



Outlook

The **iSight**Cornwall Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2022



iSightCornwall[®]

Inspiring futures for people
living with sight loss

Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2022 edition of Outlook



Patron Edward Bolitho meeting the board of trustees in April.

I'm delighted that Colonel Edward Bolitho has officially begun his role as patron and is continuing his family's association with the charity which dates back to 1856. We're hoping that members will get the chance to meet Colonel Bolitho at our AGM which is taking place in person again this year. I can't wait to welcome everyone back on Friday 7 October so please save the date.

I'm also excited to announce that we'll be launching our annual volunteer recognition awards at the AGM. We're inviting members to nominate volunteers who make a real difference to you. Details of the awards are on page 5.

This is not the only new initiative that we're launching this year. A

volunteer-led walking buddies service has recently been introduced and is already proving to be a huge success. In addition to this we have exciting plans for a new book club and hope to introduce other activities later in the year.

Finally, I'm pleased to welcome two new trustees to our board. Kerry Eldridge is the Executive Director of People and Governance at Cornwall Care, the largest charity-based Adult Social Care provider in Cornwall.

Marcus Slater is the Managing Director of Reynolds & Slater Opticians with practices in Falmouth and Penzance. He is also a specialist optometrist for Glaucoma at RCHT.



Marcus Slater

With Mel Colton-Dyer retiring from the board, Ian McCormick has stepped up to become Chair and Clare Green is now Vice-Chair.

Carole Theobald
Chief Executive

Staff news

We're sad to announce that Ruth Broad and Rodney Keat are both stepping down from their roles in May. Ruth is retiring after 14 years as benefits adviser for the charity. During that time she's helped thousands of clients to receive the benefits they were entitled to, amounting to over £6 million in total.

Rod joined the charity in 2008 and has been giving expert advice on assistive technology for 14 years. When Rod joined the charity he was only the second person to take on the role of assistive technology adviser so he has played a huge part in shaping the service we have today.

We would like to thank Ruth and Rod for their years of incredible service and wish them all the best in their new ventures.

We will of course be recruiting new members of staff to continue providing these services and will announce the new appointments in due course. The charity is committed to providing excellence in all of our services and will continue to offer advice



Hayley Stewart

and guidance in these areas. But please bear with us in the interim period as we will be limited in the number of appointments we can offer.

Happily, we've recently been joined by two new members of staff, Ana McMonagle and Hayley Stewart. Ana has joined the low vision team as Sight Services Assistant and is responsible for arranging appointments and helping with low vision queries. Hayley has been appointed to the new role of Customer Services Manager and will have responsibility for customer experience and overseeing the Sight Centre shop. Hayley has many years' experience with sensory loss as a Rehabilitation Officer at Cornwall County Council and in New Zealand where she was a Regional Service Manager at the Blind Foundation in Auckland.

Latest news

Clay workshops

Local artist, Bridgette Ashton, recently ran two clay workshops for **iSight**Cornwall members as part of her Artificialia exhibition. For her exhibition, Bridgette created a series of replica minerals and plinths using clay. During the workshop, the participants were able to handle the exhibits and then create their own unique pieces using the pinch pot method.



“ I really enjoyed the workshop. Moulding and handling the clay was very therapeutic and I’m looking forward to seeing the final pieces when they have been fired. ”

Margaret

AGM

In October, our AGM will be held in-person for the first time since 2019. We’re looking forward to seeing you again after a two year break and will be bringing back all the usual entertainment for the afternoon.

We’ve set the date for Friday 7 October in St Erme Community Centre. Members will receive their invitation and further information nearer the time.

Volunteer awards

Volunteers are an integral part of the charity. Without them our clubs wouldn't exist, there would be no volunteer transport scheme and we wouldn't offer any befriending services. To recognise the outstanding contribution that volunteers make, we're introducing new volunteer awards and we want members to get involved. Tell us who you think goes above and beyond for the charity. To nominate a volunteer, simply let us know who they are and why you are nominating them. We will be announcing the winners at this year's AGM.

Digital research project

iSightCornwall has been invited to take part in an exciting project which aims to use technology to help people stay active as they get older.

