



IWALC
Serving Town, Parish
and Community Councils
March 2025 Newsletter

Town, Parish & Community Council Elections to go ahead on **Thursday 1 May 2025**

Although “all-out” Isle of Wight Council elections have been postponed until 2026, voters are being reminded that Town, Parish & Community Council elections will go ahead as planned on Thursday 1 May 2025.

To take part in these elections, voters should ensure that they are on the electoral register, especially if they have moved home recently. Any new applications to be on the register should be made by Friday April 11 to be able to vote in an election on 1 May.

Anyone who cannot get to a polling station can apply for a postal vote – this deadline is Monday 14 April, 5pm.

Photographic ID will be required at these elections. For those without acceptable IDs, such as a passport or driving license, the deadline to apply for a free “Voter Authority Certificate” is Wednesday 23 April, 5pm.

More information about voter IDs can be found on the Council’s [Photographic Voter ID](#) page.

For those who wish to stand in these elections, nomination packs are now available from Isle of Wight Council Electoral Services via the [Town, Parish and Community Council Elections 2025](#) page and the deadline for returning completed nomination forms will be Wednesday 2 April, 4pm.

More information about postal voting, being added to the Electoral Register and elections on the Isle of Wight can be found via IW Council’s [Electoral registration](#) page.

At present there is one vacancy on Isle of Wight Council, which will be filled through a by-election in Central Rural ward, which includes the villages of Godshill, Merstone, Arreton and Rookley. This by-election will also take place on 1 May 2025.



I was invited to talk at the Parish Futures event at the Riverside Centre which was extremely well attended, about the upcoming training available to new councillors and the benefits to being IWALC members, putting minds at ease and answering questions for people considering becoming councillors in May.



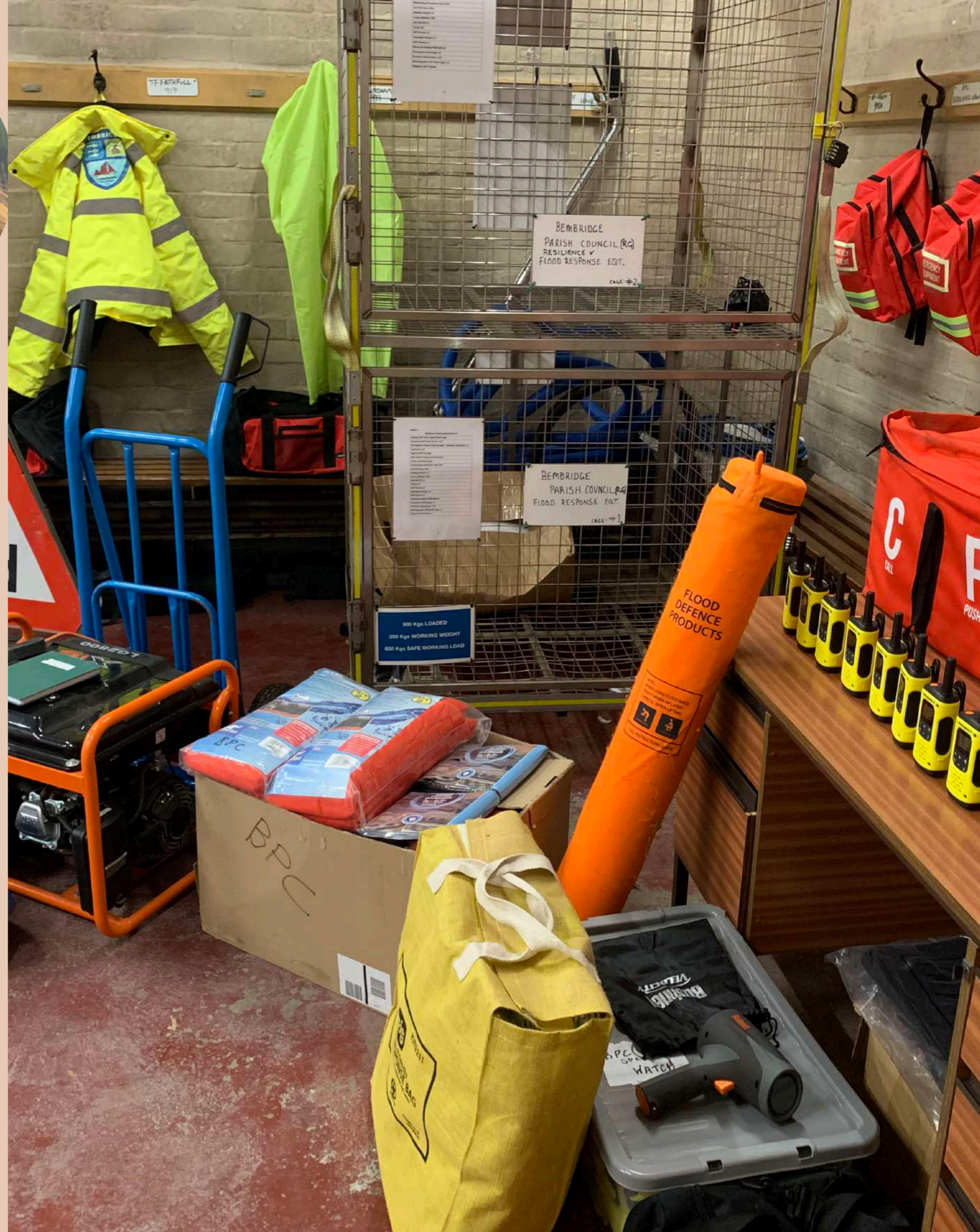
An update to the Practitioners guide is due imminently at the end of this month, this will be sent to all Member councils. County Officers were briefed on the updates, much was mainly clarifications made from the last publication.

