, resilience and people behind their success. We had some brilliant discussions as a judging panel, although choosing between so many outstanding businesses certainly wasn't easy! It was an absolute honour to be invited to judge such a prestigious award. Best of luck to all the finalists; I can't wait to celebrate at the awards."

Sophie joined fellow judges Adam Walsh, Helen Tonks MBE, Daniel Hildebrand and Fiona Graham. Going from award winner to judge marks another milestone for the Isle of Wight-based business and its growing involvement with the national awards programme.

Cowes Yacht Haven named Coastal Marina of the Year

Cowes Yacht Haven has been named Coastal Marina of the Year (over 250 berths) at the TYHA Marina Awards, presented at the Southampton International Boat Show.

The award recognises excellence across the marina sector, including standards, facilities, customer experience and service, and is a significant achievement for the Cowes Yacht Haven team.

"What an amazing honour to receive this award, and it's a great testament to all of the staff and our suppliers who make visiting us a great experience for our customers," said Daniel Jehan, Managing Director of Cowes Yacht Haven. "We're so pleased to receive this award."

There was further recognition for the Island marina, with team member Amy Ferrier receiving a special mention in the Marina Employee of the Year category. Located at the heart of Cowes and its maritime community, Cowes Yacht Haven welcomes resident and visiting boats throughout the year and plays a prominent role during major sailing events, including Cowes Week.

The double recognition follows a successful period for the marina and acknowledges the work of its staff and suppliers in maintaining high standards and delivering a welcoming, customer-focused experience for those visiting and staying in Cowes.



IOW Group launches new filtration technology



Ryde-based IOW Group is preparing to take its latest innovation to the global market with the launch of PuriFuge, a new development in centrifugal oil filtration.

Designed, manufactured, and assembled at the company's Ryde facility, PuriFuge is described as the world's first self-driven centrifugal oil filter operating at 7 bar with integrated water removal technology.

Developed in response to customer demand, the system removes water and harmful contaminants from oil, helping protect critical equipment, extend oil and machinery life, improve reliability and reduce operating costs. With potential applications across industries including marine, power generation and mining, the technology is expected to create new international opportunities for the Island manufacturer.

Managing Director Brett Nicholls commented, "From initial design and engineering, through to machining, manufacturing and assembling, the new product has been brought to life by the IOW Group team. We're excited to introduce PuriFuge to the international market, where its potential is truly global."

Founded in 2016, IOW Group specialises in separation and filtration solutions and has more than 100 years of combined industry experience within its team. The company designs and manufactures its next-generation pressure-driven centrifuges from its Isle of Wight base. ■



Vectis Radio training school wins BBC community award

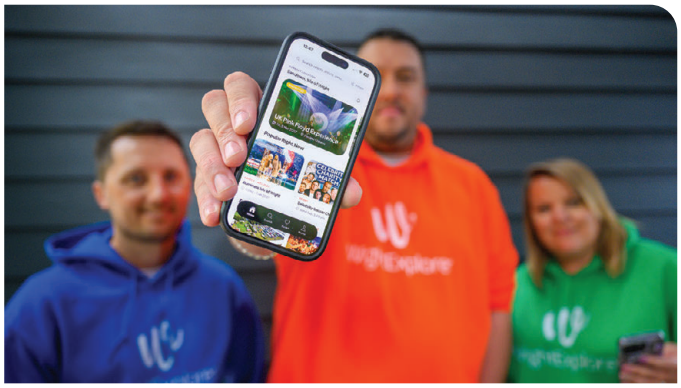
Vectis Radio's 4PS Radio Training School has won the Community Group Award at the BBC Radio Solent Make A Difference Awards. The Newport-based project was recognised for using radio broadcasting to help young people develop communication skills, confidence and self-esteem.

For more than 13 years, 4PS has given young people opportunities to learn about radio presenting, production, podcasting and promotion, alongside interviewing and broadcasting skills, within a supportive environment. The awards ceremony, held at the Utilita Bowl in Southampton, celebrated individuals and organisations making a positive difference across the region.

Ian Mac from Vectis Radio said he was deeply honoured and extremely proud of everyone involved. "It's all about the youngsters. They're the ones that are achieving every day. We just put the project together 13 years ago, and they are following it to the letter. They're the real winners here."

4PS student Leisha Lang added: "I'm so lucky and grateful to be a part of an incredible project and to be part of the most wonderful radio team on the Isle of Wight."

The latest accolade follows previous recognition for Vectis Radio's community work, including The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and being named Community Radio Station of the Year at the ARIAS. ■

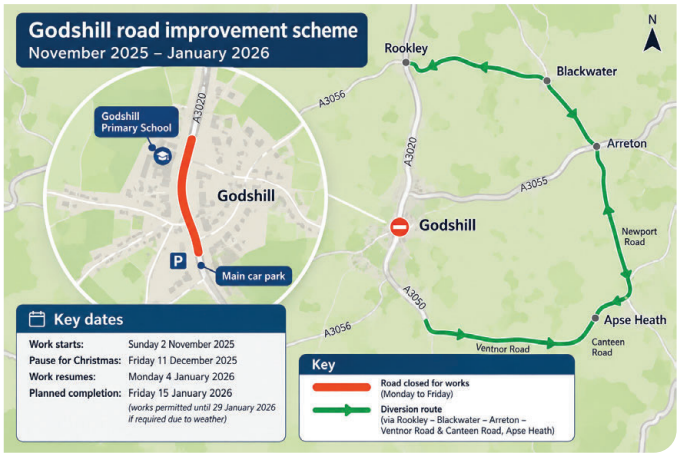


New Island app puts what's on in one place

A new Island-built app is aiming to make it easier for residents and visitors to discover what's happening across the Isle of Wight. Wight Explorer has been created by Islanders Shane Smith, Fiona Jeffery and Matt Jeffery, bringing events ranging from major festivals and live music to theatre, markets, family activities and community events together in one place.

Available free on Apple's App Store and Google Play, users can browse by category or date, save events to create personalised schedules and receive reminders. Explaining the idea behind the app, Wight Explorer Director Shane Smith commented: "There are some brilliant events taking place every week, from small community activities through to some of the biggest events in the Island calendar, but information can be spread across lots of different places. Our goal is for Wight Explorer to become the app people open when they think, 'What shall we do today?'"

The project has been developed with Fiona and Matt Jeffery of Island design and development agency Brightbulb. Looking at its potential, Matt added: "The challenge isn't a lack of things to do, it's making those things easy to discover. We want to build a genuinely useful platform for residents, visitors and event organisers, while supporting the businesses, venues and organisations that make the Isle of Wight such an interesting place to live and visit." ■



Major road improvement scheme planned for Godshill

Island Roads will begin a major improvement scheme through Godshill in November, following consultation with local businesses and the wider community.

Work will focus on the section between Godshill Primary School and the main car park, where underlying ground issues have caused deterioration since the road was last resurfaced ten years ago.

The project begins on 2nd November and will pause on 11th December for Christmas, resuming on 4th January with completion scheduled for later that month. The road will be closed Monday to Friday, although Island Roads aims to reopen it at weekends where safe to do so. The work has deliberately been scheduled after the October half-term following feedback from local businesses about the importance of the visitor economy.

