

Recognition for volunteers

By Martin Neville

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A COMMUNITY bus service described by passengers as a “godsend” won the overall prize at this year’s Community Action Awards.

The **FYTbus** won the Local Communities category before claiming the top award at last Friday’s ceremony, held at the Riverside Centre.

The essential service was conceived by local residents, Michael Craig and Adrian Harris, who spent two years planning the logistics, raising funds and learning all they could about running a bus service.

IW vice-Lord Lieutenant Sir Guy Acland presented the shield and cheque for £1,500 to Mr Craig, Mr Harris, John Daniels and Christine Seamen.

She said: “I think it’s amazing. There are so many worthy groups and organisations here tonight and I cannot understand why we have been chosen above everyone else.”

Runners-up were **Age UK IW**, while a special individual award recognised the enthusiasm and commitment of **Chris Goodman**, who heads a



Left, from left, Adrian Harris, Michael Craig, John Daniels and Christine Seamen, of the FYT Bus, with vice-Lord Lieutenant Sir Guy Acland.

0515-R55048

Right, Judges’ Special Award winner, Chris Goodman, with deputy lieutenant Patricia Partridge.

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team of around 150 volunteers in staging the annual **Brighstone Christmas Tree Festival**.

From small beginnings in Brighstone Parish Church, it now displays 162 decorated trees in six locations, attracting more than 7,500 visitors.

Mr Goodman said: “I get the privilege of working with a superb group of people, the pleasure of seeing the smiles on visitors’ faces and the satisfaction of seeing the money we raise going to

where it’s needed in the parish.”

The annual awards, sponsored by the *IW County Press*, recognise the efforts of volunteers across the Island and were organised by Community Action IW, a charity established to support Island groups.

The judges, deputy lieutenant for the IW, Patricia Partridge, editor of the *IW County Press*, Alan Marriott, and chief executive of Community

Action IW, Mike Bulpitt, spent two days visiting 25 organisations shortlisted from more than 50 applications.

Mr Bulpitt said: “The variety of applications was incredibly diverse and the impact on local people and communities was clearly huge.”

“All the groups short-listed tonight are clearly winners and doing a huge amount to benefit the Island.”

Healthy lives

Sponsored by IW Clinical Commissioning Group

Shortlisted: Earl Mountbatten Hospice John Cheverton Centre information and support, Care in the Garden, IW Asthma Society and Swim Group.

Winner: Care in the Garden.

CARE in the Garden, a community interest company, has been trading for more than three years, having been founded by John Goodenough, a trained social

worker, and his partner, Gill Smith, a horticulturalist.

The project is not just about growing plants — it also helps people to grow, including those who have suffered from isolation and exclusion.

It supports people with disabilities and long-term health conditions by providing assisted work places and opportunities for training.

The Palmers Brook community plant nursery at Wootton, the home of Care in the Garden, is a hive of activity. There are people digging beds, potting up seedlings,

making bird boxes and really enjoying what they do.

They will supply bedding plants for baskets and pots at IW Spar stores and will also be responsible for the planters outside the shops.

John had always wanted to do something that would not only be his own business but also be a platform to offer more to people with disabilities than the normal care system could provide. He said: “Sometimes, I feel the care world is moving backwards and I want to do something to make it move forward again.”



From left, Steve Double and Barbara Blackblock with Dr John Rivers, of IW NHS CCG. 0515-R55051

Sport



From left, Ian Thomas, of Shanklin and Sandown Rowing Club, and Imogen Moss, of Shanklin Rifle and Pistol Club, with Rajinder Sangha, of sponsors Glanvilles. 0515-R55073

Sponsored by Glanvilles Legal Services
Shortlisted: IW Tae Kwon Do Club, Shanklin Rifle and Pistol Club, Shanklin-Sandown Rowing Club.

Joint winners: Shanklin Rifle and Pistol Club and Shanklin-Sandown Rowing Club.

Shanklin Rifle and Pistol Club

THE club, founded in 1903, offers people of all ages the opportunity to target shoot safely and responsibly.

