

ISLE OF WIGHT **FOUNDATION**

Supported by
Vinci Highways UK,
Meridiam IM s.a.r.l,
Ringway Island Roads
and Island Roads Services

ISLE OF WIGHT
FOUNDATION

2025
ANNUAL REPORT

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HELPING
Helping everyone to feel part of the Island community

Foreword

It is a great pleasure to introduce the Isle of Wight Foundation Annual Report for 2025.

Having taken over the chairmanship of the Foundation towards the end of the year, I have been extremely impressed by the breadth, quality and dedication of the voluntary, charitable and community interest organisations that exist across the Island. Their work touches every aspect of community life, supporting individuals and families, tackling social isolation, improving wellbeing, creating opportunities and helping to build stronger, more connected communities.

The Isle of Wight Foundation was established to make a positive difference to people's lives by supporting projects that address disadvantage and promote social inclusion. Over the past year, I have seen first-hand the impact that even modest financial support can have when combined with the passion, commitment and local knowledge of the organisations delivering these services.

Island Roads and its partner companies remain proud supporters of the Foundation and the communities we serve. While our primary responsibility is to maintain and improve the Island's highway network, we also recognise the importance of contributing to the wellbeing and resilience of the wider community. Through the Foundation, we are able to extend that contribution and support initiatives that deliver real and lasting benefits for local people.

The projects highlighted within this report demonstrate the remarkable difference being made every day by volunteers, community groups and charitable organisations across the Island.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank all of the organisations, volunteers, trustees and partners who have contributed to the Foundation's success during 2025. Their dedication, compassion and hard work continue to improve lives and strengthen communities throughout the Isle of Wight.

I look forward to working with the Board and our partners in the years ahead as we continue to support the outstanding work taking place across the Island and help ensure that the Isle of Wight remains a place where people and communities can thrive.

Eddie Fellows
Chairman
Isle of Wight Foundation Board



About the Isle of Wight Foundation

A massive investment in the Island's infrastructure

Island Roads has been delivering the biggest highway improvement programme ever seen on the Isle of Wight. In partnership with the Isle of Wight Council, as part of the Highways PFI, Island Roads is responsible for upgrading and maintaining the Isle of Wight's infrastructure, including some 804 kilometres of roads, 756 kilometres of footways (pavements), 12,000 streetlights and a wide range of other highway assets such as bridges and retaining walls.

The majority of the upgrade has been completed but the company will maintain the highway network at that standard until 2038, meaning that it will be part of community life on the Island for 25 years in total. As such, Island Roads and the companies behind the partnership - VINCI Highways UK, Meridiam Infrastructure and Ringway - are keen to play a wider role in supporting the community.

The Formation of the Wight of Foundation

In April 2014, the company established the Isle of Wight Foundation, a charitable trust. Its aim is to help tackle social exclusion on the Isle of Wight through an annual grant-giving programme.

The Isle of Wight is a beautiful place to live and work, but behind the vast expanse of stunning countryside and coastal scenery, there are some communities that have fewer opportunities and some people can be left behind. Unemployment statistics are high, particularly amongst young people, and the rural nature of the Island and difficulties with transportation links can leave some communities and individuals isolated.

A recent survey by the Isle of Wight Youth Trust showed an increase in mental health issues among children and young adults. The emphasis on tackling social exclusion aims to reduce these impacts. Having worked with community representatives and having reviewed local data, the partners formed the Isle of Wight Foundation to help address these issues through community funding. Since its creation, the Isle of Wight Foundation has supported over 120 projects on the Island, helping to build better communities that encourage social integration and create opportunities for people to access training and development to improve their life skills and opportunities for employment.

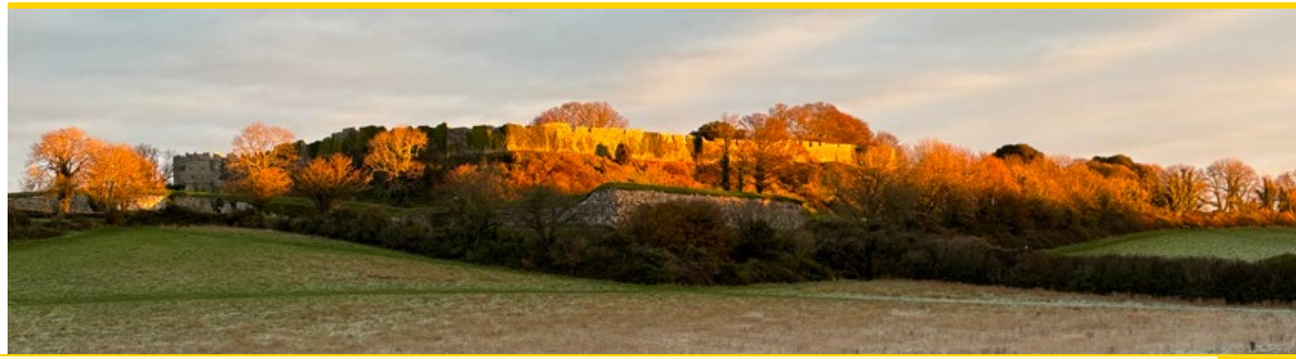
Providing opportunities through funding

Each year, the Isle of Wight Foundation launches a grant call, offering up around £90,000 of funding to local community projects that meet its criteria for supporting projects to help tackle exclusion, whether through access to training and qualifications or building stronger communities. The total sum is usually allocated in amounts of between £3,000 and £16,000 to not-for-profit, community or charity organisations. In more than 10 years, the Foundation has provided projects on the Island with over £900,000 worth of support.