GOALD (Generating Older Active Lives Digitally) is being led by a team of researchers at Plymouth University. The project aims to bridge the digital divide by bringing together younger and older people in small groups to hear their experiences, opinions, and challenges. Using this data,

the GOALD team are hoping to be able to create assistive technology that can help keep us active even when we are no longer mobile, such as virtual gatherings and online games.

Some of our clients will be taking part in the study to share their experiences of using technology with sight loss; helping to ensure that any new ideas or inventions are as inclusive as possible.

RCHT Accessibility Advisory Board

As you may know, the Royal Cornwall Hospital (Treliske) is currently undergoing a major extension to house a new oncology unit and MRI suite. In order to make sure the new building is accessible for all users, the hospital is consulting with a group of leading disability organisations that represent the needs of people with different access requirements across Cornwall. We've been invited to represent people with sight loss and help improve the patient experience.

Hospital Information Desks

With Covid-19 cases still high in Cornwall, most of our hospital information desks remain closed for the time being, with the exception of Falmouth. Falmouth Hospital have added a new eye clinic on Tuesdays and our volunteer Sue is there most Tuesday afternoons to let people know all the different ways we can help them.

Unfortunately Helston Hospital no longer hold a weekly eye clinic which means that our hospital desk there has permanently closed. Thank you to our volunteers Ginny and Kevin who ran the hospital desk for several years prior to the pandemic and helped many people to access the support they needed.

Glaucoma UK Digital Support Groups

Glaucoma UK runs free digital glaucoma support groups every fortnight. They cover topics ranging from the basics of glaucoma, to living well with the condition, and the latest research. The sessions are run via Zoom, visit **www.glaucoma.uk/events** to book your space. The talks are also available to view live and afterwards on their Facebook page, **www.facebook.com/glaucomauk**. Alternatively you can join by telephone. For more information, contact **01233 64 81 70** or **helpline@glaucoma.uk**.

Thanks to our supporters

- B&Q Foundation
- Carlyon Bay Golf Club
- Carn Brea Court residents
- Cornwall Council
- Community Outbreak Management Fund
- Cuddra WI
- Feock Methodist Church
- Gunnislake & District U3A
- Macfarlanes Charitable Trust
- Mylor Church
- Newquay Golf Club



Hoby runs his own business, Cabin Fever Audio.

London Marathon 2022

We're delighted to be represented in this year's London Marathon by Hoby Allen who is hoping to raise £2,000 for the charity. Hoby said: "I am fundraising for **iSight**Cornwall because as well as helping out many people with various eyesight conditions in Cornwall, they have also provided me with a lot of help over the years, from early on in primary school through to the current day."

After running the marathon four years ago and swearing he'd never do it again, the goal of

trying to get his time under five hours finally got the better of Hoby and he's aiming to beat his previous time with the help of his guide runner.

You can help Hoby achieve his target by donating online at <https://tcslondonmarathon.enthuse.com/pf/hoby-allen> or get yourself tickets to his fundraising gig on Saturday 17 September at the Godolphin Club in Helston headlined by the excellent Queen tribute band, The Good Old Fashioned Lover Boys. Tickets are available from www.cabinfeveraudio.co.uk.



Clubs and activities

Here's a roundup from all our clubs as well as information on some new activities we're planning to introduce. Clubs and activities are only possible thanks to a wonderful team of volunteers so, as always, we'd like to thank them all for their dedication and support.

BLIS Singers

The singers are back after their winter break and are always happy to welcome new members. They meet fortnightly on Tuesday evenings in Mount Hawke Church Hall.

Bugle Blues Bowling Club

At the end of last year, club secretary Henry Tabb, stood down from the role after more than 15 years of volunteering at the club. He's handed the reins over to Frances Thorne who will work alongside the other volunteers to run the club which meets every Thursday morning at Goonbarrow Bowling Club.



BUGS Shooting Club

BUGS Shooting Club reopened in February and meets every Wednesday in St Austell Rifle Club. They have recently welcomed two new volunteers as well as new members who have already established themselves as proficient shooters. All of the members are taking part in either regional or national competitions this year and are keen to test their new state-of-the-art equipment which has just arrived. The club received two new sights for the rifles, one of which was funded by **iSight**Cornwall through a Cornwall Council grant, the other from kind donations from people close to the club.

Dance Club, Par

This dance club meets in Par Methodist Church on a Monday afternoon between 2-4pm. The meetings take place every couple of months and everyone is welcome. Please get in touch with **iSight**Cornwall if you would like to find out when the next meeting will take place.

