

oneIsland

Your magazine from the
Isle of Wight Council
Issue twelve
February 2008
www.iwight.com

Special places

A look at the Island's
children's centres

Also inside: Eco Island - a vision for the future
Council tax and budget 2008/2009



Welcome



Welcome to the 12th issue of the Isle of Wight Council's magazine, which this month features important information on your council tax, our spending plans for the year ahead, and the One Island programme of improvements.

Much has been happening in recent months, particularly the issue of options for change in our education structure and the consultations across the Island. In this edition we provide information on the next stage in this process.

We also look ahead to progress with the Eco Island vision, and plans for two big events – including a major eco conference – in the coming months.

Through all areas of the council's activities we remain committed to delivering high quality value-for-money services. And in shaping our plans for 2008/2009 and beyond we have once again done our best to integrate the wishes you have expressed in residents' surveys and other consultations.

As ever, there is much important work to do on your behalf, and we remain determined to maintain the improvements and progress that Island residents deserve.

Councillor David Pugh
Leader, Isle of Wight Council

One Island is published each month, except for September and January – these editions are combined with those of the previous month. If you have community news to share with other readers or would like to advertise in *One Island*, we would like to hear from you.

We also welcome your letters – you can contact us by post, email or telephone.

Post One Island, Communications, County Hall, Newport
PO30 1UD

Email Onel Island@iow.gov.uk

Telephone 823105

makingcontact

USEFUL CONTACTS

Isle of Wight Council, County Hall,
Newport PO30 1UD

Fax 823333

Email customer.services@iow.gov.uk

Website www.iowight.com

TELEPHONE SERVICES

Call centre 821000

Mon to Fri: 8am to 6pm

Saturday: 9am to 1pm

For telephone assistance we recommend you contact the call centre directly where we aim to answer as many enquiries as possible at this first point of contact.

Popular numbers

Automated telephone payments	559310
Council tax	823901
Education	823455
Environmental health	823000
Housing benefits	823950
Libraries	203880
Licensing	823159
Planning	823552
Refuse collection	823777
Roads and highways	823777
Tourism	813818
Trading standards	823396
Leisure services	823828
Wightbus	823782
Dial-a-bus	522226

Adult and children's services

Adult services	823340
Children's services	525790
Local centres:	
Cowes	291144
Newport	823340
Ryde	566011
Sandown	408448
Headquarters	520600
Housing	823040

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

In an emergency dial 999

Fire and rescue control centre (24hrs)	525121
Out of hours:	
Highways	525121
Waste disposal	0800 3283851
Wightcare	821105



FACE TO FACE SERVICES

Newport Help Centre

Tel 821000

County Hall, Newport PO30 1UD

Mon to Fri: 8am to 6pm

Sat: 9am to 1pm

Ryde Help Centre

Tel 812678

188 High Street, Ryde PO33 2PN

Mon to Fri: 8.45am to 5pm

Sat: 9.30am to 12.30pm

Brading Help Centre

Tel 405873

West Street, Brading PO36 0DR

IW Council desk – Tues: 9am to 1pm

Shanklin Help Centre

Falcon Cross Hall, Falcon Road, Shanklin

Mon only: 10am to 4.30pm

West Wight Information Centre

Tel 756140

Freshwater Library, School Green Road,

Freshwater PO40 9AP

Mon: 9am to 5.15pm,

Tues and Wed: 9.30am to 5.15pm, Thur:

(closed), Fri: 9.30am to 4.45pm. Closed for lunch (1pm to 2pm each day)

Wootton Bridge Centre

Tel 884361

Joanne's Walk, Brannon Way,

Wootton Bridge PO33 4NU

IW Council desk – Mon, Tues,

Thurs, Fri: 9.15am to 1pm

Cowes Help Centre

Beckford Court, Beckford Road, Cowes

Fri (mornings): 9am to 12 noon



council meetings



Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are in public at County Hall. Call 823200 24-hours before a meeting to ensure it is going ahead and to check if any items are likely to be held in private session.

Council

(council chamber)

19 March (6pm)

Cabinet

(venue to be confirmed)

19 March (9pm)

1 April (6pm)

Planning Committee

(council chamber)

18 March (4pm)

Licensing (Determinations)

Sub-committee

(committee room one)

31 March (10am)

Audit Committee

(committee room one)

11 March (6pm)

Ethical Standards Committee

(committee room one)

17 March (6pm)

Policy Commission for Business and Infrastructure

(committee room one)

26 March (6pm)

Policy Commission for Care, Health and Housing

(committee room one)

5 March (6pm)

Policy Commission for Children and School Results

(committee room one)

2 April (6pm)

Policy Commission for Safer Communities

(committee room one)

27 March (6pm)

For a full list of council services, look out for a complete A to Z with your council tax book



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Cover picture: Enjoying shared learning at an Island children's centre



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Islandimage



Picture by Oliver Parsons

One Island is available on request as an audiotape, in large print, in Braille and in other languages.
For further details, please contact One Island on 823105. The magazine is also available online at www.iwight.com

The way forward for education... what happens next?

In January the council published full details of three options designed to help improve education standards on the Island.

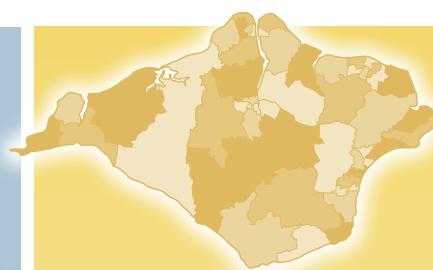
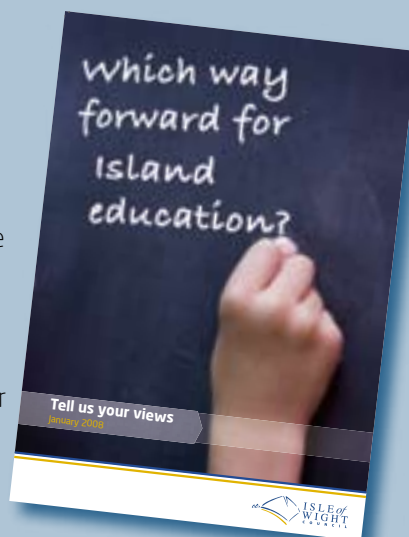
As part of a consultation process, opinions were sought through a questionnaire available online at the council's website at www.iwight.com and also as a pull out in the widely-distributed 'Which Way Forward for Island Education' booklet.

Details of the findings from the questionnaire will be published on 10 March on www.iwight.com and a final decision on which of the

three options will be introduced will take place on 19 March.

Once this final decision is taken, formal consultation with individual schools, including pre-schools and nurseries, will take place over the summer. The earliest date when any of the major changes will come in is September 2010.

If you wish to find out more about the council's proposals for education reform, click on www.iwight.com or check in the 'Which Way Forward for Island Education' booklet (pictured).



Fewer councillors likely from 2009

The number of councillors to be elected at the next Isle of Wight Council election in May 2009 looks likely to be reduced from 48 to 40.

Following an initial consultation phase, the Boundary Committee (in its draft recommendations) has agreed with the council that the number of councillors should be cut to 40.

The council has generally supported the draft recommendations, due to come into force in time for the 2009 local authority elections. But it does not agree with the Boundary Committee proposal to merge the parishes of Brading, St Helens and Bembridge into a single division, electing two councillors.

It was felt such a change might destroy the strong community ties felt by each parish to an individual councillor.

The publication of the Boundary Committee's final recommendations will take place in spring this year.

They will be implemented in 2009 if agreed by the Electoral Commission.



Taking that extra smoke free step

A new scheme is being launched to reward businesses which go beyond the letter of the law in promoting a smoke free environment.

The council, the Isle of Wight NHS Primary Care Trust and the Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce, Tourism and Industry, working as the Healthy Business Partnership, are promoting the scheme – which they hope could lead to the Island being a UK leader in smoke free environments.

They hope that the Island's tourism industry will make a particular effort to promote premises as being smoke free.

From 1 July last year it became an offence to smoke in substantially enclosed public places or workplaces. The vast majority of premises have complied with those requirements, but now the partnership is seeking to encourage businesses to go even further by designating their whole sites, including outside spaces, as smoke free.

Businesses who meet the criteria of the Smoke Free Award will be eligible to receive an attractive plaque to display on their premises. It is hoped that by displaying their plaques, businesses will not only receive the recognition they deserve, but also attract more customers to their smoke free premises.

Partnership chairman Kevin Smith said: "Wouldn't it be wonderful if the Isle of Wight could become the UK's first destination where every hotel had earned the Smoke Free Award? It would give the Island yet another unique selling point and also fit very well in with the Eco Island concept."



Top post for former Youth MP

Former Isle of Wight Youth MP, Billy Jones (pictured), has been elected to the post of UK Youth Parliament national corporate trustee.

Members of the UK Youth Parliament South East Region elected him to the position, which means he will be responsible for the general control

and management of the parliament's administration.

This will include fund raising, financial matters, employment of staff, and ensuring the parliament's activities are carried out legally and safely. Twelve young people from all over the UK sit on the board of trustees

with Billy, who ended his year of office as Youth MP on 31 January. The new Youth MP is 17 year old Max Connor.