It has more than 100 members and has an indoor and outdoor range.

It also hosts groups from schools and recently 200 scouts from all over the country visited to try target shooting, supervised by volunteer members.

The club has a good record in competitions and has nurtured nationally

successful members, whose successes include Commonwealth Games medals and many national titles.

The indoor range is used every evening and the club is struggling to cope with the rise in applications for membership, putting pressure on space and range time.

Architects are now drawing plans to expand its indoor range.

The new build will also be accessible to wheelchair users and the club also has plans to buy equipment to enable shooting for the blind.

Shanklin Sandown Rowing Club
DATING back to 1875, the club has a team of volunteers who have worked improve and upgrade the club.

A revamped boathouse opened last April, with support from Sport

England and volunteers played a large part in building and decorating.

Volunteer coaches devote at least ten hours each week training the crews and a senior members work 20 hours each week to maintain the facility and the equipment.

The club has a very successful junior squad competing in and often winning regattas along the south coast as well as links to Sandown Bay Academy and the Island Free School, Ventnor. The age range of membership is wide, with some in their 70s.

President Ian Thomas said: “This is recognition of the hard work our volunteers put in. Some have been involved in the club for 50 years and they are supporting the younger rowers.”

He said the money would go towards a new minibus.

Village halls and community buildings

Sponsored by Norris and Fisher insurance brokers

Shortlisted: Aspire Ryde, Shanklin Community Library, Isobel Centre Pan Together.

Winner: Aspire Ryde.

ISYOU Initiatives community interest company identified the need for a community hub two years ago.

Following talks with the Anglican Diocese of Portsmouth, it set about reviving the former Holy Trinity Church, in Dover Street, for the benefit of the community and the Aspire Ryde project was born.

The building had been unloved after dwindling congregations struggled to maintain the

huge structure, which was identified as “at risk” by English Heritage. One proposal had been demolition as the land value was worth more than the building.

The group, however, was determined to renovate the historic church and 50 volunteers, tradesmen and artisans started a programme of restoration and modernisation.

After just one year, a wealth of services are on offer, provided by a huge range of public, private and voluntary groups.

Project leader, Heath Monaghan, said: “This is recognition of the hard work of all our volunteers in transforming a derelict building into a fantastic community hub.

“We are only in our first year but already we have 500 people a week using the building.”



From left, Heath Monaghan, Julie Monaghan, Nick Mulhern, Tina Fraiser and Martyn Ingram, of sponsors Norris and Fisher. 0515-R55067

Children and young people

Sponsored by IW Community Fund

Shortlisted: IW Scouts Adult Training Team, Brading Town Colts Football Club, Ability Dogs 4 Young People.
Winner: IW Scouts Adult Training Team.

THE scouts have many hundreds of volunteers on the Island and more than 1,200 young people participating — but none of this could happen without all the scout leaders and other volunteers being trained.

The training is delivered by a small team of volunteers, led by county training manager, David Turner.

They all put in hundreds of hours of unpaid work and

in 2015 alone. County commissioner Paul Savill said: “I am not aware of another county which can boast about its training team. Elsewhere, there are always problems to overcome or difficulty in retaining volunteers.”

“The IW Adult Training Team has developed new ways of reaching across the county using Skype, taking training sessions to new venues or holding training clinics at events so adult leaders can pop in and get work they have done verified.”

IW Scouting will soon have more than 1,500 young people involved through a project called Access All Areas and the training team will be expected to teach around 100 new adults on top of their busy schedule.



From left, Paul Savill, John Gulliver, David Turner and Kelly Reay, with Ian Jenkins from sponsors IW Community Fund.

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Older people

Mark O’Sullivan, left, and Fiona Langborne, of AGE UK IW, with Maggie Bennet, of sponsors Island Healthcare Ltd. 0515-R55061



Sponsored by Island Healthcare Ltd

Shortlisted: Age UK IW, IW Shopmobility, Carisbrooke Castle Museum.
Winner: Age UK IW.

THE Good Neighbour scheme operated by Age UK continues to go from strength to strength.

