



**12<sup>th</sup> AGM 26 Nov 2019**  
**CEO Review of the Year to**  
**date from April 2019**

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Since my arrival in April 2017 the findings of the Members' Survey, conducted during the summer and autumn of that year, have been our driving force. Many positive developments have taken place since that time to ensure that the Charity re-focused on delivering its charitable objects. We have addressed and are still actively working on those matters that Members identified were of greatest importance to them.

Following the restructuring of our small team, the Member Services Manager, now supported by the Member Services Administrative Assistant, has continued to develop the range of services and activities across the six geographic areas of the Island. Our programme offers the variety to appeal to a wide range of interests, with opportunities and experiences that might otherwise be inaccessible to our VI Members – a recent example being the Scott Bader Catamaran sailing experience.

The quality and content of our quarterly Newsletter, put together by the Millbrooke House Team, has continued to improve. It's now regularly distributed to all Island Libraries, Opticians', Health Centres and Doctors' waiting rooms, in addition to St Mary's Hospital Eye Department, and of course, to our Members.

The *Talking News* remains highly regarded. Again we are hugely indebted to the large and stalwart team of volunteers who prepare, produce, copy & arrange distribution and will ensure that we continue to support this weekly service with necessary equipment and resources.



The Audio Library still serves a significant number of our VI Members, so we will similarly continue our support of this service with our CD collection. Again, during the past twelve month period we have loaned out more than 1,700 audio books.

Low Vision Drop-In Days continue to be popular with our VI Members. Not only are these invaluable for those who have more recently been diagnosed with sight loss, but with ever-changing and developing technology, they remain an important way for VI Members to enjoy first-hand demonstrations of equipment and technology. Reflecting the interests of Members, the Member Services Manager will increasingly promote new technological and digital solutions in our quarterly Newsletter and at Low Vision Drop-in Days. Our first major 2020 Low Vision Day will be hosted by Sight for Wight on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March. An external venue will be used, details to be confirmed in the New Year, to accommodate a wider range of companies and organisations identified recently at a regional event held on the mainland. In the November Newsletter we had also identified a date in September 2020 for a second major Low Vision Day. However, in place of our own event we will now join the Sight Loss Awareness Event to be hosted at the Riverside Centre, by our Trustee Laura Gooljar, in her capacity as Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLLO) at St. Mary's Hospital. This is scheduled to take place in September 2020.

Another way the results of the last Members' survey influenced our work was in Sight for Wight developing closer links with many other organisations and networks on the Island and nationally that are delivering services and activities identified as being of potential benefit to Members. Members said they generally preferred to participate in activities that are open to everyone, not necessarily those exclusively for people affected by sight loss. This has resulted in Sight for Wight supporting activities where we facilitate VI Members joining with others in the community – as in the SingAbout Sessions that take place in Wootton and the additional supported swimming sessions in Freshwater.

Effective partnership working continues with the national charity *Guide Dogs*. The *My Guide* programme is now well embedded in our offer of training and promoted in the Quarterly Newsletter and on our website. A team of staff and volunteers have successfully completed the required trainer's training since our last AGM. The half-day *My Guide Level 1* programme provides basic sighted guide training – ideal for all of our volunteers, who will be invited to refresh this training every two years. The additional half-day *Level 2 My Guide Training* is for those volunteers who would like

to be matched with a VI Member to achieve individually set and agreed goals, for example, increasing confidence to independently access a specific service or activity, within an agreed timeframe. 2020 dates are currently being finalised and will be advertised shortly.

A new partnership project is currently in progress with RNIB. A number of staff, volunteers and VI Members successfully completed facilitator training by the RNIB in March, so that, going forward, we will take a more significant role in delivering their established *Confidence Building* programmes on the Island. These are designed to support those newly diagnosed with sight loss. The first date when we will be more fully involved will be 13 February 2020 at a *Confidence Building* programme to be offered in Shanklin.

The quarterly Members' Forum meetings remain especially valuable in giving Members the opportunity to meet with me in person, to put forward proposals and suggestions and, of course, to discuss any matters of concern to VI Members. We have already identified dates for 2020 Members' Forum meetings as follows: Wednesday 22 January; Wednesday 22 April; Wednesday 22 July and Wednesday 28 October. The January Meeting will take place at Millbrooke House but we are still seeking other venues Island-wide.

To review the current and future transport provision for VI Members, a Transport Working Party was established in July. Comprising VI Members, volunteer drivers & escorts, two VI Trustees and with relevant staff input, the Working Party, with agreed Terms of Reference, has held two meetings to discuss and consider transport provision. Additional research and information gathering by Working Party Members was undertaken between the two formal meetings. The information gathered will be collated into a draft report for the Working Party to approve at their next meeting scheduled in January and will subsequently be presented, with recommendations, to the Trustees.