In addition to the financial help on offer, Island Roads employees are also linked up to the selected projects to provide additional support and expertise as part of the company's volunteering scheme.

The opportunity to apply for funding is promoted widely in local media and through voluntary and community networks. A selection committee, formed at the outset, chooses the projects to receive support following an initial review of applications and potential project visits carried out by the Isle of Wight Foundation Co-ordinator. The board then meets to finalise the approvals.

Funding is awarded for use within one year of the allocation to ensure a swift and marked measurable improvement in tackling social exclusion on the Isle of Wight. In 2025, the Isle of Wight Foundation supported eight projects, each of which are profiled in this report.





Our Six Key Areas of Support

The Isle of Wight Foundation was formed to help tackle social exclusion through access to employment and building better communities. Applications were sought from charities, not-for-profit, and community interest organisations within six key areas of support:

Access to employment

Projects that support those currently excluded by the job market to adapt to the working world, while also receiving the training and support they need.

Training and qualification

Projects that offer basic training and guidance to enable individuals with no qualifications to enter the working world.

Road back to improved mobility

Initiatives that help people to reduce the factors restricting their mobility and improve the mobility of people deprived of a means of transportation, thereby allowing them easier access.

Building better communities

Projects that facilitate access to housing for the most underprivileged individuals to provide them with more stability.

Youth and citizenship

Initiatives aimed at promoting citizenship and responsibility among young people.

Social integration

Projects to support people who are excluded from society, to help them regain self-confidence, recover a decent standard of living, accomplish day-to-day activities and integrate with society.







Our Key Criteria For Funding

Projects applying for funding must also meet key criteria in order to qualify for support. These are focused on the following principles:

Lasting commitment

Projects that are sustainable and can provide permanent employment or activities that benefit the Island community over the long-term.

Social innovation

Projects or initiatives that seek innovative solutions to tackle social exclusion.

Impact

Projects and initiatives that can make a measurable and lasting impact on the community within the 12-month giving period.

Employee and volunteer engagement

Projects which link support from employees to provide advice, contacts, expertise, skills, training and practical, physical support, and help develop individuals involved in the projects.

Compliance

Projects must be compliant with relevant legislation and must be able to evidence their constitution as charity, community or not-for-profit group, and their ability to manage any grant funding effectively. Certain funding criteria must also be met, and restrictions apply. See www.islandroads.com/community/isle-of-wight-foundation/ for further information.







Community Projects Supported

During 2025, the Isle of Wight Foundation awarded funding to eight community projects. You can read about them in more detail in the case studies section at the end of this report. The projects to receive support last year with grants totalling more than £85,000 were:

YES! Creative Beats

£4,200 given to this new community interest company which is aimed at developing community drumming/ movement groups for adults. YES! Creative Beats will run 12 weekly sessions in three different locations.

Community Action IW

£14,000 towards developing a grassroots music/media project within the renovated Sandown Town Hall, which will be open to all interested young people.

The 4Ps Vectis Radio Training School

£6,600 for this radio training school designed to provide individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to produce and present their own radio programmes while boosting much-needed confidence and communication skills. The 4Ps in the name stands for 'Presenting, Production, Podcasting and Promoting'. The training school will cover a range of broadcasting skills.

Ryde Aspire

£16,000 to pay for a replacement community bus that will transport Islanders to a number of projects and events, from young people engaged in sports, music and social activities, to older community members participating in lunch clubs and wellbeing trips.

Alzheimer Café IW

£16,000 for Arts and Woodwork Studios at the Alzheimer Café IW's newly opened Parklands Centre in Cowes. The studios will allow an artist and a carpenter to work in a light and airy space that will encourage both people with dementia visiting Parklands and others from the wider community to come together for arts and crafts activities.

Care In the Garden (CITG)

£16,000 for a Work Buddy Scheme that will help fund a co-ordinator to source paid employment and work experience placements for clients of Wootton-based CITG. The co-ordinator will liaise with employers, clients and their families, as well as other external agencies such as educational establishments.

People Matter IW

£3,690 has been allocated to People Matter, which aims to improve the skills and self-esteem of people with learning disabilities. The money will be used to purchase potting equipment for the gardening area in the Learning Disability Support Centre and to purchase a 65-inch smart screen as a learning aid.