Billy said: "In my new role I hope to look at ways the parliament can gain extra funding. I'm really looking forward to what I'm sure will be a challenging three years in office."

Volunteers needed for cycling festival



Organisers of this year's Isle of Wight Cycling Festival are on the lookout for volunteers to become ride leaders for the event.

The festival takes place from 13 to 21 September, and the ride leaders act as guides on the 30 different routes.

The routes take in the most picturesque areas of the Island as well as local landmarks and the occasional country pub. Cyclists with good local knowledge are needed to lead those wishing to take part.

If you are keen to help, please contact Claire Critchison of the council's events team on 203891, email: claire.whittington@iow.gov.uk (by 30 April).

A complete programme of rides will be available on the website (www.sunseaandcycling.com) and from the festival programme (available from Island tourist information centres) in June.

Old pier gets a smartening up



Ryde Pier, parts of which were built almost 200 years ago, has been benefiting from some renovation and repainting thanks to the council and owner Wightlink.

The pier, originally opened in July 1814 and now a grade II listed building, is one of the Island's best-known structures.

The council's conservation and design team is working with Wightlink on various projects to improve the pier's appearance.

Recently the pier's Victorian decorative railings were repainted and replaced where necessary using casts from the originals; its decorative fire huts were refurbished; and the dull galvanised lamp-posts were painted black to fit in better with the surroundings.

Commission says council is 'improving well'

The Isle of Wight Council has been assessed as 'improving well' by the Audit Commission.

In its Direction of Travel assessment – the most up-to-date indicator of its performance – the council was judged to be offering improved services to the public while making good progress with its priorities.

Over two thirds of the council's performance indicators had improved and a third were among the best nationally.

Highlighted as particularly improving areas were adult services, where more people were helped to live alone, and planning, where applications were being processed more quickly.

The Audit Commission recognised the council had made progress in the areas of community safety, in providing public conveniences, encouraging Islanders to take up leisure pursuits and in collecting council tax.

However, improvement in education was found to be mixed and achievements remained below standard.

The commission also highlighted the condition of the Island's roads and urged it to adopt a contingency plan should its bid for Private Finance Initiative funding fail.

The Audit Commission said: "The council is dealing with some high profile issues of public concern and is using the

lessons learnt to improve controls and strengthen the organisation to tackle key priorities.

"It has made good progress with plans to sustain future improvement and a number of key strategies have been adopted during the year."

Council leader, Councillor David Pugh, said: "There is no hiding the fact that this has been a difficult year in some areas. So it is good news for Islanders that despite the difficulties presented by issues such as the Undercliff, the Audit Commission has recognised the improvements we continue to make to services.

"We, as an organisation, have become stronger over the past year and lessons have been learned. We will continue to remain focused on improving services further and working towards becoming an excellent authority."

Chief Executive Joe Duckworth said: "This is the second year running we have been assessed as 'improving well' so it is pleasing we have maintained our forward momentum as well as meeting the challenges of the last year.

"Now it is our duty to Islanders to ensure this improvement continues. We have made progress and while there is still more to do, we are moving on from an increasingly sound position."



Pan development exhibition

Around 150 people took the chance to have their say on the proposed new Pan development at a special public exhibition.

Representatives from the council, development partner Miller Homes, Pan Neighbourhood Partnership and Spectrum Housing Group were on hand to answer questions and receive views during the exhibition at Downside Middle School.

Issues covered included the impact the development of up to 1,000 homes - all built to a high environmental standard

and around 300 of them affordable homes - would have on the surrounding habitats and streams.

Also covered were issues of access and who would live in the new properties.

Comments raised will be evaluated.

Sarah Mitchell, director of community services, said: "We all know what a close community Pan is, so we shouldn't be surprised so many people came along to find out more about the project and to register these views and suggestions."

Confidential help service

Island residents experiencing financial, legal and other difficulties are being encouraged to contact a free government-funded confidential service.

Community Legal Advice provides help and advice on a range of common legal problems and is paid for by legal aid.

You may be drowning in debt, or have had your benefits stopped. Perhaps you have been unfairly dismissed from your job or are behind with your rent.

Community Legal Advice has a free helpline you can call (0845 345 4 345), which provides independent advice about debt, education, benefits and tax credits, employment, and housing problems for people on a low



income or benefits.

Legal advice is available from 9am to 6.30pm from Monday to Friday. If you call outside these times you can leave a message and the service will call you back.

The helpline also has a translation service if you would like advice in a language other than English or Welsh.

• For information online you can visit www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk

Check out your hot water system



Island householders are being warned about the dangers of scalding water spilling out from their hot water systems.

It follows two incidents on the mainland when large volumes of near boiling water poured through bedroom ceilings and on to occupants sleeping below.

The council's housing section is asking homeowners, tenants, landlords and the plumbing industry to check on a rare but potentially serious scalding risk from domestic hot water systems which include a fixed all-electric, or part-electric immersion heater in conjunction with a plastic cold water storage cistern or tank located in a roof space.

Particular consideration should be given to systems more than ten years old and systems where homeowners or landlords may have other reasons to suspect the initial installation or subsequent work.

The risk is greatest when cisterns are located above bedrooms and is more likely in houses built between 1945 and 1975.

Occupants should be aware of warning signs such as excessive noise from the hot water cylinder indicating possible thermostat failure and overheating of the water in the cylinder.

Warning signs include:

- excessive hot water coming out of hot water taps;
- excessive noise or bubbling from the hot water cylinder;
- hot water coming out of cold water taps;
- steam/moisture in the attic or roof space.

Anyone who suspects something is wrong should switch off the system. Tenants should contact their landlords and householders should contact a reputable plumber.

Fourth year of Soapbox Challenge



The annual Isle of Wight Soapbox Challenge at Pan - a popular community go-kart event for young people - is to be held for the fourth consecutive year this June.

The event, on Sunday 22 June, is staged over a purpose-built course at Downside Middle School, Newport, and involves racing by young people aged 12 to 20 in karts they have made themselves.

Details of the event and how to enter will soon be available on the website www.iow-soapbox-derby-challenge.org.uk

• Anyone interested in being part of the organising group is asked to contact Tina Byers on 814260 or email: tina.byers@iow.gov.uk

Milestone for village awards

PICTURED:
Yarmouth,
winner of the
2007 Best Kept
Village award



The Isle of Wight Best Kept Village Awards will be celebrating their 40th anniversary in 2008.

The awards started in 1968, when 11 villages entered, and since then have gone from strength to strength, with last year a total of 43 villages taking part, and Yarmouth declared overall best kept village.

In 2008, as in previous years, the awards will encourage villages across the Island to improve their appearance and tidiness, with special emphasis on reducing litter and instilling a sense of pride.

Judging for the awards will take place in May and June, with villages divided into four groups: extra large, large, medium-sized and small villages.

All villages are automatically entered, and there are also awards for a conservation project and for the best maintained war memorial.

This year's results will be made official at the start of July, and a special ceremony and 40th anniversary celebrations will be held in September.

Highlighting road safety

A capacity 300-strong crowd recently helped celebrate the lives of three young Islanders who died in road accidents.

The 'Don't Forget' event at St George's Park, Newport, was organised by the council as part of its on-going campaign to improve road safety.

Island bands including Llana and the IT Kids and Goodbye Stereo were among performers at the event dedicated to Pascha Burgoyne, 16, Tom Rees, 17, and Martin Hawker, 18, who all lost their lives in traffic accidents in the West Wight in the last two years.

Tracey Skipper, senior road safety officer, said: "It was a fantastic event. A capacity audience turned the event into a fitting tribute to Pascha, Tom and Martin.

"It was clear from the comments made to me by many of those who were there that the need to drive safely had really got home.

"I would like to say how grateful I am to the parents of Pascha, Tom and Martin for being so brave in sharing their tragic experiences. It is by highlighting the cases of real people who were known and loved within the local communities that we hope to really get our road safety messages across most effectively."

The council's road safety campaign has also this month featured a series of roadshows highlighting speed awareness and safe driving.



Sports unit round-up

Encouraging youngsters onto the greens

The council's sport unit has been helping Newport Golf Club attract more local youngsters to the royal and ancient game.

Sports development officer Tom Lyons has been working closely with the club to develop its junior golf programme through improved school links and a special community programme at the club.

Close links have been built with primary and middle schools through Tri-Golf and Golf-Extreme taster sessions run by Graham Darke of the Professional Golfers' Association, assisted by

specialised trained volunteers from the club itself.

To build on the links established with schools the club has developed a community programme involving weekly group lessons on a Saturday morning, soon to be extended to a weekday evening. The club has further plans to hold golf festivals and junior open days.

• For more information on how the sports unit could help your club please contact 823818 or email Sportsunit@iow.gov.uk

Islanders sign up for volunteering

More than 50 Island sports volunteers have signed up and begun training on the *On Your Marks* programme.

The programme offers free training for anyone interested in volunteering in sports. All volunteers receive training in child protection, health and safety and first aid for sports injuries, as well as being able to choose one of the following four courses: basic IT, foreign languages, equity and diversity, and customer care.