An Island Roads spokesperson explained, "We have spoken first to local councillors and then to Godshill businesses, and their feedback has been instrumental in the decision to begin the work in November."

Once the foundations have been strengthened, Island Roads plans to return next year, most likely in April, to resurface the entire road during overnight works. The scheme is the first planned major upgrade to the Island's strategic highway network since May, with significant works scheduled outside the main summer tourism season wherever possible.



Ahmad Tea brews up support for Air Ambulance

Ahmad Tea has marked Emergency Services Day by providing Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance with bespoke brew kits and a year's supply of tea. The Hampshire-based global tea brand, an official UK charity partner of the Air Ambulance, made the donation in recognition of the lifesaving service its crews provide across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Each specially created kit included a selection of teas, a reusable mug and personal thank-you card, with Ahmad Tea also supplying tea to the charity's base and crew areas throughout the coming year.

For Managing Director Ebraham Afshar, the partnership has particular significance as a Hampshire-based business. "We are incredibly proud to support Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance and recognise the extraordinary work its team carries out every day," he explained. The support has been warmly welcomed by the charity, with Supporter Engagement Officer Judith Stephens describing the donation as "such a lovely reflection of the partnership we're building."

She added: "We really value the opportunity to work with great local businesses, develop meaningful relationships and create partnerships that can make a lasting difference for the future."

The initiative builds on the developing relationship between the two organisations and Ahmad Tea's commitment to supporting its local community.

Joedan's £4m vision for Isle of Wight manufacturing



Family-owned window and door business Joedan is progressing a major investment in its Newport operation, expected to exceed £4 million and create up to 150 jobs. The company is developing its 3.5-acre site to establish PVC-U manufacturing alongside its existing aluminium operation. Plans include new machinery, warehousing, a showroom and a 25,000 sq. ft manufacturing extension.

A new partnership with Eurocell will enable Joedan to manufacture PVC-U products for its retail operation, with future opportunities in trade supply, new-build and light-commercial markets. Initial production capacity is expected to reach around 800 frames a month, rising to approximately 3,000 as the development progresses.

Founder John Purcaro explained, "We are prepared to invest because we believe in the opportunity, the Isle of Wight and the future of UK window and door manufacturing. We want to create skilled, sustainable employment and provide young people on the Island with a route into manufacturing."

The three-year plans could create up to 150 jobs, including 30 apprenticeships, with Joedan also planning an apprentice academy offering career pathways in manufacturing, engineering and design. The first customer-ready Eurocell Logik frames are planned for November 2026.

Pertemps

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2027

THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF OUR 2026

As 2026 draws to a close, we'd like to say a sincere thank you to our clients for your continued trust, support and partnership throughout the year.

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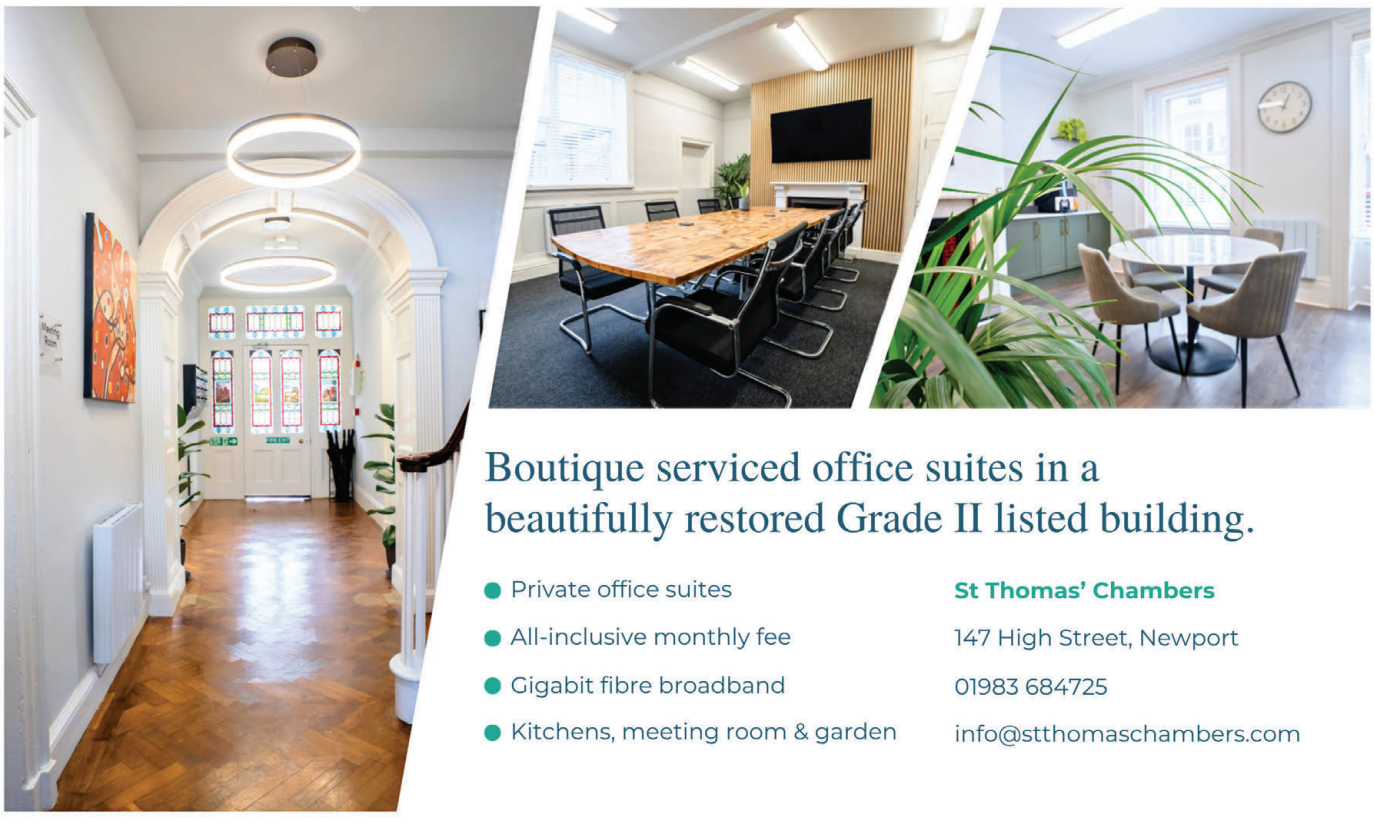
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REPAIR CAFE

The Isle of Wight Repair Cafe was conceived by a willing group of volunteers, with initial support from Planet Aware, Portsmouth Repair Cafe IW, and is very kindly hosted by Quay Arts in Newport and Ventnor Exchange.

The volunteers bring expertise in technical or crafting skills, and the Repair Cafe aims to keep things out of landfill, encourage people to understand more about how things work and how they can be repaired. The aims fit broadly with the Repair Cafe foundation, which was started in the Netherlands and has expanded around the world.