St Catherine's Speech and Language School

£8,924 for an additional Job Coach to specifically work with students who have additional vulnerabilities alongside their Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN). These students need to have more frequent and intensive work experience opportunities. The Job Coach will attend placements with these students, to provide support and help them to break down barriers.





Building Better Communities

The Island has a population exceeding 142,000 individuals across an area more than 145 square miles with just over one half of this population living in the seven major towns across the Island. More than a quarter of all residents (28.2%) are aged over 65 and this proportion is increasing. Just under 15% are aged 0-14 years old.

For young and old alike, there are challenges as well as benefits to living on the Isle of Wight. The Island has several areas that are classed among the 10% most deprived areas in England, transportation is limited and a challenge particularly for those living in the rural areas of the Island.

Social exclusion is a very real issue for people of all ages living on the Island and this in turn can be detrimental to physical and mental health, day-to-day living and economic wellbeing. We hope to help minimise social exclusion for Islanders by funding projects that can help build stronger communities, with more active citizens working together and supporting one another, particularly those who are most vulnerable.



Access To Employment

Unemployment can affect so much of people's lives and wellbeing. Not only is economic wellbeing, encompassing financial stability and access to housing, affected, but detrimental physical and mental wellbeing, stigma and exclusion from society are all difficulties faced by those who are not engaged in paid work.

Through the work of the Isle of Wight Foundation, we hope to improve social integration by funding projects that help support people to get into employment.

We help to fund projects that work with people who, for a variety of reasons, may have found themselves excluded from the world of work, whether they are long-term unemployed, on minimum social benefits, have physical or mental health issues, or are young people who lack work experience, skills or qualifications.

Through these projects we can help provide access to develop new skills, training and qualifications as well as developing confidence, self-esteem and life skills, helping people to rebuild their personal and professional lives.

Sponsorship: Involving Our Employees

The Isle of Wight Foundation offers Island Roads employees the opportunity to make a personal commitment by sponsoring tangible, and often very innovative projects, which benefit the local community.

These sponsors form a crucial element in the work of the Isle of Wight Foundation. They supplement the financial support provided by contributing their skills to the non-profit organisations supported.

Sponsors are carefully selected to marry their specific skills with those that will benefit the project and organisation involved, as well as providing the employee with an opportunity for their own personal development.

Their role can include general assistance and advice, or more specialist support (e.g. management, communication, IT, accounting, commercial strategy, administration) or on technical aspects of the projects where appropriate.

In addition, Island Roads provides each employee with the opportunity to undertake two paid volunteering days a year, and staff may continue to support their chosen charity in this way.



Here is what some of our sponsors have to say:

Andrew Cooper
Highway Technician
Alzheimer Café IW
"So many people are touched by all forms of dementia these days, it was great to support an organisation such as Alzheimer Cafe IW.
"It is well documented that cognitive exercise is vital for people living with Alzheimers and similar conditions, so this art and woodwork studio will provide the perfect space for people visiting the cafe."



Maddie Clewett
Geotechnical Engineer
Care in the Garden
"My own interest in gardening drew me to be a sponsor for Care in the Garden. In addition to bringing people with learning difficulties into work in an outdoor setting, this social enterprise also provides those people with valuable practical skills in a work environment to enable them to progress to full employment elsewhere, in areas such as carpentry and horticulture.
"Each individual can also practise their communication skills through interaction with others on the scheme but also with customers who visit to purchase plants and outdoor furniture made on site. It was great to hear the enthusiasm from the employees who had gained so much from working at Care in the Garden."



Matt Shirley
Customer Services
Vectis Radio 4Ps Project
"Seeing the work that Vectis Radio carried out with the 4P's project was inspiring, seeing the students develop themselves and grow in confidence while working on their public speaking skills was immensely rewarding. It's great to see that we were able to help a project that has ran for 10-plus years with great success. "

Karen Rarity
Customer Services Adviser
St Catherine's School
"It was a great pleasure to sponsor St Catherine's School job coach project. As a specialist school for children with additional speech and language needs, getting the right support to access work experience placements and understand the steps required to move from education to work is vital.
"This funding was received with great gratitude on behalf of the students. They have taken students, including those having substantial medical needs as well as speech and language needs to work settings.
"They have also helped develop more links in the community to kickstart further placements for students. They have been to OT sessions to gain a deeper understanding of students' specific needs so when on placement they are able to fully support the students now and in the future."

Sebastien Fry
Engineering Assistant
Yes! Creative Beats
"Yes! Creative Beats use samba and drumming as a way of bringing people together in a way that provides physical exercise, companionship and cognitive activity.
"It ticked so many boxes and I was proud to be a sponsor of an activity that took place across the Island. They took all the advice onboard, delivered all the deliverables in a timely manner, and needed no help doing their side. Top marks, 10/10, would sponsor again!"





Our Foundation Structure

The Isle of Wight Foundation is supported by a Board of Trustees and a Selection Committee representing all of the partner organisations. It is also supported by the crucial role of the Isle of Wight Foundation Coordinator who oversees the day-to-day implementation of the charitable trust's activities on the Island.