Places are still available for the training, and anyone interested in developing their skills free of charge and becoming a volunteer should contact the council's sports unit on 823818, or email sportsunit@iow.gov.uk

Sports unit activity guide

• Volleyball

Sundays, 7pm and 9pm, at Medina Leisure Centre, for males and females aged 16-plus, £2 per session.

• Ryde Kings Youth Badminton

Wednesdays, 7pm to 8pm, at Ryde Sports Centre, ages 13 to 18, £1 per person, all equipment supplied.

For more information call the sports unit on 823818 or email: sportsunit@iow.gov.uk

Adopt a garden and help your neighbour



An innovative pilot scheme has been launched on the Island to bring into use gardens which their owners can no longer look after.

The Adopt-A-Garden project aims to link disused gardens with people who are keen to grow but don't have a plot.

The target is to match 50 gardens with 50 gardeners over the next 14 months, helping local people to grow more local produce.

There are many Islanders who can no longer look after their gardens due to ill health or old age, and the idea is to assist them by utilising helpers including some of the 500-plus people on the council's allotment waiting list.

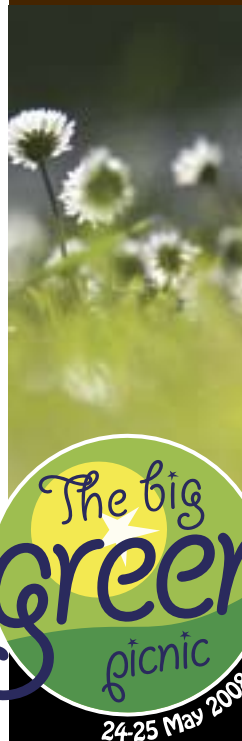
The council is endorsing the project which is being led by environmental charity The Footprint Trust, and supported by the Isle of Wight Charitable Trust and Anchor Staying Put.

The project will help householders get their gardens looked after free of charge and provide a new allotment in return. No money will exchange hands and either party can give six weeks notice at any time.

Ray Harrington-Vail of The Footprint Trust, said: "New friendships might be developed between neighbours and across the generations. The scheme could mean that some of the Island's 3,000 uncared for gardens could be growing local food for local people, reducing food miles and encouraging healthy eating along with exercise through gardening activities. This fits very neatly with the council's Eco Island vision."

• Anyone interested in the project is asked to contact The Footprint Trust on 822282 or email: info@footprint-trust.co.uk

Check out iwight.com for Big Green Picnic



National stage for youth councillors

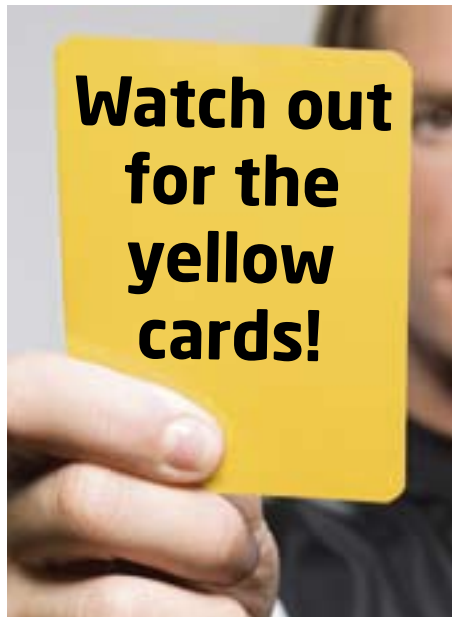
Members of the Isle of Wight Youth Council recently took to a national stage, speaking at a major conference in London about bus travel for young people.

They were invited by the National Youth Agency to be part of a debate about innovative solutions for young people who use the bus on a regular basis.

The conference was held at the Hilton London Metropole and among the invitees were ministers, transport managers and young people from across the country.

Two years ago, the council, Southern Vectis and Island Line introduced a student rider scheme for young people under the age of 19 to travel on a bus or train at a flat rate. The Isle of Wight Youth Council was a key contributor in pushing for the initiative.

Watch out for the yellow cards!



Town centre managers, community support officers and dog wardens on the Island are set to be given the power to issue yellow cards to residents, businesses and visitors over the next two months, in a wide ranging crackdown on anti-social behaviour.

The yellow cards will warn people that they are committing a number of offences including littering, dog fouling, graffiti and abandoning vehicles in advance of a new range of fixed penalty notices being launched from 2 April.

People who drop cigarette butts, leave refuse outside their homes other than on designated rubbish collection days, abandon vehicles, daub graffiti or allow their dogs to foul, will face a range of fines when the new laws come into force.

In the meantime, council staff will be issuing officers including the ten town centre managers with yellow cards to warn residents that they are committing the offence.

Fines, after the educative approach ends on 2 April, will range from £50 for litter dropping rising to £75 if not paid within 14 days, to abandoning a vehicle which will cost offenders £120 or £300 if not paid within 14 days.

Cash raised from the fines regime will be re-invested back into the service where the offence was committed.

Other fines that could be issued by managers include smoking in a smoke free place, allowing a dog to enter an area where the animal is not allowed, or failing to have a dog on a lead.

The new system comes into place under the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005 which allows local authorities to issue fixed penalty notices for a number of offences.

The new powers have been drawn up in partnership with the police and the council's safer neighbourhoods team.

Iwight.com, the council's website portal, has set up a special micro-site with details of the Big Green Picnic due to take place at Church Litten Park, Newport on 24 and 25 May.

The Big Green Picnic is designed as a community-based event to encourage individuals of all ages to do their bit to create an Eco Island. More details of the event and the Eco Island initiative can be found in a special feature on page 10.

Visit the Big Green Picnic site at www.iwight.com/biggreenpicnic or via the iwight.com homepage.

At your convenience!



The latest toilets to be refurbished or replaced in a programme of work to improve provision across the Island are now open to the public.

The brand new block in The Cut, Cowes, follows a major overhaul of the toilets in Appley Park, Ryde, opened in January.

Work on the Cowes block was held up slightly by the discovery of an old well underneath the former unsightly stainless steel building. The new toilets comprise six cubicles including one modified for disabled use.

Also progressing are plans to build four other Eco-friendly conveniences in Ventnor, Yaverland, Brading and Wootton. Work on three of those loos – each including special features such as public art and the latest in sustainable energy techniques – is now underway, with a completion date earmarked for 31 May.

Stuart Love, director of environment and neighbourhoods, said: "We know from consulting the public that toilets are an issue of importance to them. We hope this new work will be very much to their liking and give first class amenities that will be well used by residents and visitors."



Clean up for Lukely Brook

Newport's town centre managers recently joined forces with the council's community support officers to clean up a section of Lukely Brook.

Five shopping trolleys were fished out of the brook, as well as two roadworks signs and a bicycle.

The shopping trolleys were returned to the shops they came from and the bicycle was taken away for recycling.

The council is currently drawing up a programme of works to clear up waterways as part of the One Island programme.

Competition winner



This unusual image of a 'fridge at sunset' was the winning photograph in a competition run under the Taste of the Wight programme, which is supported by the council.

The competition featured in the programme's Taste of the Wight magazine (winter edition). The winning photograph was entered by Jack Cleary from Niton, who won a dinner for two at The Royal Hotel, Ventnor.



Booklet to celebrate the Isle of Wight

The distinctiveness of the Isle of Wight is being celebrated under a new project organised by the council's conservation and design team and the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Unit.

The project will record and celebrate many of the features and characteristics that contribute to the Island's environment.

Local people will be encouraged to gather photographs for a miscellany celebrating the physical 'placemarks' and wealth of interesting detail across the Island.

The project does not focus on the wider landscape, buildings, animals or people, but is about appreciating the minutiae of familiar places and those ordinary or quirky things that contribute to 'islandness'.

Island residents are being encouraged to take a fresh look at places they enjoy every day across the Island, and send in photographs of, or ideas for, objects and details that highlight what makes the Island unique.

Pictures submitted will be collated over the next few months for a booklet to be published in April.

It is hoped the booklet will provide a valuable reference for artists, architects, visitors, residents, community groups and schools.

• Photographs and ideas can be sent by post to: Freepost RRLA-XREB-BXZZ, Isle of Wight AONB Unit, Seaclose Offices, Fairlee Road, Newport PO30 2QS, or to aonb@iow.gov.uk, with the subject heading "Islandness entry".

All entries should be submitted no later than 1 April 2008 and ideally photographs should be a minimum 300dpi and sent as either a tiff or jpeg file.

All submissions will become the property of the AONB partnership, which will retain the copyright and may use the material submitted for future use.

Seven successful years for lottery



The Isle of Wight Lottery, set up seven years ago to help Island business, has provided interest free loans worth more than £250,000 to 50 Island companies since April 2001.

It is estimated the lottery has directly helped to create 120 jobs in that period, and in partnership with the Isle of Wight Enterprise Agency has supported 300 companies in creating 500 other jobs.

The lottery has also given out £791,500 in prize money to more than 1,000 winners since 2001. Latest first prize winner is Daisy De La Torre, recently made redundant and who plans to use her £2,000 winnings to help set up her own business.

