

Outlook

The iSightCornwall Newsletter

Autumn/
Winter
2023



Welcome to the Autumn/Winter 2023 edition of Outlook



We were overwhelmed by the response that we had to our 'See the difference. Be the difference' campaign which launched on BBC Spotlight and BBC Radio Cornwall in August.

It was fantastic to be able to tell the stories of people we have directly helped, and I want to give my sincere thanks to Jean, Haydn and Luci for their help in working with the BBC Spotlight team and to

Barbara and Haydn (again!) for going along to the Pirate FM studios to record some adverts for us.

On top of that I'd like to thank everyone who contacted BBC Radio Cornwall to add their support, particularly Bradley for his moving account of the struggles he's faced and the help that he has received.

Finally I'd like to thank Libby Raison from Raison Opticians in Helston who is also the secretary and commissioner of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Optical Committee (LOC). The LOC represents the optical community in Cornwall so to have their backing meant a great deal to us.

Carole Theobald
Chief Executive



see the difference.
Be the difference.

See the difference. Be the difference.

In case you missed it, here are some of the real-life stories that inspired the campaign.

Luci Forbes

Luci's world changed last year when a routine scan showed she had a bleed behind her eye. The chance examination was the start of months of intensive treatment to try to save as much of her sight as possible.

Luci's condition was caused by a complication of diabetes and has left her with no peripheral vision and trouble seeing distances and shapes, as well as difficulties with depth perception.



Before I got involved with **iSightCornwall**, I was just kind of struggling on. I thought that because I still had some vision, my condition wasn't severe enough to warrant the charity's support. But they've helped me in so many ways. I've been able to talk to other people who are going through similar things to me and I know that if I need anything, **iSightCornwall** are just a phone call away. Without them I would have been lost.





Jean Smith

Jean was just four years old when her vision began to deteriorate and she lost the sight in one eye. Now aged 89, Jean suffers from a range of conditions, including cataracts and myopic macular degeneration (MMD).

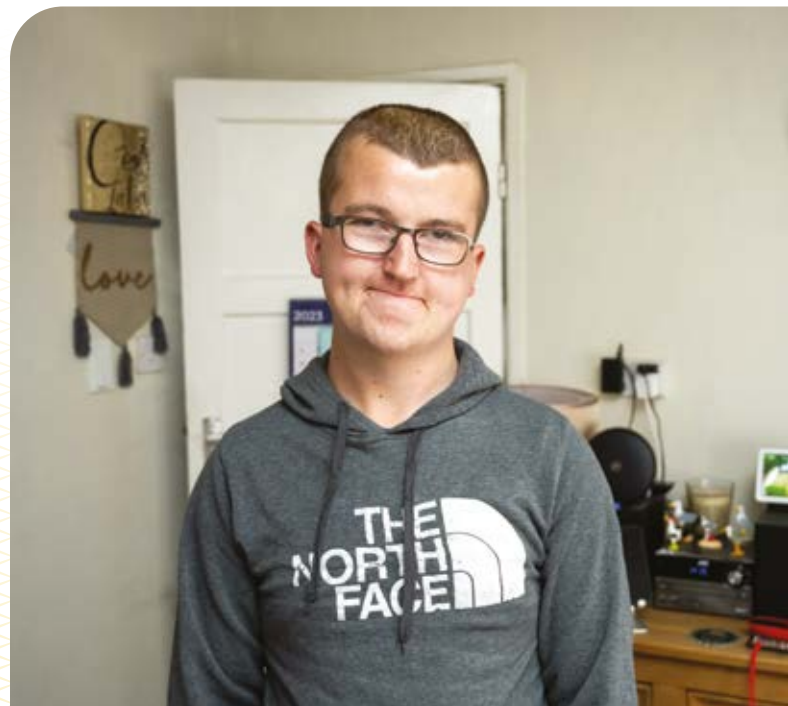
“My sight has got so much worse as I’ve got older and it’s changed my whole life. I’m alright in familiar places but I’m hopeless in a strange environment. After the lockdown ended I realised I was spending more and more time stuck at home. I’ve got a lovely family, but I don’t want to rely on them all the time, so when I heard about the Walking Buddy scheme I thought it sounded like a great idea. It’s been absolutely wonderful, Judy makes me feel young again! I’ve not just got a walking buddy, I’ve got a real friend.”