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the general administration of the Foundation, including the approval of its annual budget and decisions on the use of funding.

The Board comprises the following members:

John Sunderland
Ringway Island Roads

Arnaud Judet
Vinci Highways UK

Rob Gillespie
Island Roads Services

Emma Scott
Meridiam Infrastructure Managers S.a.r.l (until 24/02/2025)

Victoria Martinez
Island Roads Services, (from 02/09/2025).

Caron Atley
Island Roads Services, became the company secretary on 02/09/25.

Selection Committee

The Selection Committee is responsible for reviewing the applications for funding and making recommendations to the board for future funding requests.

Stephen Ashman
Chairman, Island Roads

Michael Bulpitt
External Expert, Community Action Isle of Wight

Caron Atley
Island Road Services

Rachel Mills
Island Roads

Neil Troughton
Island Roads

Isle of Wight Foundation Coordinator - Samantha O'Rourke

The Isle of Wight Foundation Coordinator is responsible for promoting the grant funding available from the Foundation and for encouraging applications each year from community, charity and not-for-profit groups across the Island.

Samantha's role is also to oversee the initial shortlisting and presentation of applications to the Selection Committee and Board of Trustees. The co-ordinator is also responsible for facilitating the development of partnership projects in conjunction with their individual sponsor.



Foundation Support in 2026

The Isle of Wight Foundation is proud to partner so many Island groups providing initiatives to support Island communities, and we look forward to reaching the goal of £1 million in total grants dispensed in 2026. In the meantime, a number of Island groups are already receiving support in 2026 with grants totalling more than £89,000.

Age UK Isle of Wight

£3,600 to help it expand its volunteer programme. The charity will be able to support more older Islanders thanks to this grant.





Arreton Cricket Club

£16,000 for a new artificial wicket at its Haseley Lane ground in the village. Arreton CC has become a disability hub for Isle of Wight Cricket and also supports junior and women's teams as well as a 1st XI.

Care In the Garden

£12,000 grant enabling it to buy an accessible vehicle to transport its clients with additional needs and mental health issues to its Wootton headquarters.





Cowes Sailability

£7,250 to allow this Cowes-based charity to give people with disabilities the chance to spend time on the water, specifically by hiring the specially adapted Wet Wheels Hamble vessel for sessions in 2026.

Havenstreet Community Association

A £5,860 grant will help make the community centre more accessible for the elderly, young families and those with disabilities. It will be used to create a wheelchair-accessible entrance at the front of the building and reverse the current side entrance/fire doors to allow them to open outwards.





Isle of Wight Search and Rescue (SAR)

The £12,000 it has received will help Isle of Wight SAR in its vital work of finding missing Island people. The money will go towards a new drone and medical kit.

The Phoenix Project

£15,662 for this charity which helps adults with moderate to profound learning disabilities, physical disabilities and neurological conditions, and will allow it to improve the main room of its HQ in Ryde Haylands, with a new wooden divider, plus new furniture and radiators.





Porchfield Cricket Club and Island Bakeries Cricket Club

The £7,525 grant received by these two clubs, which share the Coleman's Lane ground, will enable both clubs to improve the shower and toilet facilities, making them more accessible to all cricketers, as well as people using the ground for other activities.

The Way Forward Programme

A £10,000 grant for this charity that works with people with learning and physical disabilities will enable the purchase of a support vehicle to take clients to activities. Some of these clients are uncomfortable travelling in larger minibuses and public transport.



YES! Creative Beats

Type: Youth & Citizenship/Social Integration
Project: Connecting Communities Through Rhythm
Status: Community Interest Company
Area: Sandown, Ventnor & Freshwater/Island-wide

YES! Creative Beats has developed community drumming/movement groups for adults on the Isle of Wight in three locations. Sessions are fully inclusive for adults of all ages and abilities. The sessions are fun and create social opportunities to encourage building friendships by factoring in a break for a cuppa and chat in each session.

The project is the first of its kind on the Island and provides a '4 in 1' solution: physical exercise, music, cognitive exercise and friendship/ community formation, delivered by facilitators who are backed by consultations with a community physiotherapist, and who have many years of experience delivering community samba drumming workshops.

YES! Creative Beats is grateful to have received support from the Foundation to support increased marketing and a website upgrade, and to buy equipment to run its drumming/movement sessions. In 2025, uptake was very consistent, and many participants enjoyed creating social bonds and doing gentle exercise whilst drumming. Organisers report that the sessions were always lively and upbeat, with lots of fun and laughter, facilitating new friendships among participants, many of whom now meet outside of sessions for other social activities.

By combining the Foundation grant with funding received elsewhere, YES! Creative Beats has been able to run many more sessions than initially anticipated.

Participants in the sessions said:

"I find the sessions invaluable for both social, exercise, memory and balance. I just love them!"

"It was fun and very uplifting. The two ladies running the session were inspirational!"

"My child has made new friends and is calmer after the sessions as the music helps his anxiety and trauma."