• For more information on the Isle of Wight Lottery, go to www.isleofwightlottery.com

Eco Island

a vision for the future

Major plans are underway to transform the Isle of Wight into an Eco Island for the future. Here we look at the ambitious project and two key events which are set to give it a high profile launch

RECENT MONTHS have seen significant media attention on the innovative Eco Island vision which aims to put the Isle of Wight in the vanguard of eco-friendly initiatives.

The council and its partners are behind the idea to establish the Island as a world-renowned centre for sustainable living.

Eco Island is a vision for the future of the whole Island to 2020 and beyond, and is shared islandwide by the many public sector, commercial and voluntary organisations that make up the Island Strategic Partnership.

The partnership has been tasked with enhancing and protecting the current and future interests of the Island and its community through an Eco Island strategy.

Organisations making up the

partnership have been listening to their staff, Island residents and business and community leaders, through surveys to help shape the vision.

Council chief executive Joe Duckworth explained: "The intention is to create a thriving economy and a real sense of pride, where residents and visitors enjoy healthy lives, feel safe and are treated with respect.

"It's about embracing 'green' technology so that we can enhance and protect our natural environment at the same time as creating wealth for the Island and reducing our carbon footprint."

Eco Island will encourage and promote a healthy and supportive Island, safer neighbourhoods, and communities where children and

young people have the support, encouragement and inspiration to explore and develop their potential.

Two high profile events in the coming months, an Eco Island conference and the Big Green Picnic, will help get the Eco Island initiative fully underway.

Council leader, Councillor David Pugh, said: "We are passionate about delivering the Eco Island vision. It will only become a reality if it is supported by the Island as a whole and by each of us individually.

"That is why we want to hear from you. If you have any views or suggestions or would like to know what you can contribute to Eco Island then please contact us at ecoisland@iow.gov.uk."



Cowes Yacht Haven is to be the location for a major conference promoting the Island as a location for eco excellence.

The Eco Island Conference takes place on Wednesday 26 March, and is planned to be one of the most important events on the Island business calendar.

People from across the Island and from the mainland will be invited to the event, where they

will learn how they can play a part in the Eco Island vision.

There will be keynote speakers, including renowned architect Sir Terry Farrell, as well as leading environmental organisations.

The day-long conference will be split into two parts: a morning session with practical workshops about going carbon neutral; and the afternoon

will include internationally-recognised environmental authorities and business people offering their views on how to achieve an Eco Island.

The council will also launch its sustainable community strategy at the conference.

For more information please email ecoislandconference@iow.gov.uk



Eco Island conference

The Big Green Picnic will be an inspiring and entertaining educational and community event to encourage Island residents towards a greener lifestyle.

It takes place on Saturday and Sunday, 24 and 25 May, at Church Litten, Newport.

The event will feature activities and displays about what services and products are available, as well as local music, arts and produce.

More information on the event is available from Claire Critchison on 203891, or by visiting www.iwight.com/biggreenpicnic



The Big Green Picnic



Eco Island – a vision for the future

A new Eco Island vision created by the council and its partners has played a key role in shaping our budget for the year ahead.

The vision has given clear direction to the One Island programme of priorities which you have identified through residents' surveys over the past two years.

This four-page budget special gives a flavour of how and where we will direct our funds and what it means for you in terms of council tax.

On this page we explain how you have helped shape our plans, and opposite how we are responding positively to your views through the One Island projects.

Then on the next two pages we explain spending and council tax details for 2008/2009

How you shaped the budget

Last week the council set its budget and council tax levels for the next 12 months. At **3.9 per cent**, the increase was in line with inflation at a time when many other councils have approved increases of above four per cent.

At the heart of our budget-setting process were the priorities you highlighted for attention in our residents' surveys of the past two years and in the budget consultation and stakeholder meetings.

Last February the council launched the One Island programme and undertook 24 major improvement projects.

For 2008/2009 we will continue to develop these projects and will also be supplementing the programme with a whole range of new initiatives.

One Island achievements so far

During the past 12 months we have made progress with many One Island projects, bringing about positive changes and benefits for local residents.

These have included:

- around 1,000 free personal homecare packages for elderly residents, resulting in a 23 per cent reduction in the number of people living in residential care and a 56 per cent increase in older people being supported by the community;
- 75 speed reactive signs installed across the Island, with more to follow;
- six speed restriction (20mph) limits outside schools;
- one million blooms planted across the Island;
- four new green 'super loos', four toilets refurbished and one underway, and additional seasonal toilet attendants;
- two new dog wardens and new dog bins in place;
- assisting nine parish councils to achieve the quality parish accolade;
- appointing a developer to drive forward plans for Pan to build 800 new eco-friendly homes;
- £500,000 spent on smartening up Island towns;
- 11 new town centre managers in place;
- thousands of free swimming sessions taken up in school holidays by Island children;
- pledging £1.3 million to support the Island Games.



Thousands of free holiday swimming sessions

"We have set a council tax increase of 3.9 per cent, reflecting the consultation response that it should be kept to the rate of inflation."

"We remain focused on delivering the immediate priorities of residents; but must also look to the long term needs of the council and the Island."

"This is what our Eco Island plans are all about, reducing carbon emissions while delivering positive improvements in many areas."



David Pugh, Leader, Isle of Wight Council



The One Million Blooms planting programme will be extended

Responding to your priorities

One Island – investing in the Island

In its budget the council has allocated millions of pounds to its latest series of One Island schemes – designed to make a positive and immediate impact on Island life.

We have grouped these under the key themes of the council's corporate plan:

The One Island projects for 2008/2009 include:

A safe and well-kept Island

- The council will be spending an additional £1.75 million on the upkeep of Island roads this year and will continue with its drive to secure £325 million of government Private Finance Initiative credits to significantly improve the road network around the Island.

- Six new public toilets will be rebuilt and one refurbished by March 2009.
- Outside all schools, where possible, there will be 20mph zones within the next two years to improve children's safety.
- There will be a further clamp down on drinking in public places with the introduction of three more no-drinking zones to tackle anti-social behaviour in town centre trouble spots.
- The one million blooms planting programme will be extended to three more showcase areas and 20 community-led planted areas.

A thriving Island

- Appointment of one of the world's leading architects, Sir Terry Farrell, as a new design champion to help ensure development on the Island is high quality, sustainable and co-ordinated.
- Use of planning powers to promote sustainable development through the emerging Island plan which replaces the Unitary Development Plan as the Island's planning blueprint.

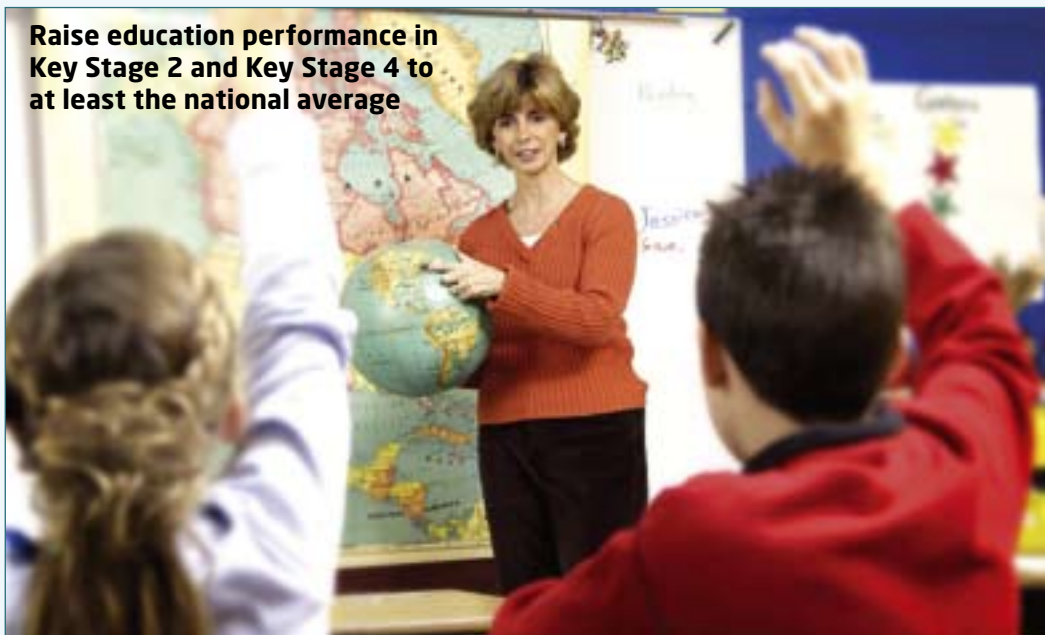
A healthy and supportive Island

- £500,000 financial support to help insulate 1,500 Island homes, bringing warmth for the most vulnerable residents and creating greater fuel efficiencies.
- Bring 100 empty properties back into use and deliver 160 affordable homes.
- Enable 100 people with learning disabilities to live independently at home.
- Encourage more people over 80 to take up the council's pioneering free homecare scheme.
- Encourage 22,000 more people to use leisure centres by upgrading equipment and expanding the free swimming initiative introduced last year.