Haydn Uren

Haydn lost his eyesight after a fall when he was five years old and has been in and out of hospital for most of his life. Despite everything he’s been through, Haydn has been determined to lead a normal life. He’s been able to progress through primary and then secondary school before going onto Truro College whilst using software packages, computer equipment and other technology which has been specially designed for people with sight loss.

“I often go to **iSightCornwall** and talk to them about the latest gadgets around and they show me what they can do. If there’s anything I’ve needed or asked about, I’ve been able to go to them and they’ll help me. **iSightCornwall** has been absolutely brilliant to me.”



Latest news

Behind the scenes

Our 'See the difference. Be the difference.' campaign really took off when it was featured on BBC Spotlight. Reporter John Henderson visited the Sight Centre to find out more about the work we do and to meet with Luci, Jean and Haydn. John spent hours chatting to everyone and then he decided to have a go at guiding so that he could introduce our walking buddies scheme. We were a bit nervous about him guiding Jean along a riverside path with no safety barrier, but chief executive Carole Theobald kept a very close eye on things behind the scenes to make sure everyone was safe.



No-one else is doing what **iSight**Cornwall does in Cornwall and demand for its services is higher than ever. A relatively small donation can make a huge difference. We hope the people of Cornwall will see the difference **iSight**Cornwall makes to thousands of people and be the difference when it comes to raising vital funds.

Libby, Raison Opticians



Events roadshow

We were delighted to get our events roadshow back up and running this summer with events in Penzance, Truro and Redruth. Approximately 180 people joined us over the three days to find out what support is available. Visitors were able to try a range of different handheld and stand magnifiers, get advice on how best to use them and find out more about how to get a low vision appointment. They could also get a look at the latest offerings from the world of technology, get advice on how to make their current mobile devices more accessible and learn more about using speech-based software.

The events in Truro and Redruth were organised by Optelec who produce a range of electronic magnifiers including the Ruby and the Compact HD. For these events, Optelec and the **iSightCornwall** team were also joined by a number of other organisations including Dolphin, the Macular Society, Cornish Talking Newspapers, Age UK, Blind Veterans and the RNIB.



Due to the success of these events we are planning to visit a number of other towns across Cornwall in the coming months starting with St Austell, Launceston and Wadebridge. Members will be sent details of the events in their area in advance.



It was brilliant to be able to take my father to the **iSightCornwall** open day in Redruth. So helpful, lots of useful products and Dad is made up with his stick! Thank you!



Trustee success

iSightCornwall trustee, Steve Holyer, has been given a prestigious award for his innovative product design and development.

Steve has been a member of iSightCornwall for more than 30 years and on the board of trustees for five years but when he is not busy helping to shape the future of the charity, he spends his time inventing and creating new products to help blind or partially sighted people like himself.

As the founding director of easyAccessibility, formerly known as ADi Access, Steve's biggest success story is The RoomMate which has helped make public toilets accessible to thousands.

The RoomMate is an electronic, wall-mounted device that offers an audio description of the facilities to users, and it was this that caught the attention of Institution of Engineering Designers (IED).

The IED is the UK's only professional body representing those working in the fields of Engineering and Technological Product Design.

This year the IED's Council named Steve as the winner of the Alex Moulton Award which



is given to 'an individual or a company in recognition of development of an innovative product'. Previous winners of this award include the Dyson design team.