A big change about to come in is the requirement for councillors to have council owned email addresses. The requirement at this stage is for email addresses to belong to the existing domains of Town and Parish Councils .Parish Helper Service are still operating to assist town and parish councils to move towards having their own .gov.uk domain name.

The S137 expenditure limit documentation has now been released, you can find it here <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/resource/section-137-expenditure-limit-for-parish-and-town-councils-announced-for-2025-26.html>

There is a feature in this month's Newsletter regarding CPR training that was held in Bembridge. Iain Lawrie from the Isle of Wight Council Emergency planning team was there, and he mentioned that the **SSEN window for applications will be opening soon**. Iain has said that he is happy to help any town or parish council to establish what emergency equipment they may need and directly help with the application - the IWC Emergency Planning department has a proven track record of successful grant applications. I will be emailing Clerks with more details shortly, but you can contact iain.lawrie@iow.gov.uk in the meantime to make enquiries and get the ball rolling. Pictured right is the equipment that Bembridge Parish Council successfully gained when they applied for the funding.

Finally, with elections around the corner, we stand to gain new talent and sadly lose some very experienced councillors who have dedicated many years in serving their communities. Thank you to all of those councillors who have served their respective communities.



I was invited by Cllr Chris Adams of Bembridge to attend defibrillator training on Monday 17th March. The training was very well attended, (full in fact,) with Coastguard volunteers, Parish councillors, Iain Lawrie from the Isle of Wight Council Emergency planning and Alex Rickets from Hampshire Fire and Rescue. Some of the session was filmed for Hampshire.

Chris set the imaginary scene as he opened up the training: there is one road in and one road out of Bembridge. With 5000 residents and 10 defibrillators, if a road is blocked for any reason, Emergency services will likely be delayed - so it's imperative that as many people are trained to use defibrillators as possible. Nobody could possibly argue with that. The training was delivered by Cllr Murray Clark, an ex-Police and Ambulance worker and a town councillor in St Helens. Accompanied by Cllr Martin Groom from Bembridge, talking through an emergency situation and demonstrating CPR, defibrillator use and a very helpful volunteer who jettisoned himself onto the floor to demonstrate the Recovery position.

Opportunities to ask questions were found and Murray diligently stopped to fully answer any queries that arose. The training provided was illustrated along the way with pertinent and memorable stories - all giving clues as to signs to look for, and how we are all different when it comes to symptoms displayed. "what happens if" was met with "I was in a situation where" throughout the session - it was clear of the level of experience in the room where stories were shared.

The Island has a success rate higher than the mainland for resuscitation. The average on the mainland is 8.9%, on the Island we are 12% - and 80% of Islanders will try to give CPR. It takes 4 minutes for the brain to be damaged when a heart attack happens, so the need to act quickly



is urgent. With 80% of cardiac arrests happening in the home, and different people displaying different warning signs, CPR training is an impactful way of making a difference in our communities. Waiting for an ambulance can take a while, Murray gave tips throughout on conserving your energy, recovery positions.. the hour and a half flew by, with delegates deeply engrossed in the whats and the whys.