People with learning difficulties will be helped to live independently at home

Raise education performance in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 to at least the national average



An inspiring Island

- Raise education performance in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 to at least the national average over the next three years.
- Improve the support to children who are 'looked-after' by the council, in particular by establishing a new 'children in care council' by September 2008, to enable young people in care to talk about and help shape the services they receive.
- Keep the number of young people not in education or training to five per cent or less by offering advice and support to help them back into work or a learning environment; and work to reduce teenage pregnancies.
- Reducing the numbers of children and young people who are currently excluded from school by ten per cent in the 2008/2009 academic year.
- Start the latest phase of work on the new state-of-the-art modern learning centre at Cowes, offering facilities not just for children and young people and their families but for all Island residents and the business community.

A modern council

- Launch a comprehensive A to Z of services to make it easier for residents to access council services.
- Save £2 million by being more efficient – one call to the council's 821000 number will give residents the opportunity to access 113 services and be signposted to many others.
- Pledge to provide better services to customers by responding to residents by email in two days, by letter in 15 days and face-face in five minutes, and processing new benefit claims within 20 days.

Alongside these projects, the council will also be undertaking specific eco initiatives to help in the drive to reduce the Island's carbon footprint.

These include:

- Eco Island conference to engage and inform key Island business leaders.
- The Big Green Picnic event for Island residents to promote 'green living' and provide information, support and advice.
- 200 more Green Island awards to recognise green businesses.
- Converting 13 council fleet vehicles to run on biofuels – pure vegetable oil – this year, as part of a drive to reduce the council's overall carbon emissions by four per cent.
- Following the lead set in Ventnor, the council will be introducing a zero plastic bag initiative; encouraging the use of renewable bags instead of plastic ones across the Island.
- Five new electric charging points in council car parks – encouraging drivers to switch to more eco-friendly forms of motoring.

One call will give access to 113 council services



Your council tax

Your council tax increase for 2008/2009 has been set at **3.9 per cent**.

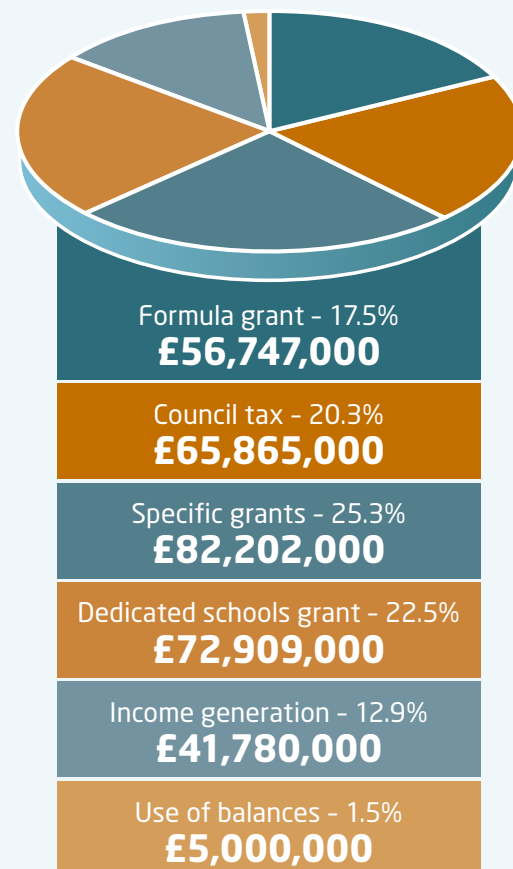
Here we explain how your council tax contributes to our overall funding, where we will spend our funds in 2008/2009, and what the council tax for your band is. Also the figures for your parish or town area and the Hampshire Police precept.

Where the council's money comes from

The money the council uses to provide services comes from:

- formula grant from the government;
- the council tax;
- grants for specific services and projects;
- income from charging for certain services.

From April 2008, certain grants that were previously paid by the government to the council as specific grants are being included as part of the revenue support grant (RSG) distribution. This contributes particularly to increases in the gross costs of adult social services, children's services and consequently the budget requirement. However, there is no net impact on the council in 2008/2009 as these increases are matched by a corresponding increase in formula grant.



Where the money will go in 2008/2009

	This year £'000	Last year £'000
Fire service	7,169	6,670
Adult social services	25,591	21,602
Older people social services	32,575	30,885
Housing services	59,762	57,664
Schools' budget	95,515	93,207
Children's services	32,721	28,125
Coast protection	526	434
Environmental health - consumer protection	1,690	1,543
Public toilets	812	692
Trading standards - consumer protection	670	563
Street and beach cleansing	1,753	1,648
Waste management	8,000	7,696
Highway maintenance	6,700	5,222
Street lighting	614	665
Public transport	5,551	4,468
Planning and development control	4,052	2,884
Economic development and regeneration	899	882
Recreation and sport	5,990	5,650
Parks and open spaces	2,310	2,513
Tourism	2,507	2,399
Libraries	2,571	2,294
Public realm	1,015	1,050
Other services	20,335	20,129
Other financing	5,175	8,153
Gross expenditure	324,503	307,038
Less: specific grants and other income	-123,982	-121,824
Budget requirement including schools	200,521	185,214

Four factors that affect what you pay

1. The level of tax set by the Isle of Wight Council - The level of tax set by the council to cover the cost of services it will provide in 2008/2009 is 3.9 per cent higher than in 2007/2008, equivalent to 78p per week for a band C taxpayer.

2. The property band you are in - The value of your property, on 1 April 1991, will have been assessed by the independent listing officer, a central government agent. Your property will then have been placed in one of eight bands - your bill will show which one.

Band	Value of property (1/4/91)	Proportion of band D	Council tax (excluding parishes)
A	Up to £40,000	6/9	£900.89 (*£750.74)
B	£40,001 to £52,000	7/9	£1,051.04
C	£52,001 to £68,000	8/9	£1,201.19
D	£68,001 to £88,000	9/9	£1,351.34
E	£88,001 to £120,000	11/9	£1,651.64
F	£120,001 to £160,000	13/9	£1,951.94
G	£160,001 to £320,000	15/9	£2,252.23
H	Over £320,000	18/9	£2,702.68

*Disabled discount

3. The level of spending set independently by the Hampshire Police Authority - The element of council tax that relates to the Hampshire Police Authority will rise by 8.1 per cent in 2008/2009, equivalent to 17p per week more for a band C taxpayer.

4. Charges for local services - Your bill includes an amount towards the cost of the town or parish council for the area in which you live.

Council, police, parishes and towns

The table below shows the combined costs for a band D council tax payer. The figures include the Isle of Wight Council, the Hampshire Police Authority and the Island's town and parish councils.

	£ Per band D property	£ Total 2008/2009	£ Total 2007/2008
Isle of Wight Council	1,215.80	66,241,890	63,030,434
Hampshire Police Authority	135.54	7,384,788	6,753,030
Parish/Town Councils			
Arreton	13.11	5,200.00	4,000.00
Bembridge	46.87	97,000.00	86,400.00
Brading	49.82	41,250.00	38,000.00
Brighthstone	17.90	15,000.00	15,000.00
Calbourne	22.48	9,117.00	8,895.00
Chale	24.97	7,000.00	6,700.00
Cowes	19.32	81,000.00	79,000.00
East Cowes	28.11	66,306.00	55,335.00
Fishbourne	18.13	7,638.00	7,416.00
Freshwater	22.31	56,847.00	54,340.96
Gatcombe	32.59	6,300.00	6,300.00
Godshell	22.73	14,000.00	12,000.00
Gurnard	31.36	25,000.00	23,000.00
Havenstreet and Ashey	28.17	9,900.00	9,000.00
Lake	20.81	40,000.00	30,000.00
Nettlestone and Seaview	13.68	23,285.00	23,965.00
Newchurch	9.26	10,300.00	9,450.00
Newport*	14.05	109,814.60	0.00*
Niton and Whitwell	12.34	12,200.00	12,050.00
Northwood*	14.07	12,577.57	0.00*
Rookley	22.02	5,460.00	5,250.00
Ryde*	22.03	188,762.35	0.00*
Sandown	38.27	98,000.00	88,350.00
Shalfleet	18.61	14,000.00	12,200.00
Shanklin	22.61	82,182.00	58,342.00
Shorwell	12.59	4,250.00	4,175.00
St Helens	17.58	10,000.00	15,000.00
Totland	23.88	32,265.00	30,438.00
Ventnor	36.54	99,500.00	90,000.00
Whippingham*	21.00	7,322.75	0.00*
Wootton Bridge	30.64	45,000.00	40,600.00
Wroxall	13.33	8,930.00	8,504.00
Yarmouth	35.53	18,471.00	18,471.00

Please note: the council is required to show costs as they affect band D council taxpayers.

* Four new parish councils will be created for 2008/2009. The precepts levied relating to these parishes replaces the special expenses charged previously.

At the heart of their communities



PICTURED: (left to right) Sally Woods, Cathy Mills and Val Taylor

Cathy Mills, Brading deputy town clerk

CATHY MILLS has a simple philosophy on how her town council should serve the people of Brading.

"We consult widely and believe and hope that residents feel involved – and we recognise if they don't feel involved we're not doing our job properly.

"Local people should be able to see what is being achieved and should be able to appreciate it, and we know there is always room for improvement."

Currently she is deputy clerk to Brading Town Council, having served her apprenticeship with the parish council at neighbouring St Helens for five years.