The Repair Cafe has now been running for almost five years. There are some items they are unable to repair due to age or inability to get replacement parts at a reasonable cost. For certain areas, they don't have the expertise, for example, complex clock repairs or leatherwork, but can give details on local craftspeople who can repair them at a cost.

There was some interest in setting up further Repair cafés, one in the Shanklin and Sandown area, and they are always interested in hearing from people who might want to volunteer as a repairer or as an organiser for any of our regular events, so please check their social media or pop along to an event to see what they do. Next events are at Quay Arts on Saturday, 14 November, and Ventnor Exchange on Saturday, 21 November.







FROM BOARDROOM TO CHRISTMAS PARTY AT THE CELLAR

As businesses begin thinking about Christmas celebrations, Chef Robert Thompson MBE is opening up The Cellar beneath RT Café Grill in Ryde for festive parties, but the two private dining rooms are also offering Island companies an interesting alternative to the traditional meeting room throughout the year.

Hidden beneath the seafront restaurant, The Cellar comprises two private spaces. The 1982 accommodates eight to 16 guests and looks into the kitchen and wine cellar, while the larger 1945 seats 12 to 20 and has its own private bar. Taken together, the rooms can accommodate 36 seated guests or up to 55 for drinks and canapés.

For businesses, that flexibility means the space can move easily from breakfast meeting or working lunch to an away day, client dinner or board dinner. Packages start at £25 per person for a breakfast meeting, while a £45 working day includes the room from 10 am, coffee and pastries, a two-course lunch and afternoon refreshments. Board dinners are £85 per person.

Robert deliberately wanted the rooms to work in different ways. "I looked at it and thought, what it needs to be is flexible. It needs to be able to cater for lots of different things," he explained. "This is about the guests defining what they want it to be."

Christmas provides the perfect opportunity to discover the space, with a three-course festive menu running from 26 November to 20 December, priced at £49 per person. But once the decorations come down, The Cellar remains very much open for business, offering Island companies a private setting where meetings, team time and good food can comfortably share the same table.



ISLE OF WIGHT SME FUND

£600,000 fund opens new opportunities for Island businesses

Isle of Wight businesses looking to invest, expand and create jobs are being encouraged to take advantage of a new £600,000 funding programme offering capital grants of up to £50,000.



The Isle of Wight SME Fund, previously known as the Rural SME Fund, has been expanded to make support available to eligible small and medium-sized businesses across the Island. Funded through the Solent Growth Partnership, it is designed to help businesses overcome barriers to growth by supporting capital investment projects that create or safeguard jobs and attract additional private sector investment.

The funding comprises £400,000 available Island-wide and a further £200,000 specifically for Ryde businesses, including £100,000 from Ryde Neighbourhood Board.

Grants of between £5,000 and £50,000 are available, with businesses required to contribute at least 50 per cent of the overall project cost themselves. Funding can support projects which improve productivity, introduce new products or services, access new markets or improve quality standards, but cannot be used for everyday running costs including salaries, rent, utilities, stock or raw materials.

Previous recipients demonstrate the potential impact. The Garlic Farm used funding to construct an extension to its warehouse, creating a new packing room and goods-out area. The project created three jobs and safeguarded eight. Wight Knuckle Brewery also received support to develop a visitor centre and purchase bar equipment, creating three jobs and safeguarding two.

Alex Minns, Isle of Wight Council's Service Director for Community Regeneration and Economy, believes the expanded scheme can help more businesses turn their plans into reality. "Small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of the Isle of Wight economy, providing jobs, innovation and investment across our communities," he explained. "This expanded fund will make vital support available to a wider range of businesses and help them take forward projects that might otherwise be difficult to deliver."

For Ryde, the funding also forms part of wider regeneration ambitions. Rachael Randall, Acting Chair of Ryde Neighbourhood Board, described businesses as having "such a major role to play in Ryde's regeneration", adding: "When our businesses thrive and grow then so does the town."

Could your business benefit?

The first application window closes at 5 pm on 31 December 2026. Businesses considering applying are encouraged to act early and ensure any necessary planning permissions, licences or consents are in place.

Application forms and full guidance are available from Innovation Wight, or businesses can contact the Isle of Wight Council Economic Development team at **charlotte.chapman@iow.gov.uk** for further information.

HELEN CUREL
IW CHAMBER CEO

BUILDING THE CHAMBER'S NEXT CHAPTER



The Chamber Business Awards were a lovely way to begin this new chapter. Just a few days before officially taking up my role as Chief Executive, I had the opportunity to celebrate the imagination, determination, and hard work that run through our Island business community.

Heartfelt congratulations to all our winners and finalists, and a huge thank you to the sponsors and everyone who helped make the evening possible. I think it is important to acknowledge that behind every nomination is a story, an idea someone believed in, a challenge worked through, and a team pulling together. The awards give us a chance to pause and recognise that effort, which can so easily get lost in the day-to-day business of keeping things moving.

Since starting in September, I have been spending time with members, patrons, our team and partners across the Island. I'm grateful for the warm welcome and for the openness of those conversations. Hearing what people value about the Chamber, where we could do more, and what their businesses need next is helping me understand where to focus our energy.

I am encouraged by the fact that there is much to build on: longstanding relationships, a willingness to share experience and people who care deeply about the Island's future. I've also heard concerns about costs, finding the right skills, and making time for development alongside the demands of running a business, and that brings us back to a straightforward question: how can the Chamber make being a member useful, relevant and worthwhile?

Sometimes that will mean an introduction that opens a door, an event that helps someone work through a challenge, or a chance to learn from another business. At other times, it will mean making sure Island businesses are heard in the conversations that shape our economy at local, regional, and national level. It is vital that each contact with the Chamber should contribute something of value.

As we look towards 2027, we are considering how our events, communications, services and support can better reflect those needs. I want that planning to be informed by our members' experiences, with a clear focus on what we can deliver well, and collaboration will be an important part of this. There are so many people doing valuable work across the Island and the wider region, and by understanding one another's strengths and joining up our efforts, we can make better use of the time and resources available to us.

The Business Awards reminded me how much there is here to celebrate, and my first few weeks have reinforced how much there is to learn too. I'm looking forward to turning those conversations into practical next steps with the team.

So, if we haven't yet met, I'd love to hear what matters to your business and what you would like from your Chamber. Get in touch at **chamber@iwchamber.co.uk**, and follow us on LinkedIn and Facebook.



CHANGES TO UNFAIR DISMISSAL LAWS

by Alison Colley, Real Employment Law Advice

On the 1st January 2027 there will be a significant change in the rights of employees and responsibilities of employers, as the qualifying period of employment for a claim for unfair dismissal will reduce from two years to just six months.

This means employees will gain unfair dismissal protection much earlier in their employment. Importantly, employees who already have six months' service when the new rules take effect will come within the new protection.

The practical impact of this change is that it is going to be much harder for employers to dismiss employees after 6 months, and a full robust process will be needed to avoid a claim.

In addition to the increased risk of an Employment Tribunal claim the amount of compensation an employee can receive if successful with a claim for unfair dismissal will also increase as the current cap on compensation will be removed.

Tribunals will continue to assess compensation by reference to the employee's actual and projected financial losses but rather than placing a financial cap on this an employee can, in some circumstances, receive compensation for several years lost wages.