All in all, this was an impactful, thorough and well considered training

opportunity. Bembridge run these sessions every 3 months - has your council organised any defibrillator training lately? Cllr Chris Adams can be contacted at Bembridge Parish Council if you have any questions.

Julie Hutchison, County Officer for IWALC

Councils, housing associations and The Big Lunch

The Big Lunch 2025 takes place on 7 – 8 June and is a great way to encourage your local residents to get to know one another and improve community connection.

It's become the largest community-led fundraiser and neighbourhood get-together in the UK, with millions coming together for a few hours of food, friendship and fun on the first weekend of June each year.

Get your Big Lunch pack

From posters and invitations to games and activities. The Big Lunch pack has everything you need to plan, prep and get the party started!

Being part of a connected community means knowing who you live next to. It could mean borrowing a cup of sugar, or children playing in each others' back yards, or inviting people on your street to watch the football at your place. Ultimately, connected communities are residents who look out for each other. Though there's a bit more to it than just having someone feed the cat while you're away! Go to [The Big Lunch website](https://www.thebiglunch.com), be inspired and organise something for this year.



On the surface **THE BIG LUNCH** is as simple as sharing friendship, food and fun. But beyond the bunting, cupcakes and conversation it helps to break down barriers, build resilience and grow local connections – **creating happier, healthier communities!**

Over **10M** people joined in for 2024 – here's what they had to say...

CLOSES THE DISTANCE → BETWEEN US ←

3 IN 4

people that joined in say **THE BIG LUNCH** brings different generations together and **76%** say it connects people from different ethnic backgrounds

“The Big Lunch has helped a lot of people get to know their neighbours and build a sense of community. It's a great way to bring people from different backgrounds together and create a more inclusive neighbourhood.”

INSPIRES LOCAL ENGAGEMENT

75% of people that went to a **BIG LUNCH** now have a greater understanding of the local issues affecting their communities

76% say they're more likely to get involved in community activities

ENCOURAGES VOLUNTEERING

617,000

people volunteered their time to organise a **BIG LUNCH** and almost **80%** of attendees feel inspired to get more involved in voluntary activities

EASY WAY TO FUNDRAISE

A whopping **£100M**

has been raised for charitable causes at **BIG LUNCHES** since 2015 – with most going to support local projects!

CREATES A BUZZ

Over **75%** of **BIG LUNCH** attendees feel it had a positive impact on their community

4 IN 5 say it's a good way to bring people with different views and outlooks on life together

FOSTERS A SENSE OF BELONGING

Since attending a **BIG LUNCH**...

71% of people feel less lonely

74% feel more connected locally

76% say it's made them feel like they belong more in their community

CONNECTS PEOPLE TO NATURE

3 IN 4 people say they are more likely to make changes to their lifestyle to protect nature and the environment after attending a **BIG LUNCH**



“I've been more likely to get involved in volunteering and helping our shared space looking after a more vibrant neighbourhood.”

[THEBIGLUNCH.COM](https://www.thebiglunch.com)

TRAVEL

WIGHTLINK

ISLE OF WIGHT FERRIES



Save money with railcards

Did you know, you can save up to a third on Wightlink foot passenger ferry travel when you book your journey with a railcard? If you have one of the UK's popular train travel card, like the 16-25 or Senior Railcard, you can use them on journeys that include cross-Solent travel with Wightlink, and that means you make a saving on your ferry as well as your train.

Bear in mind, you will need to book through a train travel website, such as National Rail, to secure your savings. Don't forget Wightlink also offers discounted fares for Islanders through Season Tickets and Wightlink's Multilink Pass scheme, which applies to vehicle as well as foot passenger travel.

Find out more about Railcards here:

<https://www.wightlink.co.uk/ways-to-save/railcard>

Hovertravel Celebrates 60 Years of Service with Customer Memory Campaign

Hovertravel is celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2025 and as part of the milestone celebrations, is launching a special campaign to collect memories from customers who have travelled with the service over the past six decades.

Since its first flight in 1965, Hovertravel has been a vital link between the Isle of Wight and the mainland, carrying millions of passengers on their journeys. To mark this historic occasion, Hovertravel is inviting customers to share their memories, photos, and stories of their experiences aboard the hovercraft.