Her previous work had been with local pharmacies, including book-keeping for five pharmacies. She felt, though, that she needed a more challenging role that fitted around her children and their schooling. That led to her applying to become clerk at St Helens, a job she admitted she enjoyed immediately.

"I never knew what each day would bring and life was always full of surprises," she said. While there she gained a Certificate of Higher Education, to help her better undertake her duties.

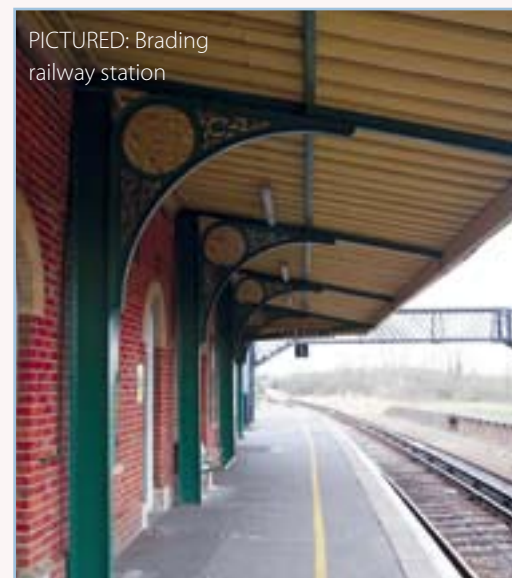
In 1997 she was appointed clerk to Brading Town Council, an area she knew well.

One of the key issues when Cathy arrived was to improve communication with the residents of the town.

"The first thing we did, with the support of Brading Town Trust, was to open an office for the public in the back of the town hall. This was an immediate success with residents bringing many queries. My hours increased from seven to 14 per week," she said.

Another issue was that of redundant buildings in the town, so in 2000 Brading

PICTURED: Brading railway station



The Isle of Wight is an acknowledged national leader when it comes to the development of its parish and town councils. At the heart of the councils and their work for their community are their dedicated and hard-working clerks. Here three town and parish clerks give us a special insight into their roles and how they contribute to local life

PICTURED: The multi-use games area in Freshwater under construction in June last year



Town Council took the decision to seek grant funding to restore a derelict education property and use it as a community centre. The bid was successful and the council moved offices and opened the building to the public in 2002. This building is now well used and has computers for public use, IT lessons, a book exchange and various surgeries.

"At present we average between 400 and 450 people visiting the centre a month," said Cathy.

Another important project for the community of Brading was the restoration of the railway station in 2003.

To help with the increasing workload an assistant clerk, Rebecca Tuck, was taken on, and Cathy has now swapped roles with her to make the best use of their individual skills. Cathy is now deputy clerk and financial officer, focusing on grant funding, planning and community development work.

"Brading is a unique town, the secret of its success is that it is full of friendly people who are always willing to help out and offer a hand whenever they are asked, and want to work together for the benefit of all," said Cathy.

"As for being a town clerk, well it is the most satisfying job I have ever had. I have been lucky enough to work with an excellent team and a great community."

Sally Woods, Freshwater parish clerk

A GENUINE LOVE for the area where she lives has helped inspire and drive Sally Woods in her role as clerk to Freshwater Parish Council.

She has been in the role for close to three years and had good preparation for the job – serving as clerk to the parish council for neighbouring Totland for ten years.

"In my ten years at Totland and nearly three years at Freshwater, I have found that local knowledge and my love of the locality has been of great benefit," said Sally.

Before becoming a parish clerk she worked in a variety of jobs – with the experience proving useful for her later community role.

She had been with the Isle of Wight Council in both personnel and health and safety sections, and then worked as school secretary in the West Wight. Later she ran a typing agency from home, and then joined social services to help set up Freshwater Neighbourhood Office. As home care organiser she supervised a team of 35 home care workers.

Sally's first taste of parish council work came when she became clerk to Totland Parish Council, staying for ten years. She later returned to parish clerk work in April 2005 at Freshwater, and has thrown her energies into a wide range of tasks for her local community.

"Projects have included much needed improvements to open spaces such as two allotment extensions, planting projects, updated and extended contracts for grass cutting, ditch and stream clearance and rat control, tree surveys, securing grants for refurbishing the war memorial and village pond, as well as planting projects," said Sally.

Important links have also been forged with local people and groups such as the Freshwater Village Association, and the probation service through the restorative justice system.

A multi-use games area has recently been provided for the village, adding to the existing skateboard park, which is being refurbished.

Public meetings have also been held regularly to ask the parishioners about their concerns and address problems such as vandalism and under-age drinking.

"I love the job, although it can be quite stressful at times. I like the variety and meeting people. I hope to still be here in ten years time helping to run the parish council for the benefit of the community," said Sally.

Val Taylor, Sandown town clerk

VAL TAYLOR'S extensive local government experience has stood her in good stead since she took up the position of clerk to Sandown Town Council in May 2005.

A former county councillor and an experienced local councillor, she has balanced her community work over the years with her main career as a midwife, including as a district midwifery sister for Sandown.

Through her past council work, she also built up considerable experience in the areas of personnel management and employment law.

Val said: "When I became town clerk it

gave me the opportunity to continue working once again in the community I both love and admire.

"The first step I took as a clerk was to join a professional body called the Society of Local Council Clerks, which provides help and support to all clerks."

One of her initial tasks after taking up her post was to set up an office at the Broadway Centre, as the previous clerk had worked from home.

"Life was quite hectic setting up a computer system with internet and email access and putting proper procedures in place, while at the same time serving as town council proper officer and handling all council affairs," she said.

"But the job is never dull. I enjoy the variety of work, including the current project working with Sandown Partnership on the proposed skate park."

Apart from the daily running of the

PICTURED: The Broadway Centre in Sandown



council's affairs, Val organises events and projects on behalf of the town council, including the Remembrance Day service, the Sandown in Bloom awards evening, a town opinion poll (a consultation exercise with the electorate of Sandown) and producing the *Sandown Chronicle* on a bi-monthly basis.

"As a new clerk I have found an enormous amount of help, advice and support from the Island Branch of the Society of Local Council Clerks, as well as its national body. I believe that membership of the society is fundamental for all town and parish clerks."

Recently Val has passed her Certificate in Local Council Administration, with the help and support of the town council, and is now working towards achieving Quality Parish Status for Sandown.

"The councillors are committed to Sandown and have the regeneration of Sandown as number one priority, which will improve the life and general well-being of the residents."



Could you be the right person to sit in judgement?

Our magistrates on the Isle of Wight, like elsewhere in the country, fulfil a crucial role in our justice system. Here we take look at what their role involves and how you might apply to become one

MANY PEOPLE may not realise that the majority of cases heard in magistrates' courts are dealt with by volunteers from the local community.

Lay magistrates provide the backbone for our criminal justice system, dealing with more than 96 per cent of all criminal cases, about 1.5 million cases nationally each year.

Although there are many offences which magistrates deal with on a daily basis such as shoplifting, drink-driving and criminal damage there are other unusual matters such as cruelty to animals, health and safety matters and increasingly, environmental cases.

It is not very well known that as well as youth matters, specially trained magistrates also hear family law cases, licensing appeals, and deal with witness documents and search warrants.

When in court, magistrates sit as a tribunal of three and although it is the chairman who speaks, all three play an equal part in the decision making process, with advice from the legal adviser in court and sentencing guidelines.

Magistrates play a critical role as members of their community and as members of the court system. These days they come from all sections of the community. The Lord Chancellor has been looking at ways to widen the diversity of the bench and most groups of magistrates now include people from a variety of backgrounds, occupations, ethnicity etc.

Virtually anyone can apply to their local court. The minimum age for appointment is 18 and the retiring age from the bench is 70.

While no formal or academic qualifications are required to become a magistrate, there are six key qualities that are sought – good character, understanding and communication, social awareness, maturity and sound temperament, sound judgement and commitment and reliability. Magistrates need to have the ability to listen carefully to all sides of the argument and contribute to fair and reasonable decisions.

Applying to become a magistrate is similar to applying for a job – there is an application form to be completed,

references to be given and usually two interviews.

Local advisory committees act on behalf of the Lord Chancellor and are responsible for recruitment and discipline. They have a duty to provide suitable applicants for appointment and to ensure the local bench of magistrates is as representative of the local community as possible. There is usually a 50/50 balance of gender – never more than 15 per cent of the bench working for one organisation or in any one occupation, diversity, variety of age etc.

Having made their selection, the advisory committees submit their recommendations and appointments to the Lord Chancellor and this is followed by a 'swearing-in' ceremony where new magistrates take the judicial oath. Training and observation then follow and mentors provide help and support for each new magistrate during their first two years.

Skills acquired and developed are recognised by employers who find that having a magistrate employee can give someone a broader perspective in life and contribute to their all round confidence and development, which in turn benefits them in their employment.

Magistrates are required by the Lord Chancellor to sit for a minimum of 26 half day sittings each year, though some undertake between 30 and 40 sittings depending on their circumstances. Rotas are usually organised well in advance and magistrates are able to swap their sittings with colleagues.

- If you are interested in becoming a magistrate or learning more, then why not visit the courts. You can come to court any day except Wednesday to observe the proceedings. The court sits between 10am and 1pm and 2pm and 4.30pm.