Isle of Wight Foundation Support

Grant

£4,200 given to this new community interest company that has developed community drumming/ movement groups for adults. YES! Creative Beats runs weekly sessions in three different locations.

Project Leads

Emma and Yetta
Yetta "We are so grateful for the funding IW Foundation was able to provide. As well as upgrading our IT kit, we've had a fantastic website built, allowing us to promote and showcase ourselves as a serious business."

Emma: "The percussion equipment we have bought will last for years - we are using it all for other groups as well as the ones within this project. Thank you so much"







Youth & Citizenship/ Social Integration

Community Action IW

Type: Youth & Citizenship/Social Integration
Project: Sandown Youth Music/Media Space
Status: Registered Charity
Area: Sandown/Island-wide

Community Action IOW (CAIW) exists to promote benefits to communities in the Isle of Wight, in the furtherance of health, environmental improvement and to relieve poverty and disadvantage. On a day-to-day basis CAIW delivers advice and training to other voluntary groups, as well as running the Island's Volunteer Centre, supporting youth work, refugee support, housing work, learning disability day services, and community post offices.

CAIW identified a need to focus on regenerating the Bay Area, and to provide new and better facilities and services to young people in Sandown. Until CAIW relaunched some youth outreach work in Sandown more than two years ago, there had been no youth provision there for about 10 years, with raised concerns about the increasing number of young people not in education or full-time employment, and the risk of crime, drug-related harm and exploitation.

CAIW are partners in the Sandown Town Hall regeneration programme, which is adding a much needed credible and accessible diversionary and development provision. The Town Hall primarily focuses on universal youth services. With Foundation support, CAIW is leading a project to develop a grassroots music/media programme at the renovated building, which is open to all young people. It is envisaged that the facility will have a large hall for sports and other activities, and a youth club area as well as the music/media facility.

CAIW believes that music making holds great potential for youth activism, personal development and citizenship. When combined with youth work, that potential is significantly heightened and also supports young people to be less isolated, increases confidence and helps build resilience.

Isle of Wight Foundation Support

Grant

£14,000 towards developing a grassroots music/media project within the renovated Sandown Town Hall, which is open to all interested young people.

Project Lead

Jake, Music, Multi-Media and Arts Co-Ordinator, BYP
"The impact the music studio at Link has had on our local community has been incredible to witness. I've always believed that giving young people access to studio-grade equipment is vital - not just for learning skills, but for building confidence, self-belief, and opening doors to creative expression they may never have thought possible. Through music and the creative arts, we've seen young people find healthy ways to express themselves, grow in confidence, support their mental health, and develop real ambition for their futures. What's made me proudest is seeing the progress they've made in such a short space of time - watching their excitement grow every week as they realise what they're capable of. At its heart though, it's also just great fun. Seeing the smiles on their faces when they figure something out, create something they're proud of, or catch themselves doing something they never thought they could do."





"It's been very helpful and has allowed me to learn a new skill that I probably wouldn't have ever done if it wasn't for the studio and staff at LINK. I get excited to attend and play the bass guitar and look forward to developing my skills and showing them off to others."

E aged 14 years, BYP participant.

Youth & Citizenship/ Social Integration

The 4Ps Vectis Radio Training School

Type: Youth & Citizenship/Social Integration
Project: 4Ps Training Project
Status: Charitable Incorporated Organisation
Area: Island-wide

The Vectis Radio 4 PS Radio Training School is dedicated to empowering individuals aged 11 to 18 with the essential skills and know-how to create and host their own radio shows. Its comprehensive training curriculum covers every facet of radio production, including content research, preparation, presentation, and technical proficiency. By fostering a supportive learning environment, Vectis Radio aims to bolster confidence and communication abilities in students through an immersive broadcasting experience, in which every young person gains the opportunity to grow and thrive, equipping them with valuable life skills for a brighter future.

The 4Ps Project stands for 'Presenting, Production, Podcasting and Promoting'. The training programme covers a range of topics, including preparing and researching content, producing and editing audio, presentation skills, and understanding the technical aspects of radio broadcasting. The course is delivered by experienced trainers and covers both theoretical and practical aspects of radio production.

Beneficiaries of the 4Ps Radio Training Project are individuals who are interested in developing their skills and knowledge in radio broadcasting, regardless of their previous experience or background. Young people aged between 11-18, and up to 25 years with learning difficulties, are benefiting from the sessions.

Experienced trainers work with them in smaller groups than they normally experience in schools, and students are more relaxed and thus more likely to engage in conversation. This in itself gives more confidence and improves communication skills, which many of these young people struggle with.

The project is designed to be inclusive and accessible to individuals of all genders, ethnicities, and socio-economic background, and has the capacity to reach out to between 50 and 100 young people a year.

Isle of Wight Foundation Support

Grant

£6,600 for this radio training school designed to provide individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to produce and present their own radio programmes while boosting much-needed confidence and communication skills.