Whether it's a daily commute, a childhood adventure, or a special journey, every memory helps tell the story of Hovertravel's unique legacy. Customers are already submitting their memories via email at info@hovertravel.com, through Hovertravel's social media pages, or, recognising that some photos or words might be on paper, by post to Hovertravel Limited, Quay Road, Ryde, Isle of Wight, PO33 2HB

These treasured recollections will be incorporated into new displays on the hoardings for the Coastal Defence Project beside Hovertravel's Southsea terminal, as well as featured on the company's social media platforms





Joe Robertson MP East Wight

I visited Ryde Academy and hosted a Roundtable with pupils to better understand the addictive nature of phones and social media. Ryde Academy has introduced pouches which pupils must lock their phones in during the school day and only gain access when going home. It was interesting to hear the feedback from pupils themselves which was generally positive. They said that it not only improved concentration in class but it promoted social interaction in the school canteen and at break time. One year 10 pupil said it even reduced her phone use at home because having the time away from the phone helped break the cycle of addiction to social media. Recently, I visited Isorropia who provide mental health and well-being support to Islanders and heard about their future plans for a wonderful new facility where the old Medina Valley Centre used to be. I also attended the Community MSK Better Health Day, where a number of community health services come together in one place to meet patients' needs in a one-stop shop, giving quicker access to the right people during a single appointment. Flooding is an ongoing issue, notwithstanding we appear to have had less rainfall so far this year compared to last year. I met with representatives from Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust in Newchurch, to see some of the river management work taking place along the Eastern Yar. We need to avoid flooding along Morton Common and better river management upstream will help with this.

Local News

Arreton Parish Council

The Parish Council was pleased to work in conjunction with Community Action IW to conduct a Housing Needs Survey for the Parish. This has now been completed and adopted by the Parish Council and can be accessed via the Parish Council and IWC websites.

Following receipt of historic papers and in co-operation with St Georges Church Arreton, the Parish Council has been able to reinstate the Arreton and Rookley Education Foundation which has been dormant for around 10 years. This will now enable funds to be distributed in accordance with the original Trust Deed.

February saw the replacement of the beloved Hare and Magpies sculpture at Arreton junction, recreated by the original craftsman. The old hare is now enjoying a new position outside the Community Hall.

Dedicated Community Speed Watch volunteers in Merstone continue to collect data on speeding vehicles with PCSOs following up on those repeatedly flouting the limit. The Arreton group is currently seeking volunteers.



Orchard Regeneration

The Old School Orchard in **Gurnard** has had several new fruit trees planned for, or put into the ground, this season: a pear for those who found peace at the site during Covid: a plum for a long term resident who has worked very hard in the orchard: a replacement crab apple for a memorial tree damaged in Storm Darragh is awaited. The most recent addition is a 'family' fruiting cherry from Grafters in Godshill. Mrs Jackson, the headteacher leading the school over reorganisation was invited to the planting. It was her first visit back to the orchard since the school moved to the Baring Road site. Her words follow:

I was invited, along with a few other ex-members of staff, parents and governors, to the planting of a cherry tree in the old school orchard in memory of Gurnard Primary School. The orchard was and is a very special place and holds lots of happy memories for the staff, pupils, parents and governors who were part of the Gurnard school family. This tree is a memorial for the 'old school', so the three grafts provide a stem for the school, one for the staff and one for the children who have passed through the doors.

It was a lovely morning, despite the threat of rain! The sun came out and we were able to enjoy the wonderful environment that is in the process of being created there. We were given a tour and could see old and new developments as well as hearing about the future plans for the orchard, top field and the community farm (adjoining Grow Gurnard site). So many volunteers have already given of their time and resources to help develop this amazing community facility. This will be a wonderful lasting legacy for the future generations of Gurnard and the surrounding areas.

I will definitely be back with more ex-colleagues, friends and family to enjoy and remember and will watch with interest the project developing. I would certainly recommend a visit if you haven't already been, there is a lot going on and a lot to get involved with.

Thank you for inviting me and for all the hard work and commitment so far and for the future.

Liz Jackson (Headteacher Gurnard Primary School 1994- 2015)

Nearly everyone who attended was closely connected to the school in one way or another – the last headteacher, two very special Teaching Assistants, two Governors, the 'legendary' child-minder who saw many of the old school's children pass through her doors, close neighbours and parents (both Parish Councillors present had children at the school) and even one pupil. A Ukrainian refugee (she holds a Masters in Agriculture) also joined us and she will hopefully feel welcomed enough to bring some of her expertise along to the site. Those able to do so went for 'elevenses' at a nearby cafe serving amazing cakes....





Ryde

Ryde Town Council is proud to support the Wightlink Isle of Wight Chess Tournament, which brought over 400 visitors to Ryde in February and filled many local hotels.