To obtain an application form to become a magistrate, contact should be made with The Advisory Committee Deputy Secretary, The Courthouse, Elmleigh Road, Havant, Hampshire P09 2AL. A website is also available and you can make contact on val.gordon@hmscourts-service.gsi.gov.uk



PICTURED: Magistrates at a session of the youth court (picture by David Bleazard)

Celebrating ten years - and still on the march!



This May will see the tenth staging of the hugely popular Isle of Wight Walking Festival - an event which has attracted tens of thousands of walkers to hundreds of different walks since it was first held in 1999

DON'T FORGET to mark the dates 3 to 18 May in your diary, and play your part in helping celebrate ten years of the Isle of Wight Walking Festival.

The 2008 event sees a big rise in the number of different walks, from 200 last year to 265 this May. Back in 1999 there were 39 walks, attracting 4,995 participants. Last year 15,500 people took part – demonstrating the big increase in the popularity of the festival.

Details of this year's event and its many different walks can be found in the official programme, which is available from tourist information centres.

As well as the festival itself in May, a special anniversary celebratory weekend is being

staged from 24 to 27 October.

Events officer Elaine Cesar, said: "Details of the festival will be exhibited at the NEC in Birmingham in March, and the actual launch will take place on 3 May in conjunction with the River Festival." TV personalities Alan Titchmarsh and Ben Fogle will be taking part in the launch of the festival.

Alan Titchmarsh will launch the event at Newport Quay in conjunction with the riverside celebrations, and Ben Fogle will be hosting a presentation at Medina Theatre, Newport, supported by magician and illusionist Rod Newman.

One of the great successes of the festival in recent years has been its speed dating walks,

which so far have led to two weddings and another due in summer 2009.

The range of walks for 2008 includes the annual fund raising Walk the Wight, dinosaur and geology walks, a reading ramble, garden walks, tea party walks and food and pubs walks.

There are also red squirrel and bat walks for nature lovers, ghost walks and twilight adventures for the brave, and meditation walks and yoga walks for those seeking a little tranquillity.

Organisers hope there is a walk to suit just about any taste.

• To find out about taking part, pick up a festival programme from a tourist information centre or view the website at www.isleofwightwalkingfestival.co.uk



The annual fund raising Walk the Wight takes place on Sunday 18 May. Last year more than 5,000 people took part, raising £217,000 for the Earl Mountbatten Hospice at Newport.

This year's Walk the Wight features three main distances, 12.5 miles from Bembridge to Carisbrooke, 14 miles from Carisbrooke to Alum Bay, and 26.5 miles for the full Bembridge to Alum Bay walk. The walk starts between 7am and 8.30am at Bembridge and 10.30am and 11.30am at Carisbrooke. There is also a flat walk of eight miles between Sandown and Newport.

More details are available from the hospice, tel: 528989, and by visiting www.walkthewight.org.uk. The last date for registration is 25 April.

"Our children's centres are showing how an integrated approach to learning for young children and their families can be of real benefit."
Councillor Alan Wells, cabinet member for children and young people

A family learning experience

The Island's eight children's centres provide an important community service for under-fives and their families. Here we look at their work

What parents say...

"Having childcare provided has enabled me to gain up to date qualifications, make new friends and keep my sanity! My daughter has settled, made new friends and is developing good social skills."

*A mother who uses
West Newport Children's Centre*

"The staff are always friendly and are very attentive to you and your grandchild. We always look forward to the dance class. My grandson loves it."

*A grandparent who uses
Sandown Children's Centre*

"An excellent foundation for early years education, making our children's transition to school smoother."

*A parent from
West Wight Children's Centre*

THE ISLE of Wight Council has won national praise for being one of the first ten local authorities to meet its targets for children's centres.

Beverley Hughes, Minister for Children, has written to the council congratulating it on the achievement.

The Island has eight children's centres, which provide an environment for young children and their families to benefit from support with health, childminding, adult learning, training and a range of other important services. All this is alongside normal daycare provision.

The care and positive learning climate for young children gives some parents the opportunity and confidence to return to work, and can direct them towards the training and contacts to help achieve this.

The eight centres are at key locations across the Island:

Barton Primary and Early Years Centre

(Barton Primary School, Barton Road, Newport, tel: 522469)

Barton Primary is the location for one of the two Newport centres, with a special children's centre family room within the school, as well as an attached crèche. Families can also access flexible job opportunities and a range of training schemes at Barton.

Cowes Children's Centre

(based at Love Lane Primary School, Cowes, tel: 07976 009007)

Building work on the Cowes centre is due for completion in early March, with doors opening to families after Easter. Local settings such as schools and medical centres have provided a location for services in the interim.

Furzehill Children's Centre

(Shanklin Primary School, Albert Road, Shanklin, tel: 867310)

Furzehill Children's Centre is now well established in the Shanklin community, providing activities including a baby café and baby clinic run by local health visitors. Outreach workers from the centre also work closely with local play groups.

Ryde Children's Centre

(George Street, Ryde, tel: 617617)

SureStart Ryde Children's Centre provides multi agency services as well

as in-the-home and out-in-the-community services through parent and toddler groups. The centre has an onsite crèche giving free childcare for parents attending courses at the centre, and offers sessions for parents to drop in and share in play with their children. There is also a monthly Saturday drop-in for dads.

Sandown Children's Centre

(operating from two sites: Brading Primary School, West Street, Brading; St John's Annex, St John's Crescent, Sandown; tel: 07847 403246)

Sandown will soon have a new centre, due in September 2008, built next to Sandham Middle School. In the meantime Sandown Children's Centre provides services such as a grandparents' group from St John's Church, Sandown and parent and toddler groups at Brading Primary School.

Ventnor Children's Centre

(Albert Street, Ventnor, tel: 857372)

The Ventnor centre, which currently has 280 children registered, is particularly proud of its level of parental involvement. A special yoga class is run by one local parent.

West Newport Children's Centre

(based at Carisbrooke Church of England Primary School, Wellington Road, Newport, tel: 539436)

Currently based at the family room at Carisbrooke Primary School, West Newport Children's Centre is soon moving to a purpose built building on the school site. The centre runs parent and toddler groups and a getting-back-to-work programme for lone parents.

West Wight Children's Centre

(St Saviour's Primary School, Summers Lane, Totland, tel: 752175)

Originally an Early Excellence Centre, the West Wight Nursery Children's Centre has excellent information technology facilities, and a nursery offering childcare 7.45am to 6pm every day, 50 weeks a year.

All the centres listed will remain in their areas
whichever changes occur from the reorganisation of schools.

Transformed from

poor to **four star**

We turn the spotlight on those who deal with our council taxes, business rates and housing benefits

THEY ARE one of council's most highly rated teams, according to government gradings.

The revenues and benefits department based at Sandown has recently been rated as "four star" for the second year running – the highest accolade a council can receive from central government.

Each year, the team processes hundreds of council tax and housing benefit claims from households across the Island. And their record in sorting out claims punctually and fairly is second-to-none.

But this impressive track record did not come about overnight. In fact, until relatively recently, the department was ranked as one of the poorest in the country.

But following a change in senior management three years ago, the service has rapidly improved and has been rated as "excellent" by the Benefits Fraud Inspectorate.

In 2006 the revenues team, which works closely with colleagues in benefits, won the BACS direct debit challenge for the highest increase in direct payers for council tax collection. And in 2006/2007 the team was in the top 25 per cent of council tax and non-domestic rate collectors.

Ian Lloyd, benefits operational manager, said: "Not only did the team manage to collect 99 per cent of council tax due to the authority

in 2006/2007, but it also managed to collect £535,000 arrears from previous years. These results have helped towards the four star rating."

All face-to-face enquiries are dealt with by the customer services team, which provides support for its revenues and benefits colleagues. And each member of the revenues and benefits team is allocated on rota to take calls from customers.

"This process ensures that teams own the service they deliver to customers and are keen to provide consistent, first class information," said Ian.

At present the service operates from three area offices, with headquarters in Sandown. This recognises the problems faced by people on low incomes and facing high transport costs. Weekly surgeries are also held in key locations across the Island.

"We are obviously very pleased with the government rating and remain determined to maintain high standards for the ultimate benefit of Island residents," said Ian.

"The effective and efficient collecting of council taxes and business rates, and the processing of related benefits are crucial to running a council that performs well. We are very pleased that a four star grading has been achieved."

Councillor Barry Abraham, cabinet member for residents and resources

A plan for the Island's future



THERE IS still time for the public to help shape what will become one of the most important documents outlining the future of the Island.

The Island Plan is the policy document that will, in stages, replace the Unitary Development Plan and become the blueprint for the way the Island moves forward in planning terms.

Already a series of public meetings have been held around various aspects of the plan's Core Strategy – the element of the document that, while not looking at individual sites, will form the guiding principles and policies against which development will be measured.

The consultation lasts until 10 March and the public are encouraged to make their views known on line at www.iwight.com/corestrategy

Acting planning policy manager, Wendy Perera, said: "The Island Plan will be an extremely important document in the years ahead and we want it to be formed having taken into account as many views – from individuals and groups – as possible.