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Dance Club, Townshend

After starting up again last September, the club have welcomed several new members. They meet fortnightly in Townshend Village Hall on Thursday afternoons. New members are always welcome and the club is currently looking for volunteer drivers in the Falmouth area.



Guitar Club

The club, which has been running for over 20 years, meets once a fortnight on Monday afternoons in Ponsanooth Village Hall. New members are always welcome.

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Kayak Club

We are hoping to offer more kayaking sessions this summer and will be in touch with anyone who took part last year as soon as we have been given the details from Access Lizard Adventure. Anyone who is interested can contact **iSight**Cornwall for more information.

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Launceston Lunch Club

Members of the club were sad to say goodbye to Angela Holman who retired last year after more than 20 years of volunteering with the club. For 15 of those years, Angela was the club organiser and she worked tirelessly to make sure that the members could meet up every fortnight to enjoy a two-course meal and the company of their friends. A team of volunteers have now taken over the running of the club. The volunteers have arranged a coffee morning to raise funds for the club on Tuesday 21 June from 10am to 12pm at Launceston Central Methodist Church. There

is a £1.50 entry charge which includes your drink and biscuits. Everyone is welcome.

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Ludgvan Bowls Club

We're still waiting for news on the venue which is under new management. As soon as we can secure the weekly Wednesday afternoon slot at Ludgvan Community Centre we will be in touch with all the current members of the club and all of those waiting to join.

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Newquay Book Club

We're planning to start a monthly book club in Newquay Library and would love to hear from anyone in the area who is interested in joining. Audio books would be available and provided by the RNIB Talking Books service. Please contact us for more information.

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Rickshaw Rides Penzance

The Cornwall Rural Community Charity have introduced a new rickshaw ride service for people who might otherwise find it hard to access the outdoors. Volunteer cyclists carry passengers in their rickshaws along the Penzance promenade and across the cycle path to Marazion. The rides start and finish at RideOn E-bikes



opposite Penzance harbour and all passengers must be able to make their own way there. The rickshaws are very comfortable and the footrest lowers to the floor for easy access.

The rides, which are free for local people, have to be booked in advance and are weather dependent. To find out more email **penzance@cyclingwithoutage.org.uk** or call **01736 888777**.

Saltash BAPS

The club continues to grow and has welcomed five new members this year. As well as their regular social activities and raffles, the group have been keeping active at their fortnightly gatherings with a pancake tossing race on Shrove Tuesday and a fitness class led by club member, Daisy. The club meets every other Tuesday afternoon at Ashtorre Rock.



Walking Buddies

For those of you who would like to take part in a little bit of gentle exercise we've introduced a walking buddies scheme where a volunteer will meet you at your house and take you for a walk in your local area. It's perfect for anyone who doesn't feel confident to go out on their own or who would welcome some company during the week.

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If you're interested in finding out more about any of these clubs or activities call **01872 261110** or email **info@isightcornwall.org.uk**.

Cost of living

Heat the human not the home

With energy costs soaring, many people are struggling to heat their homes. Money Saving Expert, Martin Lewis, has researched some of the more cost-effective ways of keeping warm for people who need to drastically reduce their energy usage. One of the key themes is to 'heat the human not the home'. It can be more cost effective to keep yourself warm with a hot water bottle or electric blanket rather than leaving the heating on.

The Money Saving Expert team researched the best methods for keeping our bodies warm and found that items that could be charged via a USB charger such as hand warmers, USB gloves and electric gilets were the cheapest, with an average cost of just 4p per week (after the initial outlay for the item). Microwavable wheat bags cost less than 50p per week to use and filling a hot water bottle twice a day would cost less than 80p per week.

Even items that use mains electricity to heat up were surprisingly cost effective with an electric blanket used for 7 hours a day costing less than £1.40 per week. Other electric items suggested include throws, foot warmers and heat pads.

Other tips for keeping warm include layering clothes, wearing thermal or ski socks indoors, getting up to move around at least once an hour and eating regularly including at least one hot meal a day.

Support with bills

Some households will be eligible for up to £350 from the government this year to help with energy bills.