To ensure we remain both valuable to clients, and valued by supporters and stakeholders, and that we steadily broaden and strengthen our position, to better serve our VI Members and the wider community it is proposed that a further Members' Survey be conducted during the summer and autumn of 2020. There will be the opportunity for VI Members to influence the focus and nature of questions in

the survey at the first two 2020 meetings of the Members' Forum in January and April as referenced above.

Turning to income generation and fundraising: it was announced at the AGM in February 2019 that the Trustees had approved the recommendations of the Millbrooke House Working Party to generate revenue from letting spare rooms. Revenue generated from long-term commercial tenants sharing Millbrooke House was identified as a potential strand in widening income generation and it was hoped could make a very significant contribution to our overheads. To date we have not received interest through the estate agents appointed, which is felt to be largely because of current economic uncertainties. We will now approach an additional agency as well as continuing to promote the opportunity through our Newsletter, on our website and via social media.

Legacies have, in most recent years, provided the greatest source of income. You will appreciate from the accounts just published, for the year ended March 2019, our income from legacies and other fundraising was insufficient to bridge the gap between current expenditure and income.

As stated in previous AGM reports, legacy income cannot easily be predicted and can never be guaranteed. One of the reasons to broaden our income generation and fundraising strategy is because it is widely recognised that, as we generally enjoy longer lives, many of us can expect to spend our later years in expensive residential care, depleting estates that might otherwise have benefitted family, friends and chosen charitable causes. So Sight for Wight will make further efforts to promote the services supported by the charity, and the positive benefits that accrue as a result, and thus encourage supporters to think about us with a legacy donation. This will remain an ongoing campaign to encourage more Islanders to think about leaving Sight for Wight a gift in their Will.

Regarding the activities of our Local Fundraising Committee, led by our Marketing Communications & Fundraising Manager together with our Volunteers Manager and with the support of many volunteers, we have a number of success stories to celebrate. The team have organised and undertaken a series of bucket collections at supermarkets that have involved Asda, the Co-op, Morrisons and Tesco. We are also grateful to the various organisations, stores and individuals who have supported us with money collected in our shard collecting boxes.

A special mention goes to Bowls Isle of Wight who nominated us as their Charity of the Year late in 2018 and since April 2019 have donated £1255.04 that adds to the sum of £544.96 collected during the latter part of the last financial year – so a magnificent total of £1800.

We are delighted to announce that the Isle of Wight Motor Home and Caravan Club, following a recent meeting with our Marketing, Communications & Fundraising Manager, have just announced that Sight for Wight is to be one of their chosen Charities of the Year for 2020.

In terms of promoting Sight for Wight at Island events, this summer & autumn we participated in a number of major Island shows including Chale Show, Ryde Pride, Fan T C Con and the Wolverton Show. In broadening our outreach to new audiences, we increase awareness of the services offered by Sight for Wight and this is essential to increase wider financial support too.

Regarding Sight for Wight fundraising events, a packed and very enjoyable Murder Mystery evening was recently hosted at Millbrooke House to coincide with the annual raffle draw. The event was organised by the Marketing, Communications & Fundraising Manager with great support from the whole staff team volunteering on the night. The event was made possible because of the enthusiastic support volunteered by the amateur dramatic group who wrote the script and performed so entertainingly on the evening. A sequel is being planned for April 2020 when we will host the evening at the Isle of Wight College Restaurant, who will also provide the catering. With a larger capacity of 48 paying guests, plus the actors, we will be promoting the event in the New Year once all details are confirmed.

Coming up on the 9 December we have our fourth annual Story Writing Competition Awards Ceremony on the theme 'The Sound of Christmas' to look forward to. As detailed in the Newsletter we again have celebrity readers. This year Melvyn Hayes, Michael Maloney, Edana Minghella and Kate Weston will have recorded winning entries. We also look forward to entertainment from Medina Community Choir, Huxley Magician and Hannah Pereira. We invite you to support us at this celebratory event on Monday 9 December at the Riverside Centre Newport from 6.30pm. In the words of our Marketing Communications & Fundraising Manager, this event is fun, festive and, best of all, free!

To ensure that we are making most effective use of the Charity's resources, most especially staff and Volunteer Ambassadors' time, the Marketing, Communications & Fundraising Manager and the Local Fundraising Committee undertake a full cost/benefit analysis before we participate in any shows or put on our own fundraising events.