Project Lead

Ian Mac, Vectis Radio Station Manager

"A home-schooled student was badly bullied at school and came to us with zero confidence and had a fear of going out and was very nervous around people he didn't know. During his time he mixed with other young people and will return to full-time education in September. Another student has speech and language problems and could barely read; he is now working on a weekly script for his weekly feature of My Top 5. His speech is improving, and his confidence is growing. Last week we played him the difference in his speech and there were tears, but he assured me he had something in his eye. He is now starting to believe and improve every week. This student produces a Travel Podcast every week. All students are now engaging in conversation more and gaining in confidence and having a voice, which will help them in the next part of their life journey. We have received a Best in The Business at the IW Radio Awards for Charity of the Year."







Youth & Citizenship/ Social Integration

Ryde Aspire

Type: Youth & Citizenship/Social Integration
Project: Community Minibus
Status: Charitable Incorporated Organisation
Area: Ryde-based/Island-wide

Aspire Ryde is a community hub, providing services throughout the week in two redundant buildings - a church and a retail space - which now buzz with activity. They also provide award winning Island-wide provisions through the 'Living Well & Early Help Service'. The offering includes Ady's Café, a low-cost café staffed by volunteers, stocking ethically sourced food and coffee. They also provide drinks and meals for homeless and vulnerable people. The Free Food Project receives donations of unused foodstuffs from numerous local retail outlets, some of which is cooked to provide free lunch for Aspire's volunteers and members of the community.

Among it's numerous other offerings, Aspire hosts 'Kingdom Play', an inexpensive children's play area accompanying Ady's Café. The Aspire Maintenance Team organizes activity groups to reduce isolation and encourage creativity, plus a cycle workshop. 'Aspire to Sew' offers free use of sewing machines and equipment plus instructions. 'Growing Great Things' is a gardening group aimed at the isolated and those with special needs. 'Aspire Works!' Social Enterprise Hub offers free PC use and employability training. 'Repaint' provides unused paint for community projects or individuals in need. 'Football 4 All' is a community football and get active programme to engage hard-to-reach young people. 'Waves of Wellbeing (WoW)' is a project to support individuals suffering from suicidal ideation through surfing, water-based activities and self-help facilitated groups.

Absolutely everyone is encouraged to come down to Aspire and get involved. Aspire staff are driven by what the community would like and projects evolve around people and their needs, and friendly volunteers are always open to new ideas. Aspire's Community Minibus is a critical community asset that facilitates activities such as wellbeing excursions, shopping assistance and community football trips, and transports over 100 people weekly, as well as providing support to other local charities and schools when needed.

Isle of Wight Foundation Support

Grant

£16,000 to pay for a replacement community bus that is transporting Islanders to a number of projects and events, from young people engaged in sports, music and social activities, to older community members participating in lunch clubs and wellbeing trips.

Project Lead

Steve Johnson
Deputy CEO Aspire
"The minibus awarded through the 2025 grant round has made a significant difference to Aspire Ryde and the people we support. Reliable transport is often one of the biggest barriers to participation, particularly for older people, individuals with disabilities, and those experiencing social isolation. The minibus has enabled us to transport people to community activities, fundraising events, wellbeing groups, volunteering opportunities, and social events, helping them remain connected and engaged within their community. It has also supported access to our projects across the Island, and supported many other local sports and community groups to get to events or meetings ensuring that transport is not a barrier to participation. We have even had several days out taking Island resident on our 'Mainland Mystery Tours'."



"The support from the Isle of Wight Foundation has been transformational. Our minibus is much more than a vehicle; it is a lifeline that enables people to access friendship, support, activities, and opportunities they might otherwise miss. For many of the people we work with, it provides independence, confidence, and a vital connection to their community. We are incredibly grateful for this investment and the positive impact it continues to have every day."

Steve Johnson, Deputy CEO, Aspire Ryde

Youth & Citizenship/ Social Integration

Alzheimer Café IW

Type: Social Integration
Project: Art & Woodwork Studios
Status: Charitable Incorporated Organisation
Area: Cowes/benefiting Island-wide

Alzheimer Café Isle of Wight runs seven cafés including the one at Parklands, Cowes, and welcomes anyone affected by dementia including individuals before and after receiving a diagnosis, families, carers, and healthcare professionals for informal education about dementia, guidance and signposting to other services.

Their cafés offer a friendly and welcoming environment where people can chat, share stories, make friends, and relax knowing everyone is there 'in the same boat'. Alzheimer Cafés on the Island have been a listening ear for people living with dementia, their families, friends and carers since they first opened their doors in 2009. Services at Parklands include a community café, wellbeing club, and somewhere everyone will feel safe and find respite for a while, five days a week.

Services include the Wellbeing Club which provides opportunities for people to revisit hobbies or engage in new activities that interest them. The Art and Woodwork Studio is set in a dementia-friendly garden that enables guests to enjoy a stimulating outside space safely and has an energy efficiency plan to support the sustainability of the building. It has provided a new opportunity for a local artist and carpenter to work in a light and airy outside space that is encouraging both people with dementia visiting Parklands and others from the wider community to come together to create beautiful things. The resident carpenter has over 35 years' experience including working with people with special and diverse needs, while the artist runs weekly art therapy groups and specialises in creating textured art.