For employers, the action required is:

Review probation periods and how they are managed.

Train managers to understand the law and risks when dismissing an employee.

Update your internal procedures.

The change does not prevent employers dismissing employees who are unsuitable for a role. It does, however, make good management and a fair dismissal process much more important, much sooner in the employment relationship.



SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS SAY THEY ARE IN IT FOR THE LONG HAUL

Small business owners have shown how resilient, resourceful, and committed they are despite the challenges that come with running a business.

New research shows that 90% of business owners say they have experienced at least one particularly difficult period in the past five years, which meant they seriously considered giving up their businesses altogether. Cash flow issues and rising energy costs (both 27%) were cited as the top factors contributing to the challenges their businesses faced.



But to deal with financial pressures, owners say they adapted and took practical steps, including diversifying their offering by introducing new products, services or sources of revenue (17%) and reducing their opening hours (14%). A fifth (18%) used their personal savings to support their business.

The research also shows that most small business owners prefer being their own boss, with almost 7 in 10 (69%) owners saying it is preferable to working for someone else, with 71% saying they intend to continue running their own businesses for the long term.

They do, however, remain vigilant around their business's finances and running costs, with 9 in 10 saying managing their businesses' energy use and costs will be important to their business's financial resilience over the next year.

When it comes to managing bills, the data provided by a smart meter can help business owners understand their energy use and identify where they may be able to find ways to reduce their energy bills.

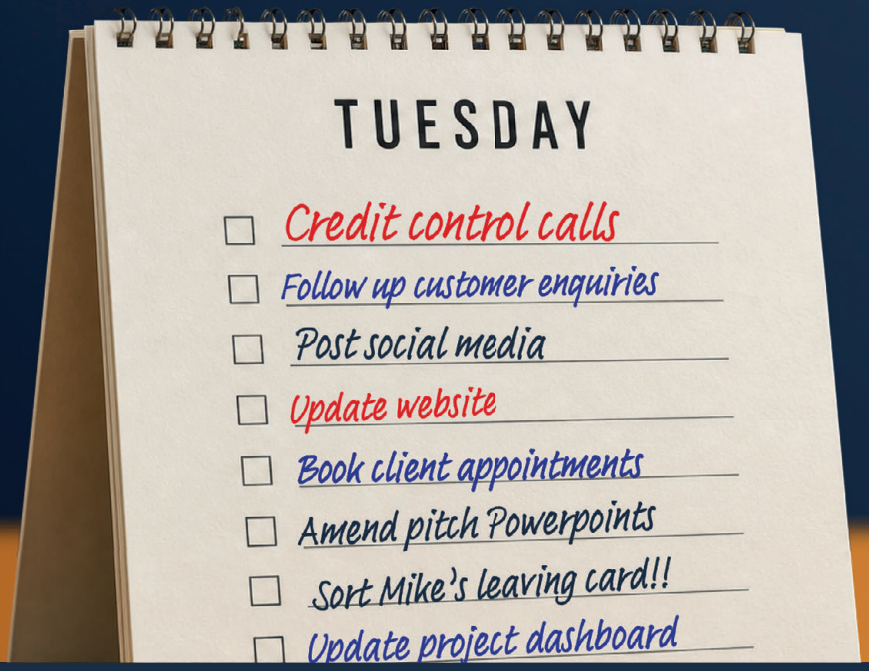
A smart meter takes automatic readings of gas and electricity use and sends them directly the energy supplier. It means businesses no longer need to read a meter and send the figures, giving them more time to focus on other jobs.

Getting a smart meter installed also ends estimated bills and records exactly how much energy is used so that customers can be billed accurately.

Find out if you are eligible: **www.britishchambers.org.uk/smartmeter**

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*Combines £2,000 hiring and £1,000 young apprentice payments. Age assessed at training start. Training must begin from 1 October 2026, within 90 days of joining. Payments in instalments, subject to eligibility and continued employment and training. Training and assessment funded up to the government funding limit; employers pay wages and any agreed excess fees.

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2025

PATRON SPOTLIGHT: LUCCOMBE HALL

GAME ON: LUCCOMBE HALL GOES BACK TO THE 80S

What do you do with a squash court that nobody really uses? If you're Luccombe Hall's Steve Wells, you turn it into an unapologetically retro 1980s gaming arcade, complete with Pac-Man, Space Invaders, BMX bikes, skateboards, movie posters, UV lighting, and a giant Rubik's Cube.

It's a project that combines Steve's eye for improving the guest experience with a healthy dose of nostalgia and, as he readily admits, more than a little nerdiness.

The squash court had become increasingly expensive to maintain and was rarely used by hotel guests. An initial attempt to turn it into a children's play area didn't quite hit the mark either. "I came in one day and just thought, 'That's really boring. Let's do something cool,'" says Steve. Inspiration came partly from watching Stranger Things, which prompted memories of growing up in the 1980s and the games he played at the time.

The result is a striking arcade built around seven bespoke gaming machines, including Pac-Man, Track & Field, Galaxian, Donkey Kong, Defender and Space Invaders. The cabinets have been created to look like the original machines, but inside they contain modern gaming PCs, each loaded with around 7,000 games. There is even a Simpsons machine, although Steve is quick to point out that, while the cartoon arrived in 1989, its first video game dates from 1990.

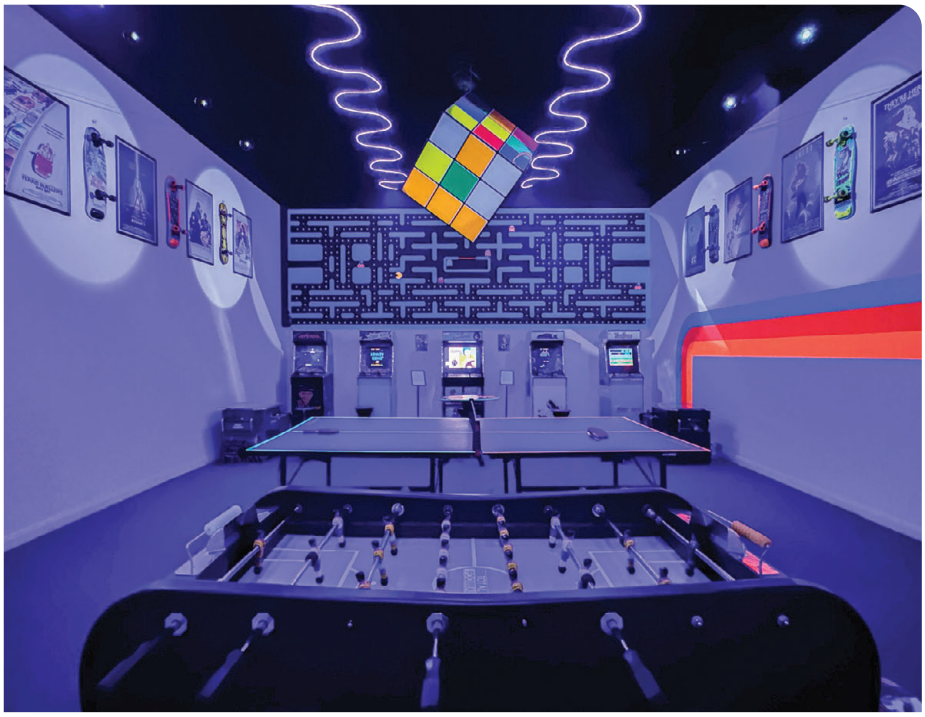
That attention to detail runs throughout the room. There are posters from favourite films including Back to the Future, Indiana Jones, Ghostbusters, Aliens, The Goonies, Labyrinth and The Breakfast Club, with original skateboards displayed between them. There are Raleigh Choppers too, alongside a BMX similar to the one he received for his 12th birthday.