"Planning and regeneration issues go to the heart of our communities so we want those same communities to be involved in shaping their own future.

"Please do not miss this chance to have your say. Your input now at this planning stage is vital."

Nature notes

By the end of February the days are noticeably lengthening as spring approaches. At dusk, flocks of starlings are still swirling and streaming overhead, weaving patterns across the sunset sky before dropping down to roost. Along country lanes, the grass is tinged greyish green and the hedges are beginning to come into leaf. There are some splashes of colour – the pale lemon of primroses has been seen since the turn of the year, and the shiny golden yellow flowers of the lesser celandines are poking out through glossy green heart-shaped leaves.

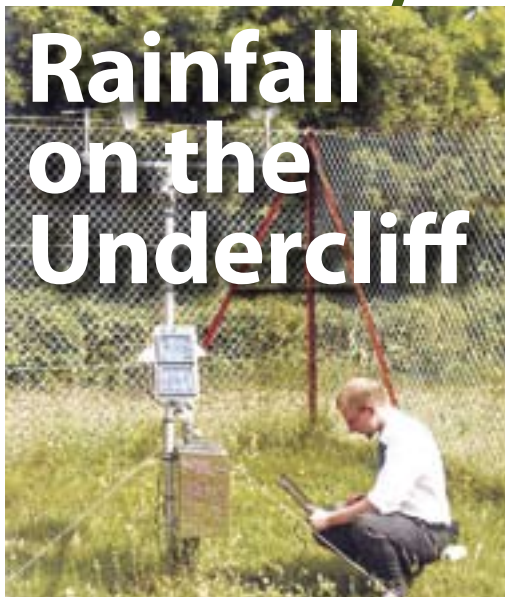


Look closely at the hedgerow twigs and you may see brightly coloured patches of lichens. They are made up of a fungus and microscopic plant growing together in a way which benefits both. Many form crusts clinging closely to the surface, but others are leaf-like or produce branching tufts. We have nearly 400 different kinds on the Island but few have common 'folklore' names. They are found on tree bark, wooden gates and fences, rocks, and stone surfaces and even on some types of soil.

Lichens are very sensitive to air pollution. They thrive here because the prevailing south-westerly winds pass over thousands of miles of ocean and bring clean air to our shores. Like all plants they need light, but they can survive remarkable extremes of drying and ranges of temperature. The vertical surfaces of headstones in churchyards are an excellent place to find them – through a magnifying glass an amazing assortment of patterns can be seen.

Anne Marston, assistant ecology officer

Rainfall on the Undercliff



PICTURED: Downloading data at the Ventnor Park automated weather station

Keeping tabs on rainfall patterns on the Undercliff is one of the key roles of the council's coastal management section.

Regular monitoring via a series of recording stations helps act as an early warning system against ground movement triggered by rain.

Ventnor has a very long record of rainfall data, going back to 1839, and this has been supplemented by two automated weather stations, one at Ventnor Park, and another at Castlehaven.

The historic rainfall record, together with automated monitoring and records of past ground movement events, has allowed the creation of an effective forecasting system.

It means the council's coastal management section can publish public advice when rainfall patterns approach those seen during times of more active ground movement. This helps focus attention on areas of the Undercliff at a heightened risk of ground movement.

- You can get more information on the monitoring by contacting James Houghton at coastal management on 857220.

Special new role for centre



PICTURED: The area of coastline covered by the review

The council's centre for the coastal environment at Ventnor is linking with the Channel Coast Observatory at Southampton for a special research project.

The pair have been selected by the coastal group, Scopac (Standing Conference on Problems Associated with the Coastline) to carry out a review of its research activities.

Scopac, of which the Isle of Wight Council is a member, works to promote sustainable shoreline management in the coastal zone of central southern England. It also carries out research into coastal issues including climate change, environmental change and coastal defence.

It is hoped the review will assist towards future research projects including adapting to climate change and coastal defence advice for local councils.

- More information on the work of Scopac is available at www.scopac.org.uk

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Seasonal guide to wildlife in the garden

It's a good time to trim ivy, dog rose or sweet briar when the berries have been eaten and before the nesting season begins. Buddleias can be cut down to encourage strong new shoots with large flowering heads. If you have more than one buddleia, cut some now and others in March to extend the flowering season to benefit autumn-flying butterflies.



ACTIVITIES

Book Fair (1 March)
Book, postcard and ephemera fair, Parish Centre, Town Lane, Newport, 10am to 3.30pm, admission 20p.

Meet a Rocketman (15-16 March)
Part of National Science Week at Needles New Battery, 12 noon to 2pm, free admission.

Pirate Trail (21 March)
At Needles Old Battery, 10.30am to 4.30pm.

Easter Egg Trail (23 March)
At Mottistone Manor Garden, 11am to 1pm, normal admission plus £1 per trail sheet.

CINEMA

Atonement (5 March)
A relationship shattered by lies and jealousy in wartime, Medina Theatre, Newport, 7.45pm, tickets £2.80/£3.50.*

Elephant (20 March)
A fictional telling of one day in the life of several teenage high school students, Quay Arts, Newport, 7.30pm, £4, tel: box office 822490.

EXHIBITIONS

Mad as Mustard (19 February – 24 March)
Showcasing illustrations and stories by local artist, Holly Maslen, Café Wall, Quay Arts, Newport.

Rowland Glaysher (1-31 March)
An exhibition of acrylic and oil paintings, mainly of a transport nature, Freshwater Library, open during library opening hours.

Rituals (1 March – 5 April)
Textile designer Vicki Fong draws inspiration from her upbringing, Chinese culture set in rural Yorkshire, Rope Store Gallery, Quay Arts, Newport.

Urbicide (8 March – 19 April)
Artist Greg Daville presents images of buildings altered by digital manipulation, Michael West Gallery, Quay Arts, Newport.

Carnival Magic! The Carnival Learning Centre (15 March – 26 April)
A showcase of work by adult learners on a carnival-learning programme, Learning Curve Gallery, Quay Arts, Newport.

Four Artists in the Picture (21-24 March)
An eclectic combination of styles and media from professional artists, Edna Coatsworth, Sandy Medany, Sarah Marsh and Becky Samuelson, Ventnor Botanic Garden, 10am to 4pm.

MUSIC

Red Hot Musicals (1 March)
Outstanding vocalists, dancers and live music



Chumbawumba will be performing at Quay Arts, Newport on 22 March, 8pm

from classic West End shows, Medina Theatre, Newport, 8pm, tickets £13/£12.*

Isle of Wight Youth Music Festival (2 March)
A range of music and song performed by Island youth groups, sponsored by Shanklin Rotary Club, Medina Theatre, Newport, 2.30pm, tickets £5.*

The Drifters in Concert (7 March)
The Treadwell Drifters with a revamped and energetic show, Medina Theatre, Newport, 7.30pm, tickets £16.50/£15.50.*

Justin Adams and Juldeh Camara (7 March)
Guitarist Justin Adams and Gambian ritti-player Juldeh Camara, Quay Arts, Newport, 8pm, tickets £12/£11, tel: box office 822490.

Piccadilly Dance Orchestra (8 March)
Michael Law's Piccadilly Dance Orchestra, music of the 20s, 30s and 40s, Medina Theatre, Newport, 7.30pm, tickets £14.50/£13.50.*

*** Online bookings for Medina and Ryde Theatres at www.leisure.iwight.com**

SHOWS

Spring show (15 March)
Brighstone and District Horticultural Society spring show, at Wilberforce Hall, Brighstone, 1.30pm to 4pm.

TALKS

The Royal Naval College, Osborne 1903 to 1921 (12 March)
A talk to the Isle of Wight Branch of the Historical Association by Dr Michael Partridge, at the Parish Centre, Town Lane, Newport, 7.30pm, contact Terry Blunden, tel: 524410.

Striking it Rich - the Californian Gold Rush 1849 (3 April)
A talk to the Isle of Wight Branch of the Historical Association by Professor Margaret Walsh, at Nodehill Middle School, Newport, 7.30pm, contact Terry Blunden, tel: 524410.

THEATRE

To the Marrow (15 March)
Forest Forge Theatre present a spoof of village life, Quay Arts, Newport, 8pm, tickets £7/£6, tel: box office 822490.

Art (27-29 March, 3-5 April)
Trinity Theatre, Cowes presents the hit comedy by Yasmin Reza, at Trinity Theatre, Cowes, 7.30pm, tickets £5/£6 (three for the price of two on opening night), available from the box office (open 11am to 2pm daily, not Sunday) from 21 March, tel: 295229.

An Inspector Calls (4-5, 12 April)
Ventnor Theatre Group present the play by J.B. Priestley, Whitwell Village Hall, Ventnor Road, Whitwell, 7.30pm, contact Bill King, tel: 854560.

Trailers

These listings are provided free, as a public information service. Details must be submitted either by: **filling out this form, or emailing your details to oneisland@iow.gov.uk**

Please conform to the format shown. Entries are included at the editorial team's discretion.

Deadline for the next issue: 5 March (21 March publication date).

Title of event/activity:

Date:

Brief description:

Venue:

Time:

Contact name:

Telephone:

Please return to:

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