Isle of Wight Foundation Support

Grant

£16,000 for Arts and Woodwork Studios at the Alzheimer Café IW's newly opened Parklands Centre in Cowes. The studios allow an artist and a carpenter to work in a light and airy space that encourages both people with dementia visiting Parklands and others from the wider community to come together for arts and crafts activities.

Project Lead

Donna White
Manager of Alzheimer Café
"Two sheds have been purchased which equates to the full value of the grant awarded. The woodwork studio is now in full flow and Maddy our artist has been moving her stuff into the second one this week."



"Having this new studio has transformed the way I can work with people living with dementia. It provides a calm, welcoming space where individuals feel safe to express themselves creatively. Whether it's one-to-one sessions or group workshops,

"I've seen how the act of painting or drawing can unlock memories, spark conversation, and bring genuine moments of joy. The environment encourages focus and confidence, allowing each person to engage at their own pace and feel a real sense of achievement."
"The new woodwork studio has been a game-changer for our participants. Working with wood offers a tactile, hands-on experience that's incredibly grounding.

"I've noticed that people living with dementia gain a sense of independence and purpose. They take pride in creating something tangible, which can boost self-esteem and foster social connections. The space itself—bright, safe, and well-equipped—makes it possible for them to explore new skills and rediscover old ones in a supportive environment."

Maddy and Chris Dobson, artist and woodworking teacher

"I am visually impaired and live with dementia. I am instantly hit by the smells when I step into Chris's shed. It makes me feel at home, just like I did when I loved to spend time in my old shed, fixing and mending.

"I have been working with Chris on a project to restore some old furniture and whilst I now rely on his support and direction, I have felt for the first time in a long time able to contribute with my knowledge and skill I have acquired. Chris has guided me to do as much of it as I can for myself. I come here every week and really enjoy our hour together."

Participant of a recent session.

Social Integration

Care In the Garden

Type: Youth & Citizenship/Social Integration
Project: Work Buddy Scheme
Status: Community Interest Company
Area: Wootton/Island-wide

Care In The Garden (CITG) provides meaningful work opportunities for adults with additional needs through their base at Palmers Brook Nursery and also via a 'Work Buddy Scheme', working with Island companies such as the Garlic Farm, to provide paid employment opportunities for their client group. Pre-employability training provides opportunities to work alongside trained staff in order to learn both area-specific and key transferable skills that will be useful for the progress to paid employment, which is the ultimate aim.

Clients can access the woodwork shop where they learn skills such as sanding, assembly and painting in order to make wooden items that are sold at the nursery. The horticultural department teaches a range of skills related to plant care and production, and the plants are sold through the nursery, and retail training is also provided. The 'Mower Men' team works in the community learning skills such as mowing, strimming and hedge cutting, and helping with planting contract work in West/East Cowes and Newport.

CITG strongly believes that adults with additional needs and mental health issues need to be given the time to establish work-based relationships/team-building skills alongside learning the new skills required for a new job. The Work Buddy scheme provides each supported worker with access to a trained member of staff who acts as their mentor as well as providing the appropriate training and any support needed to ensure they are happy in the workplace.

Foundation support has allowed CITG to create the Work Buddy Coordinator role for 10-12 hours each week, to identify and source both paid employment and work experience opportunities for clients. Following appropriate supported training, work experience placements are forthcoming with businesses such as the Co-Op, Monkey Haven and The Folly.

Isle of Wight Foundation Support

Grant

£16,000 for a Work Buddy Scheme that has helped fund a co-ordinator to source paid employment and work experience placements for clients of Wootton-based CITG. The co-ordinator liaises with employers, clients and their families, as well as other external agencies such as educational establishments.

Project Lead

John Goodenough,
Care In The Garden
"Out of all the things we have tried to establish at Care In The Garden, the work buddy scheme has been the most difficult to gather serious momentum. Although Island companies have welcomed the initiative, recent financial pressures on businesses have made many companies very cautious when it comes to recruitment. Despite this, with the aid of funds from The IW Foundation we have been able to subsidise one-to-one support for several clients who do not currently receive one-to-one funding from the council and this has enabled them to develop new skills and experience new work/ training opportunities which wouldn't have been possible in a group environment. Our pilot scheme has enabled two of our supported workers to set up their own enterprises."





Youth & Citizenship/ Social Integration

People Matter IW

Type: Youth & Citizenship/Social Integration
Project: The Learning Disability Support Centre
Status: Registered Charity
Area: Newport-based/Island-wide

People Matter IW is there for any local person from birth to end of life and without discrimination, and who define themselves as having a support need. They actively engage and work with a wide range of Island residents with support needs, concentrating specifically on people with a Learning Disability and autistic people.