Energy bill rebate

In October this year all households will automatically receive a £200 rebate 'loan' on their energy bill regardless of the tariff you're on. This is then effectively paid back over five years through a £40 levy added to your bill each year starting in April 2023.

Council tax rebate

In April this year (although it could be as late as September) houses in council tax bands A-D will get a £150 rebate. You don't need to apply for this rebate as Cornwall Council will automatically recognise if you're eligible. But how you pay your council tax may affect how quickly you receive the rebate.

If you pay your council tax using a direct debit, your local authority will transfer the payment into your bank account. If you do not pay your council tax by direct debit, you will be sent a letter from Cornwall Council with details of how to claim. Or you can update your details via the Cornwall Council website

www.cornwall.gov.uk.

Second homes, houses in multiple occupation and empty properties will not be eligible for the payment.

If your property isn't in bands A to D, you may still be eligible for support if, for example, you live in a low-income household. However you'll need to speak to Cornwall Council to check if you're eligible for the separate support.

Scam warning

The Local Government Association (LGA) has warned that scammers are cold calling people asking them for their bank details in order to receive the council tax rebate. It emphasised that councils would never request bank details over the phone and urged people not give out personal information.

It also warned against clicking on links in text messages or emails unless you know they're authentic. If in doubt, contact the organisation they claim to be from using a number you know to be genuine.

If you think you've been targeted by a scam, contact your bank immediately and report it to Action Fraud on **0300 123 2040**.

Fraudulent text messages can be reported by forwarding them to **7726**, a free reporting service provided by phone operators.



Accessibility

Spotlight on: **Eschenbach Smartlux Digital**

What is it?

The new Smartlux Digital is a powerful handheld video magnifier that is great for using around the home, in the office or on the go. It has a HD camera and 5 inch screen with up to 15 times magnification. The ergonomically designed handle means it has a better grip and it can also be attached to a lanyard to be worn around the neck.

Best used for

Reading books and magazines, filling in forms, doing crossword puzzles

Key feature

The Smartlux Digital can be connected to your TV or monitor using a HDMI cable allowing it to be used as a desktop video magnifier.

Other features

- A new design provides better grip and clearly visible buttons.
- Reflection-free, true-colour 5-inch display.
- Up to 15x magnification.
- Continuous or stepped magnification with two responsive buttons for reduction and enlargement.
- Integrated stand for three different uses: fully retracted for hand-held use, fully extended for placing on reading material and partially extended for writing mode.
- Take pictures and store to extended internal device memory.
- USB connection for transferring photos to a computer.
- USB-C power charging function.
- Weight: 240g.
- Average operating time with battery: Three hours.

Accessible television

The RNIB are running a campaign to make on-demand TV more accessible to blind and visually impaired audiences by including audio descriptions for programmes.

Although the Digital Economy Act 2017 paved the way for accessibility requirements such as subtitles, sign language and audio description to be available on catch-up TV, less than a fifth of video-on-demand service providers licenced by Ofcom currently offer audio description.

Without audio descriptions, people who are blind or visually impaired must rely on sound or limited vision alone. But the sound of a gate swinging open, for example, doesn't give the viewer the whole story. An audio description can fill in the missing information by revealing that a young man has walked into the garden carrying a watering can.

A petition has been launched by the RNIB, calling on the Government to make audio description a legal requirement for all video-on-demand services. You can add your name to the petition by going to the RNIB website

www.rnib.org.uk/campaigning.



We are the first centre of resource for all in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly who are affected by sight loss, whatever their age, circumstance or condition. We care passionately about helping anyone living with a visual impairment and have done ever since our foundation in 1856 when the charity supported Cornish miners.

01872 261110
www.isightcornwall.org.uk

iSightCornwall
The Sight Centre, Newham Road,
Truro, Cornwall, TR1 2DP

Registered charity number 1108761

Useful Telephone Numbers

The Sight Centre

01872 261110

Cornish Talking Newspaper

01872 273806

Pengarth Talking Newspaper

01736 364307

Silverline

0800 4 70 80 90

TAP hospital transport

01872 223388

RNIB Talking Books

0303 123 9999 or if you have an Amazon smart speaker say 'Alexa, call RNIB Helpline'

Action Fraud

0300 123 2040

Outlook is also available as:

- **Audio CD**
- **Audio USB stick**
- **Large print (22pt) plain text**