There are now 26 schemes around the Island, with 560 volunteers providing 40,000 hours of support.

The scheme involves neighbours helping local older neighbours, who have no-one else to turn to for help and support.

It might include shopping, small tasks around the home, prescription collection, dog-walking, letter-writing, putting the bins out or just having a cup of tea and watching

TV with someone for half-an-hour.

Volunteers highlighted gaps in local services, leading to the formation of community clubs in Seaview, Godshill and Brighstone.

Residents who attended the community coffee morning at Brighstone reported they had all experienced severe feelings of loneliness and isolation and had worried continuously about such things as shopping or obtaining prescriptions.

However, since attending, more than half said their confidence had grown, 80 per cent had made new friends and more than 70 per cent now had someone to turn to in times of need.

Arts and Heritage

Sponsored by Community Action IW

Short-listed: Northwood House Charitable Trust, Ventnor Isle of Arts Festival, Shanklin Royal British Legion
Winner: Northwood House Charitable Trust.

NORTHWOOD House and park were gifted to Cowes Urban District Council in 1929 to provide council offices and rooms for meetings and entertainment.

Today, the Northwood House Charitable Trust Co Ltd is responsible for the Grade-II* listed Georgian house,

community hall and park, which are rented out for functions and events.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the charity and range from young people working towards their Duke of Edinburgh Award to an 80 year old.

They tend the gardens and act as tour guides for the house, run open days, car boot sales, a Christmas fair and run the Stable Cafe in the community hall.

Last year, the park was also the setting for Action Challenge and the Island Highland Gathering and since 2012, the house has been the main centre for the IW Literary Festival.



From left, Ben Hicks, Roseleen Cullen, John Pollard and Janet Allan with sponsor, deputy lieutenant Patricia Partridge.

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Arts and Heritage

Ian Ridett and Ted Sandle with Fiona Ellis, of sponsors AONB. 0515-R55064



Environment

Sponsored by Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

Shortlisted: Friends of the Animals, National Trust, Ventnor Enhancement Fund.
Winner: National Trust.

THE National Trust aims is to look after special places, for everyone, for ever.

On the Island more than 160 regular volunteers ensure the land and buildings owned by the trust are well maintained.

Last year saw a pair of colourful and rare bee eaters nesting on the Island, which was a huge attraction to twitchers nationwide — and 60 volunteers contributed more than 1,100

hours monitoring and supervising the site.

One of the charity’s quirkiest and most original events is the annual goat round-up on the top of Ventnor Downs.

Held in early October, around 45 volunteers from across the Island last year helped herd the trust’s 35 goats along the length of Bonchurch Down and Littleton Down and into the collecting pen.

The event takes about five hours over 2km on steep slopes, with uneven ground and patches of bramble, bracken and gorse.

NT ranger Ian Ridett said: “Without our volunteers across the UK, we couldn’t operate. They are an integral part of what we do and we value every second they give us.”

Local communities

Sponsored by the IW Council

Short-listed: IW Foodbank, FYTbus, Brighstone Christmas Tree Festival, Freshwater Independent Lifeboat.
Winner: FYTbus.

SINCE 2011, the FYTbus has been providing a vital transport lifeline to the residents of the West Wight.

A team of 35 volunteers are enabling around 18,000 passenger journeys per year to be delivered on two routes in and around Freshwater, Totland and Yarmouth.

The FYTbus was conceived by local residents Michael Craig and Adrian Harris, who planned the logistics, raised funds and

learned all they could about running a bus service.

They worked hard to gather a group of volunteers, drivers, passenger assistants, garage staff and office staff.

FYTbus offers two bus routes and the number of passengers has steadily grown over the last three years to between 1,500 and 2,000 a month.

The service helps local residents to visit shops and attend medical appointments and the hail-and-ride service means passengers can be collected from home and dropped off close to their destination.

There are also excursions, the most popular of which are shopping trips to Newport.



From left, Adrian Harris, Michael Craig, John Daniels and Christine Seamen, with the IW Council chairman, Cllr Ian Ward.

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