One of the provisions is for people with a Learning Disability to be able to learn basic skills by accessing care and support from personal assistants. In 2022 the Learning Disability Support Centre was created; this has been very successful, helping students learn to live independently, and receive support in areas such as relationships, social media, volunteering and getting a job, all of which greatly enhances their lives.

With taster days now being arranged at local businesses, People Matter IW is helping students to undertake work experience trials so they can really get a feel for what going to work is like. One of key projects is the People Matter IW garden, and Foundation funding has allowed expansion of this facility, for example growing additional plants from seeds.

Isle of Wight Foundation Support

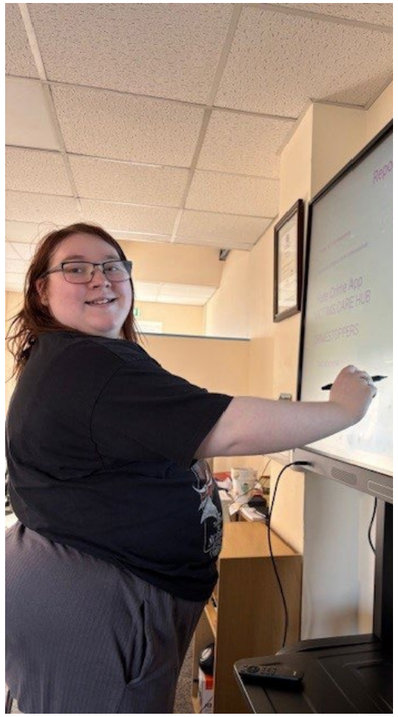
Grant

£3,690 has been allocated to People Matter, which aims to improve the skills and self-esteem of people with learning disabilities. The money has been used to purchase potting equipment for the gardening area in the Learning Disability Support Centre and to purchase a 65-inch smart screen as a learning aid.

Project Lead

Terri Baker
"Thank you to the IW Foundation as we have been able to keep our garden tidy and the shelving made it easier to pot on the plants.'
'The interactive screen has been great for all the group to have use of, we have used it to search the internet, research topics and guest presenters have used it for power point presentations, thank you."





Youth & Citizenship/ Social Integration

St Catherine's Speech and Language School

Type: Youth & Citizenship/Social Integration
Project: Work Experience Project
Status: Registered Charity
Area: Island-wide/Ventnor

St Catherine's is a non-maintained residential and day special school and sixth form run by the charity St Catherine's - Speech and Language. For over 40 years, they have been supporting children and young people with speech, language and communication needs to achieve their potential. In total, they support 94 students aged 9 to 19, and currently 75 of these students are resident on the Isle of Wight.

St Catherine's provides personalised learning underpinned by on-site speech and language therapy and occupational therapy so that every young person achieves their learning potential, maximising both their communication and life skills. School holiday activities are also open to children and young people with additional needs across the Island to have fun, make friends and learn new skills.

Young people with SLCN, such as those who attend St Catherine's, often face disadvantages due to their needs. At the age of 19, young people with Developmental Language Disorder are twice as likely as peers to be Not in Education, Employment or Training. St Catherine's recognises the difficulties that young people with SLCN face when accessing employment and therefore the importance of providing excellent work experience opportunities for students. The goal of the schools' Work Experience Project is to help students learn about the world of work and the types of roles that they may/may not enjoy; give them the opportunity to access work experience in safe and supportive environment, to give them the confidence to seek further opportunities; and learn social communication strategies that they might need to develop to adapt to the world of work.

The Foundation grant has allowed the school to employ a job coach to specifically work with students who have additional vulnerabilities alongside their SLCN, and who need to have more frequent and intensive work experience opportunities; this coach is working with the school's oldest students who are due to leave St Catherine's, to focus on their work experience opportunities.

Isle of Wight Foundation Support

Grant

£8,924 for an additional Job Coach to specifically work with students who have additional vulnerabilities alongside their Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN). These students need to have more frequent and intensive work experience opportunities. The Job Coach attends placements with these students, to provide support and help them to break down barriers.

Project Lead

Sarah Thompson
Principal:
"The grant from IW Foundation has had a significant impact on the amount and diversity of work experience our school can provide for our students."
"It has funded a dedicated Job Coach for the year, and has allowed us to bridge the critical gap between education and employment with many more young people than before."
"Our Job Coach, working alongside our careers and work experience lead, has provided tailored, one-to-one mentoring and job coaching and built vital connections with local employers, and given our students the practical skills and confidence they need to transition into the workplace."



"This funding did not just support a staff position; it has supported our students in seeking more aspirational employment and given them the confidence to look to the future.

"We are incredibly grateful for the support this grant has given us and thank the IW Foundation for giving us this wonderful opportunity to further help our students."

Sarah Thompson, Principal

Youth & Citizenship/ Social Integration



ISLE OF WIGHT FOUNDATION

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ISLE OF WIGHT
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Isle of Wight Foundation
c/o Island Roads
St Christopher House
42 Daish Way
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 SXJ

Tel: 01983 822440

www.islandroads.com