Perhaps the room's biggest talking point is the metre-square Rubik's Cube suspended from the ceiling. Ordering it was the easy part; getting it into the arcade proved considerably harder. After discovering it wouldn't fit through a succession of doors, windows and frames, it had to be removed before it could finally be manoeuvred into position with less than a centimetre to spare.

Behind the fun, however, is a serious focus on guest value. The arcade is free for hotel residents and is also included for visitors buying one of Luccombe Hall's limited day passes, giving another reason to spend time at the hotel and helping make better commercial use of previously underused space. And Steve isn't quite finished. A retro Tron bike is currently being refurbished to join the collection, and this time, he has already checked that it will fit through the door.

For Steve, the arcade shows that creating something memorable doesn't necessarily require a huge budget throughout. While the gaming machines represented the main investment, many of the finishing touches have come through finds, repurposed items and plenty of enthusiasm. "You can theme something without it costing a fortune," he says. "Everything else was a bit of time and effort."

It's that combination of nostalgia, attention to detail and a determination to create something different that has turned an underused squash court into one of Luccombe Hall's most memorable spaces.



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CIARAN O'DONNELL



THE ROAD TO ENNISCRONE

Back in 1985, I was 10 years old in the back of a Peugeot 504 estate on a small winding road in the west of Ireland.

My aunt, great-aunt and two cousins were over from England. They picked me, my brother and sister up from my grandparents for a day on the beach at Enniscrone.

Enniscrone was the firm family favourite beach. Waves fresh off the Atlantic were almost always guaranteed and the sand dunes were epic to play in.

To get there from Tuam was a 60-mile meandering route through Claremorris and Foxford. But somewhere after Claremorris, we found ourselves on increasingly smaller roads and guessed we'd taken a wrong turn. As the road reduced to a single track between farm buildings, we accepted we were lost and needed directions to get back on track.

We slowed down as an old man walked towards us wheeling a black High Nelly bicycle. My great-aunt turned off the radio and wound down her window.

"Can you tell us the way to Enniscrone?"

The man looked down the road in the direction we were travelling. Then he looked back. He looked ahead again. Then he brought his gentle stare back to the open window and said in a thick and wistful accent,

"Well, if I was going to Enniscrone..." He paused. "...I wouldn't start my journey from here."

My great-aunt and aunt made polite and resigned eye contact with each other to acknowledge the wit, if not the help. But he said there was a village ahead with a filling station where someone would be able to get us back on the right road. Which there was.

Forty years later, I'm sitting in a meeting with a founder who is looking to sell or exit his business in the next two years. He is three years in. With a growing family and his sector changing fast, he's feeling uncertain. We talk openly about the prospect of an exit while looking at his current proposition and customer base, his Profit & Loss and cash. To get from where we are today to where he wants to get to will require some difficult decisions to pivot his business from one-off projects to recurring service contracts.

Like all of us in the Peugeot 504, he'd probably prefer to be starting from somewhere else.

But nobody gets to choose their starting point.

You start from here.

What you can choose is the destination. Be clear on what your Enniscrone looks like: the valuation, the kind of buyer, and the recurring revenue and quality of earnings they'll pay for. Then work backwards.

And you don't need the whole route mapped out on day one. You need enough directions to reach the filling station in the next village, then ask again.

For me, Enniscrone was miles of soft golden sand, chest-high waves, a bottle of Club Orange and a packet of Tayto. Even lost on a single track between farm buildings, I could still picture it.

Can you picture yours that clearly?



IW CHAMBER

Business Awards 2026

A night to celebrate Island business

The IW Chamber Business Awards 2026 brought the Island's business community together for a memorable evening at Bembridge Fort, celebrating the businesses, organisations and individuals whose hard work, innovation and ambition continue to drive the Isle of Wight economy.

Hosted by the brilliant Denise Van Outen, the evening provided a fantastic showcase for Island business, with finalists representing a diverse range of sectors and organisations of all sizes.

There was plenty to celebrate as the winners were revealed, recognising achievements ranging from growth, innovation and entrepreneurship to customer service, sustainability, hospitality and community impact. Congratulations go to every one of our winners and nominees. Reaching the final stages of such a competitive Awards programme is an achievement in itself and demonstrates the strength and breadth of the Island's business community.

For new IW Chamber Chief Executive Helen Curel, the Awards also provided a fitting introduction to the Chamber and an opportunity to meet many of the businesses and people at the heart of the Island economy. "The awards were a wonderful introduction to the energy, creativity and ambition that is so prevalent across our Island business community. Congratulations to all of our winners and nominees, and















special thanks to our patrons and sponsors who make this celebration possible year on year. It really is the people behind it all working hard and working together that makes it successful".

A huge thank you must also go to Denise Van Outen, who brought warmth, energy and plenty of personality to the evening, helping to make the 2026 Awards such an enjoyable occasion.

And, of course, an event of this scale simply would not be possible without the commitment of our patrons and sponsors. Their continued support enables the Chamber to shine a spotlight on success and provide a platform for Island businesses and their people to receive the recognition they deserve. Thank you too to everyone who joined us at Bembridge Fort and to all those who worked behind the scenes to make the evening happen.

The trophies may have been presented for another year, but the Awards once again demonstrated something worth celebrating every day: the strength of Island business and what can be achieved when its people come together.





Start Up Business of the Year

Sponsored by PC Consultants

WINNER:

JMD Business Consultancy





Winning the Start Up Business of the Year 2026 award from the Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce is humbling whilst being a proud moment for JMD Building Consultancy. The last six months have brought immense personal and operational challenges following my wife's serious accident and spinal cord injury, which have left her in a wheelchair. This recognition is a powerful validation of our resilience as co-directors, business partners, and a family. It honours not just our technical expertise, but the sheer determination it took to keep moving forward and adapting during the most difficult chapter of our lives.

When our name was announced at Bembridge Fort, we felt an overwhelming wave of relief, pride, and emotional validation. Being able to be together to accept the award marks a beautiful milestone in both our personal recovery and our professional growth. As we transition away from the mainland to focus purely on island work, we hope this recognition will solidify our presence as trusted commercial building surveying experts as we move into developing our RICS-registered Home Surveys for the Isle of Wight community. *Joel MacDonald, Director*

Tourism and Leisure Business of the Year

Sponsored by Visit Isle of Wight

WINNER:

Robin Hill Adventure Park



Winning Tourism and Leisure Business of the Year was such a special moment for all of us at Robin Hill. When our name was announced, there was a real feeling of excitement and pride - and perhaps a little disbelief too! To see the hard work of the team recognised in this way, particularly after everything that has gone into relaunching and rebuilding the business, means a huge amount to us.