Our Marketing, Communications & Fundraising Manager also maintains our website, manages our PR and media outputs and regularly features on Vectis Radio, with a monthly slot called *Insight for Wight*, on the last Tuesday of the month.

To provide support to the Marketing Communications & Fundraising Manager and wider fundraising initiatives the Trustees approved the appointment of an apprentice in February 2019. We had expected the appointment to commence from April. After a third round of interviews a job offer made was taken up in October and the 2020 Admin Apprentice has started the essential task of populating our CRM database with details of supporters / fundraisers and providing some administrative support as required to other team members. Our 2020 Admin Apprentice has also made a valuable contribution in supporting delivery and gathering evaluation of the pilot sessions of the Key Stage 1 (KS1) Education Programme, aimed at pupils aged five to seven years and their wider families.

The purpose of the KS1 education outreach programme is to link sight, sight loss and promoting avoidable sight loss, to the national curriculum across a range of subjects. The preliminary work on the KS1 Education Programme was developed with the support of an Education Working Party comprising myself, two Trustee Members (including one VI Member) and two new volunteers who have extensive experience in primary school teaching and special educational needs. With the impressive wealth of collective experience of developing, delivering and evaluating tailored education and outreach sessions, the Education Working Party met on several occasions to generate ideas, offer guidance and influence the production of materials. Once developed by the CEO, these were then reviewed by the Working Party. Meetings were held in July with teachers from three schools who had confirmed their interest in piloting the materials and activities developed. As detailed in regular Newsletter updates, sessions developed cover science, history, maths, geography, technology, literacy and music.

A high quality take-home pack was also designed and produced to enable pupils to share the key messages relating to promoting avoidable sight loss with their wider families.

In total 101 pupils from the three schools took part in the piloting sessions and we have received very positive feedback from teachers and pupils and reports, via comments received by teachers from parents of the pupils involved, that the take home packs were highly valued too.

The feedback received has confirmed that we achieved our goal in producing an inspiring, engaging and fun education programme; valued by schools for providing high quality education that supports their curriculum teaching; and through the distribution of take-home packs for pupils, provided information promoting avoidable sight loss to parents, carers and wider family members. The clear benefit to VI Members will be in widening understanding of the impact of sight loss and increasing empathy with those who experience visual impairment. All of these together will also increase awareness of how Sight for Wight can support those affected by sight loss and expand the number of supporters we have right across the Island Community.

So since the last AGM we have again had a packed schedule of activities to benefit our VI Members either directly or indirectly. However, it must never be forgotten that, with a small core team, of mainly part-time staff, much of what we do can only be achieved with the tremendous support, so generously given, by our volunteers. During the past year, over 100 volunteers have again supported us across all areas of our operations: in facilitating and delivering Member Services; education and outreach; fundraising; administration and in governance, as it must not be forgotten that our Trustee Directors are all volunteers too. Our new Volunteers Manager continues to recruit, induct, support and co-ordinate training and development of our volunteers. Our Volunteers Manager has also undertaken some new initiatives to help build our number of volunteers, an example being representing Sight for Wight at a recent Wellbeing Event for volunteers, hosted by Community Action Isle of Wight at the Riverside Centre, accompanied by some of our regular volunteers.

The constant challenge we present to our Volunteers Manager is that in growing the number of new activities we offer, we consequently require more hours of volunteer time.

Especially in delivering new services and activities, including fundraising and outreach, we are keen to attract new volunteers who can support us. We are always pleased to welcome enquiries from anyone interested in getting involved. We invite those interested to get in touch or look at our website, to see the range of support we welcome and then contact us. Whatever people's skills, talents or interest, it is likely that we will have a volunteer role where they would be valued.

To help evaluate and quantify the enormous support volunteers provide Sight for Wight, we endeavour to keep a monthly record of their hours' contribution to Sight for Wight during the year. We will continue to invite volunteers to describe what they gain from volunteering with Sight for Wight, so that we have both the quantitative and qualitative data that will support our ongoing recruitment of volunteers and which is often required in making funding applications. The Charity was honoured to have received the Queens Award for Voluntary Service in 2014 and Sight for Wight remains immensely proud of the achievements of our volunteers and volunteering programme today.

My commitment to the charity and its core objects was first pledged at the 2017 AGM prior to taking up office as CEO when I said: *'I trust that you will find in me someone with the skills, experience, professionalism and proven track record required of a successful Chief Executive, together with the drive, energy and enthusiasm demanded of such a role'*. That commitment remains as we take Sight for Wight forward for the benefit of the Island's VI Members.

I handover now to our Chair to conduct the rest of the AGM.

Ends