Throughout the week, players could be seen enjoying the town's bars and restaurants, with fantastic feedback from all involved.

We hope this becomes a regular fixture in Ryde and a must-visit event on the European chess calendar.

Ryde Town Council Mayor, Richard May, had the honour of making the ceremonial final move on Board 1 for GM Bobby Cheng in a fiercely contested match against English International Master Matthew Wadsworth. Wadsworth needed a win to secure the trophy and potentially achieve his GM title. After a thrilling back-and-forth battle, the game ended in a draw, with both players trying for first place. Cheng lifted the trophy as the overall winner after ranking tie-break



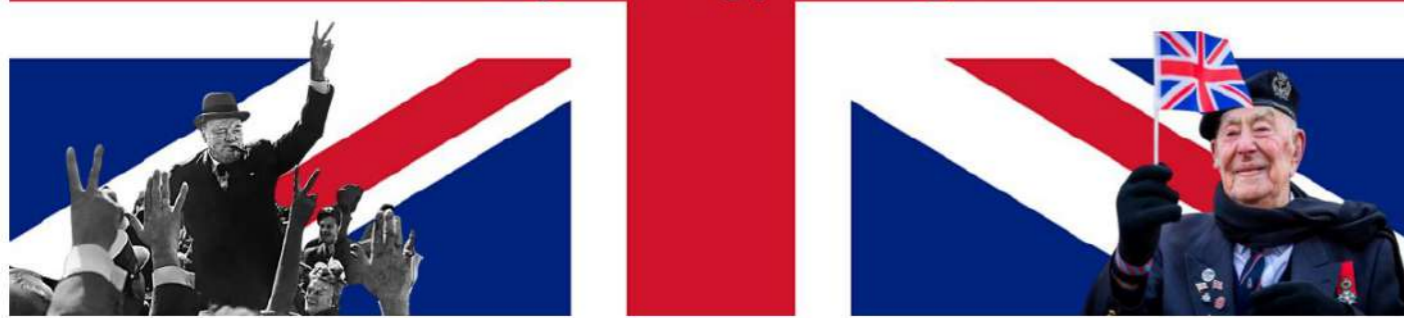
CELEBRATING 80 YEARS OF VICTORY IN EUROPE

THURSDAY 8TH MAY 2025



Join us at East Cowes Esplanade starting at 4pm on the 8th of May for an evening of live music and the Beacon Lighting ceremony.

Don't forget to bring your own picnic!



EAST COWES TOWN COUNCIL – LATEST NEWS

Exciting things are happening in East Cowes! The contractors are hard at work giving the Esplanade Toilets a much-needed facelift, and the Esplanade Paddling Pool is getting a refreshing makeover just in time for family fun this May! Plus, we can look forward to the Skatepark renovations starting soon. It's all about creating a vibrant community space!

East Cowes Town Council is embarking on some exciting new ventures! One of them is a Luncheon Club set for Tuesday, April 8th—be sure to inquire if you'd like to make a reservation! Another fun addition is a VE-themed Tea Dance happening on Friday, May 9th. Plus, you might have noticed some lovely improvements to the Community Orchard at Jubilee Recreational Grounds, including a beautiful stumpery, with a bug hotel coming soon!

Join us on the Esplanade for a special VE Day celebration hosted by East Cowes Town Council! Enjoy live music and witness the ceremonial lighting of the beacon. Don't forget to bring a picnic and celebrate with us!

Commonwealth Day 2025

On Monday 10 March, Councillors gathered at Francki Place to celebrate Commonwealth Day, an annual celebration observed by millions across the Commonwealth in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Americas, the Pacific and Europe.

This year's theme, 'Together We Thrive', celebrates the enduring spirit of the Commonwealth Family – 56 independent member countries united by shared values enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter.

VE Day 2025

Preparations are well underway to mark the 80th Anniversary of VE Day on 8 May. Cowes Town Council will be hosting a Beacon Lighting Ceremony on The Parade, following a parade of cadets through the town.

Local veterans, cadets and members of the public will be treated to live entertainment prior to the Beacon lighting at 9.30pm, to coincide with the national lighting of beacons.

Look out for further details on our Facebook page! [Cowes Town Council](#)

Place Plan

Southampton University has shown an interest in the Cowes and Northwood Place Plan and Councillors have been invited to attend a workshop with them.

While the local Councils have a lead role to play in the Place Plan, it must also involve and collaborate with other local stakeholders, so we welcome this opportunity.