We'd also like to say a big thank you to the Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce for their continued support and for championing Island businesses. It's wonderful to have that recognition from the local business community, and this award is something the whole Robin Hill team will be incredibly proud of. It's a lovely way to celebrate how far we've come and the commitment, creativity and passion that everyone has put into making Robin Hill what it is today.

Growth Business of the Year

Sponsored by WRS

Business Social Impact Award

Sponsored by

Joedan Windows and Doors

WINNER:

WightFibre



These awards are particularly meaningful to us because they celebrate not only business success, but also WightFibre's positive impact on the Isle of Wight. As a truly local company, WightFibre remains focused on helping people stay connected, supporting economic growth, and contributing to the Island's future. The company is honoured by the recognition and looks forward to building on this success in the years ahead. *John Irvine, Managing Director*

Creative Impact Award

Sponsored by Medina Publishing

WINNER:

Robertson Foster



The Robertson Foster team was absolutely thrilled when we were announced as winners of the Creative Impact Award.

Our whole team contributed to the success of the bowel cancer awareness campaign 'Your Loo Could Save You,' and we were blown away by the extraordinary support we received from across the Island community. So many people and organisations really got behind the campaign to help us spread such an important message far and wide, and we were delighted with the impact the campaign had. We also had great fun working on it with our clients at One Wight Health.

And best of all, on the night of the Chamber Awards, we learned that the campaign had not only significantly increased referrals for testing but looks to have saved the lives of 20 Islanders. Thanks to all involved, and thanks to the Chamber for, once again, putting on such a great night – a fitting celebration of all the things that make the Island such a great place to live and work. *Claire Robertson, Director*

Entrepreneurship Award

Sponsored by Red Funnel

Small Business of the Year Award

Sponsored by Wightlink

WINNER:

Wight Coaches





Winning both the Entrepreneurship Award and Small Business of the Year meant a huge amount to all of us at Wight Coaches. Hearing our name called for the first time was amazing, but winning a second award later in the evening was a genuine surprise, especially given how highly regarded all the other shortlisted businesses are.

After winning Start-Up Business of the Year in 2024 and Growth Business of the Year in 2025, these latest awards feel like another special milestone in Wight Coaches' journey. We've grown a huge amount since we started in 2020, and it's incredibly rewarding to see that progress recognised year after year. The awards reflect the hard work put in by the whole team, and we're very proud of how far the business has come. We're also really looking forward to what's ahead and continuing to build on everything we've achieved so far. *Josh Harris, Director*

Employer of the Year

Sponsored by
Glanvilles Damant Legal Services

WINNER:

Yokogawa Marex



To win the Employer of the Year, being recognised for what we do as an employer by the wider business community is very special. It confirms all the work that we are doing to make Yokogawa Marex a great place to be. As the time approached for our nomination, we were all apprehensive and hopeful. Then, to see the joy and elation of the team as our name was announced as winners, and to walk up on stage and receive our award with the team was a very proud moment. *Wayne Matthews, Divisional Director*

Community Award

Sponsored by Moore (South) LLP

WINNER:

Isle of Wight Donkey Sanctuary



For the Isle of Wight Donkey Sanctuary, winning the community award is a wonderful acknowledgment of the important role we play in Island life. Getting the biggest cheer from the room when our win was announced was amazing!

All of us at the sanctuary work extraordinarily hard not only to care for our animals, but to be the best we can be to support our community. Our award is a huge testament to all the hard work and commitment of our team of volunteers and staff. And of course we'd be nothing without our donkeys, ponies, horse and mule! We're absolutely delighted and extremely proud to be recognised by the Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce. *Stephen Tobitt, General Manager*

Environment and Sustainability Award

Sponsored by IFPL

PRESIDENT'S AWARD

WINNER:

Isle of Wight Tomatoes





We are honoured to have received both the Environment & Sustainability Award and the President's Award for Outstanding Contribution at the Isle of Wight Chamber Awards.

The Isle of Wight is at the heart of our business and plays a fundamental role in shaping the quality and character of our produce. We are passionate about championing the Island, showcasing its unique strengths, and demonstrating that businesses can not only succeed here but thrive.

These awards are a meaningful recognition of our commitment to sustainability, our contribution to the local community, and the exceptional work being carried out across the business. Most importantly, they reflect the dedication, passion, and hard work of our team, whose efforts continue to drive our success. We are incredibly proud of what has been achieved together and grateful for this recognition.
Paul Thomas, Managing Director

Technology & Innovation Business of the Year Award

Sponsored by Lifeline Alarms

Manufacturing & Export Business of the Year Award

Sponsored by GKN Aerospace

BUSINESS OF THE YEAR AWARD

WINNER:

IFPL Group Ltd







Winning these awards is a tremendous honour, but being named Business of the Year in our 30th year of trading makes it particularly special. We are immensely proud of our team, grateful to our customers and partners, and excited for the next chapter. This recognition celebrates not only what we've achieved over the last 30 years, but also our ambition for the future.

Customer Service Award

Sponsored by RPL Construction

WINNER:

Tolchards Ltd



Winning the Customer Service Award means a huge amount to us and in all honesty, was a massive surprise when our name was called out!

Customer service has always been much more to all of the team than just doing a job. It's about listening, caring, building real relationships, and making a difference to the customers we have the privilege of looking after. To have the team's commitment recognised is incredibly rewarding and gives us a real sense of pride in what we have built as a business.

We'll celebrate this achievement and recognition together and are excited to keep doing what we love. Above all, it's a wonderful thank you to our customers, whose continued support and trust mean so much to all of us. *Mark Curran, Managing Director*

Training and Development Award

Sponsored by Yokogawa Marex

WINNER:

Captiva Homes



Winning the Training and Development Award means a great deal to all of us at Captiva Homes. We felt proud as a team and were absolutely delighted when our name was announced. It's great to see the work we're putting into developing people and investing in the future of the island recognised in this way.

The Captiva Academy only launched last year, so to receive this recognition so early on is particularly special. We know how important it is to develop the next generation of skilled people within our industry, and we're really proud that the Academy is already creating opportunities, including enabling us to employ apprentices directly. It's a great acknowledgement of the team's hard work and our commitment to training and development, and we're excited to continue building on the Academy and creating more opportunities in the future. *Andrew Titmuss-Morley, Sales & Marketing Director*

Hospitality Business of the Year Award

Sponsored by Cherry Godfrey

WINNER:

The Blacksmiths



We are absolutely thrilled and incredibly proud to have won the Isle of Wight Chamber Award for Best in Business in Hospitality. The Isle of Wight has such a special hospitality community, and we truly feel that we are all one big team. There is so much support, encouragement and friendship between businesses across the Island, and we are always championing one another. To be recognised amongst so many fantastic hospitality businesses makes this award even more special.

We are enormously grateful to our wonderful guests, both those who have supported us for years and those discovering us for the first time. Their loyalty and encouragement mean everything to us. Most importantly, this award belongs to our amazing team. Hospitality takes a huge amount of hard work, passion, and dedication, often behind the scenes, and we couldn't be prouder of the people who give so much every day to make our business what it is.

We feel incredibly lucky to do what we love, here on the beautiful Isle of Wight, surrounded by such a supportive community. A huge thank you to the Isle of Wight Chamber, our wonderful guests, our incredible team, and everyone who has been part of our journey. *Rachel & Robert Burrows*

Micro Business of the Year Award

Sponsored by Gurit

WINNER:

Newclose Cricket Ground



Punching well above its weight, Newclose Cricket Ground impressed the judges with remarkable growth, versatility and community impact. With just three cross-trained staff, the team successfully delivers everything from weddings and functions to festivals and a Beer Festival attracting more than 1,000 people.

Newclose's success goes beyond the figures. Every pound of surplus is reinvested into charity, including a direct £10,000 donation and more than £8,700 raised through quiz nights. Combining strong commercial performance with exceptional customer care and a genuine commitment to giving back, Newclose Cricket Ground is a very worthy winner of the Micro Business of the Year Award.

CHAMBER MEMBER OF THE YEAR 2026

WINNER:

Meridian 3



We were so honoured to have been awarded the Chamber Member of the Year Award. We had no idea about it and we were genuinely stunned when our name was announced. We'd like to congratulate the hosts, nominees and winners on the night. It really highlighted what a fantastic and diverse business community we have on the Island.

We love producing printed items for our clients and we really appreciate every single order that we receive. We've always had fun adapting our product line based on our clients' needs, so we're never sure what we'll be doing next!

Huge thanks to all at the Chamber of Commerce for choosing us for this award. Being recognised for what we do – especially amongst all the other amazing Island businesses – was so humbling. We are proud to have our award on display at our premises. *Barry Smith, Director*


IW CHAMBER
Business Awards 2026
Pioneer DJ



PLAY LOCAL. WIN LOCAL. SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESS

Since it was established, the IW Lottery has loaned more than **£1.3 million** to over **115 Island businesses**, helping to create or sustain around **450 jobs**.

Buying a ticket for the Isle of Wight Lottery isn't just about the chance of a win. It's also a simple way to put something back into the Island economy, supporting businesses, creating opportunities and helping good ideas become reality.

Since it was established, the IW Lottery has loaned more than £1.3 million to over 115 Island businesses, helping to create or sustain around 450 jobs.

Behind those numbers are real Island success stories. Lottery loans have helped entrepreneurs take that important first step, enabled established businesses to invest and expand, and provided funding when a great idea just needed a little help to get moving.

Businesses including Wed & Prosper have already demonstrated what that support can mean. For owner Carrie Almond, an IW Lottery loan provided the final piece of funding needed to turn her idea for a bridal boutique into reality, helping with stock, designers, and the cost of setting up the shop.

That's what makes the IW Lottery different. Players get the fun of taking part and the possibility of winning, but their participation also contributes to something much bigger – keeping investment here on the Island.

And for businesses, the Lottery offers another important opportunity. Its interest-free loan scheme is designed specifically to support Island enterprise, providing access to finance that can help turn plans for growth into something tangible.

It creates a positive circle: Islanders play, winners celebrate, businesses invest, and the Island economy benefits.

Whether it's helping someone open their doors for the first time, invest in new equipment, take on staff or move an established business to its next stage, the Lottery has been quietly backing Island ambition for years.

So perhaps the next time you buy a ticket, it's worth remembering that you're not only playing for yourself.

You're playing for Island business too.

And if you're running a business with plans to grow, the IW Lottery could be worth looking at from the other side of the ticket, as a source of interest-free funding to help make those plans happen. ■

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

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


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ISLE OF WIGHT LOTTERY
JOIN NOW

NETWORKING EVENTS

EVENT: BUSINESS LUNCH: BANK OF ENGLAND

10th November 2026
Isle of Wight College, Newport
12 pm – 2 pm
£20 per person

Join the IW Chamber at the Isle of Wight College Restaurant for an exceptional two-course lunch and a unique opportunity to hear directly from the Bank of England about the economic outlook and what it could mean for businesses.

Enjoy a delicious two-course meal in the College's own restaurant, which has been awarded a Certificate of Excellence by Restaurant Guru, while hearing from Florence Hubert, Agent for Central Southern England at the Bank of England.

Drawing on her extensive experience with the Bank of England, Florence will provide valuable insight into the current UK economy, emerging economic trends and the outlook for the months ahead. She will also explore how the Bank's decisions can influence businesses, investment and the wider economy, with a particular focus on what this could mean for businesses here on the Isle of Wight.

EVENT: COFFEE & MINCE PIES

19th November 2026
Café Isola, Newport.
3:30 pm – 5:00 pm
IW Chamber members - FREE
£10 (non-members)

Join us for informal networking and an early mince pie



EVENT: EMERGENCY FIRST AID AT WORK COURSE

23rd November 2026
Unit S5 Branstone Business Park, Sandown
9 am – 4 pm
£78 +VAT

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

This course is delivered by Good Skills Training.

EVENT: FIRE MARSHAL COURSE

24th November 2026
Unit S5 Branstone Business Park, Sandown
9 am – 12.30 pm
£68 + VAT

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

This course is delivered by Good Skills Training.

NETWORKING BREAKFAST AT THE ROYAL HOTEL

4th December 2026
The Royal Hotel, Ventnor
7:30 am – 09:30 am
£20 per person

The days are getting colder and the nights are getting longer, so get ready to feel more festive at the Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce Networking Breakfast at the award-winning Royal Hotel.

With frosty views of the stunning gardens and onto the English Channel, this historic building has long been a firm favourite of members. Join us and the membership for one of the fixtures of the networking calendar. Make connections over hot drinks, build business over breakfast, and leave knowing where you stand in the Island's business community.

UNDERSTANDING EXPORTING - ONLINE COURSE

4th November 2026/16th December 2026
9.15 am – 12.20 pm
IW Chamber Members £250 plus VAT

The UK accounts for only 2% of global GDP, so 98% of the world's market could be open to your company. This is an introduction to Exporting and the practical considerations needed. The course covers the requirements of sales and purchase orders, an introduction to Incoterms, packaging considerations, general compliance issues, and commodity codes. The importance of export documentation is explained, along with sources of help and guidance.

UNDERSTANDING IMPORT PROCEDURES - ONLINE COURSE

5th November 2026/17th December 2026
9.15 am – 12.30 pm
IW Chamber Members £250 plus VAT

This introduction course is aimed at those involved in the importing of goods. The course will cover import documentation and procedures, commercial considerations, the importance of your purchase order, calculating VAT and duty, the three main

import duty drivers and how to reduce import customs clearance delays. Incoterms® and their impact on importing will be shown, along with an introduction to duty regimes to help importers.

RULES OF ORIGIN - ONLINE COURSE

18th November 2026
9.15 am – 12.30 pm
IW Chamber Members £250 plus VAT

This introduction course is aimed at those involved in the administration of international trade to ensure an understanding of rules of origin, product classification and item valuation to meet the demands of international trade in both exporting and importing. Understanding origin, tariffs and valuation is essential for correct calculation of taxation and duties, and mistakes leading to non-payment or underpayment are considered a serious matter by HMRC. They could also lead to duty reliefs, so getting this right could save you money.

INCOTERMS – ONLINE COURSE

1st December 2026
9.15 am – 12.30 pm
IW Chamber Members £250 plus VAT

An introduction to Incoterms® and their importance to international trade. Understand the history and purpose of Incoterms®, how they are used, the practical issues to be considered, and sources of additional help and information. Commercial matters will also be discussed, including the impact of Incoterms® on costs and profitability. The definition of each Incoterm® will be covered as well as practical topics such as why EXW is not suitable for international trade. An understanding of Incoterms® is fundamental to international trade.

DOCUMENTARY LETTERS OF CREDIT – ONLINE COURSE

17th November 2026
9.15 am – 12.30 pm
IW Chamber Members £250 plus VAT

This introductory course covers the ten main types of Letters of Credit used in international trade, from advance payment to Sight Documentary Collection and Documentary Letters of Credit. It includes the use of Bills of Exchange with and without documents.

Over 75% of first presentations to banks against Documentary Letters of Credit are rejected, resulting in delayed payments to exporters, additional costs, and breached delivery deadlines. This introductory course is suitable for all staff who need to have

a clear understanding of the procedures required to ensure payments for goods sold on documentary credit terms. Knowledge and understanding are reinforced through the use of exercises, tips on getting the credit you want and working examples of documentary credits.

Go to www.iwchamber.co.uk or
Email chamber@iwchamber.co.uk



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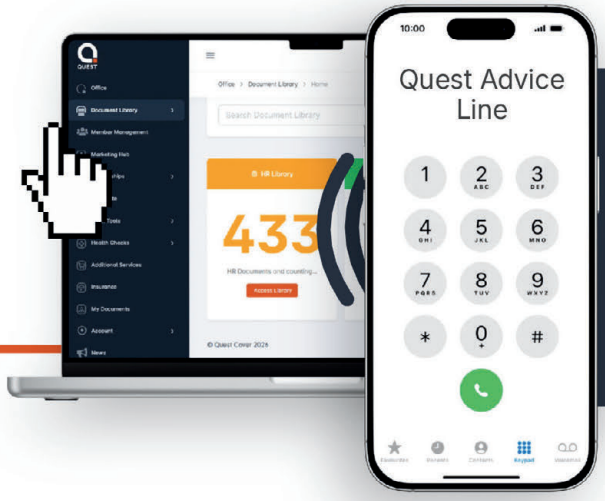
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IW CHAMBER **NEW MEMBERS**

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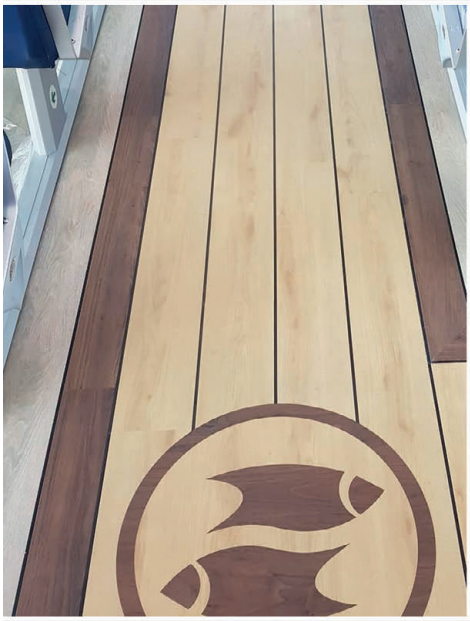
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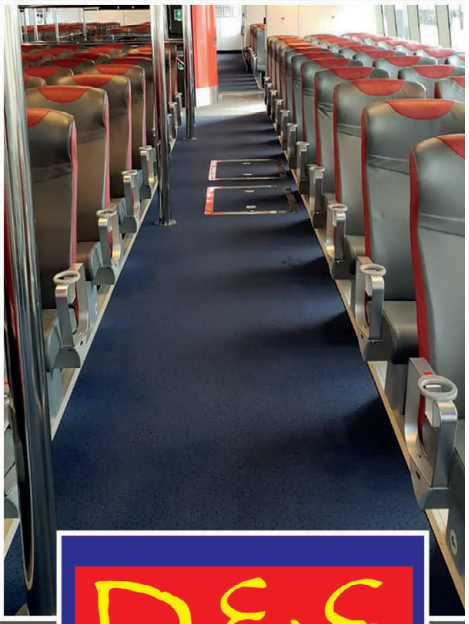
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IW CHAMBER PRESIDENT

Celebrating Island Business Success, Ambition and the Power of Positivity at This Year's Chamber Awards

By Alison Colley, IW Chamber President

The Isle of Wight Chamber Business Awards are always a highlight of the business calendar, but I have to admit that this year felt particularly special for me, as it was my first Awards as President of the Chamber and in the fantastic surroundings of Bembridge Fort.

Looking around the room at the finalists, sponsors, and businesses represented on the night, I was reminded again just how much we have to be proud of within our Island business community.

In my opening speech, I talked about positivity and change, and that whilst there are challenges outside of our control, as a Chamber, we have an important role in talking about those challenges, representing our members, and making sure the voice of Island businesses is heard.

But the challenges should not become the only story we tell about doing business on the Isle of Wight.

The Awards demonstrated that there is another story, and it is a really positive one.

We have Island businesses growing, investing, and creating employment. We have entrepreneurs taking risks and building new businesses. We have organisations innovating, finding new markets, and doing extraordinary things locally, nationally and internationally.

The quality and variety of this year's finalists demonstrated just how much talent, ambition and determination exists across our Island.

Sometimes I think we can be a little too good at talking about what we have not got, what is not working or why something cannot be done, and as I go into my second year as President, I would like us to change that conversation.

This does not mean pretending everything is perfect or ignoring the very real challenges businesses face, but it does mean being a little louder about what is going right.

Let's shout about businesses that invest here, let's celebrate entrepreneurs who take a chance, let's champion our young people and show them that there are exciting careers and opportunities right here on the Island.

And when an Isle of Wight business succeeds on a national or international stage, let's make sure people know where it came from.

One of the things I said at the Awards is something I genuinely believe; being on an Island doesn't have to hold our businesses back, and it can be one of our greatest strengths.

We support each other, we collaborate, and we are connected. There is a genuine sense of community here that you don't find everywhere else, and the atmosphere at the Awards demonstrated that perfectly.

Seeing businesses cheering one another on, celebrating each other's achievements and sharing in each other's success is what a strong business community looks like.

So, following this year's Awards, my message is a simple one.

Let's keep talking about the challenges and working together to tackle them. But let's talk just as loudly about our successes.

Let's be ambitious about what our Island can achieve.

And let's make sure that whenever an Isle of Wight business does something brilliant, we celebrate it.

Congratulations to every winner and finalist, and thank you to our sponsors, judges, the Chamber team and everyone who made this year's Awards possible.

Here's to positivity, here's to change, and here's to another year of showing just what Isle of Wight businesses can do. ■

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