The council were impressed by The RoomMate as well as Steve's more recent creation, the Huju All Terrain Cane Tip which can be added to Ambutech long and guide canes. It is the only cane tip that can be used on all surfaces including grass, sand and gravel. Steve was invited to accept the award at a prestigious ceremony at the Falkirk Wheel in Scotland.

“It was a complete surprise; I got a letter out of the blue saying I had been nominated and then another saying I had won. It's particularly meaningful because all of the members of the institute vote for the nominations so it was brilliant to be chosen.”

Leach pottery

Earlier this year, several of our members took part in workshops at Leach Pottery in St Ives. Following on from the success of that, Leach Pottery have offered us more workshops in the new year. The workshops are free, and this time we have the option to choose a more easily accessible

venue. If you are interested in taking part, please contact Sophie Butcher on **01872 261110**. Places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis and the location will be decided once we know where the majority of the interest is coming from.

Pendennis Castle historical tour

Members of **iSight**Cornwall have been offered a fantastic opportunity to take part in a tour of Pendennis Castle which will include tactile elements and audio descriptions that are not usually available to visitors at the English Heritage site.

The tour has been devised by a volunteer from Pendennis Castle, who also happens to be a walking buddy volunteer for **iSight**Cornwall. Not only has Jan designed the tour herself, but she has also secured funding to offer free places on the tour for each person plus an accompanying sighted guide.

There are a limited number of places available for the tour

which will take place in spring 2024, so we are currently asking for expressions of interest with places being allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

It is worth noting that the history of the castle goes back to the 1540s so there are a lot of steps and awkward changes of level throughout the building. The tour has been designed to avoid the narrow spiral staircase in the Keep but there will be some walking to do between various locations.

If you would like to take part in this unique opportunity, please contact us on **01872 261110** to book your place.

Audio book

We were very excited when local author, Christopher Johnson, dropped into the Sight Centre with some of his books and offered to turn them into audio versions for our members. Over the course

of several months, Christopher has been recording his stories and with the help of a friend, he has created a collection of 12 short stories which are available on request from the Sight Centre.

Ticket office closures

With the threat of railway ticket offices being closed for good, **iSightCornwall**, along with many other disability groups and unions, raised concerns that this would create huge barriers for disabled travellers.

Ticket offices and frontline railway staff play an essential role in making train travel possible for so many people, especially people with sight loss.

iSightCornwall's Dominic Hall appeared on local news programmes to share his experiences and concerns and we shared the public consultation details on our website and social media.

Thankfully, with the consultation receiving 750,000 responses, the message from the public became clear and on 31 October it was revealed that the Government had asked train operators to withdraw the proposals.

A big thank you to everyone who took part in the consultation, and everyone who encouraged their friends and family to write a response.



Fundraising news



A Wine Tasting Like No Other

Old Chapel Cellars, a local independent wine merchant, have chosen **iSightCornwall** as their charity of the year and held a special event in August to mark the start of their fundraising activities.

A Wine Tasting Like No Other was a sold-out wine tasting event that took place at the Old Chapel Cellars' premises in Truro. More than 30 people were guided through the process of tasting different wines but with the added twist of doing it whilst blindfolded. The idea behind the event

was to find out how our perceptions are altered when we can't use our sight to give us clues. For example, could the guests tell the difference between red and white wine when both were chilled?

Old Chapel Cellars co-owners, Jamie and Louisa selected **iSightCornwall** as their charity of the year after reading about the charity's work helping people with sight loss in the county. It inspired the pair to think about what it would be like to lose their sight.

Louisa explained: "In our business we rely on our senses to tell us about the different wines, but what would happen if one of those senses were taken away? This was something that really resonated with us and is why we chose **iSightCornwall** to be our charity of the year."

Louisa, Jamie and the team are hosting a number of wine-tasting events in the run up to Christmas and all of the profits will be donated to **iSightCornwall**.

Cape Cornwall Ladies

Members and supporters of Cape Cornwall Golf Club raised a fantastic £1,810 for **iSightCornwall**. The charity was chosen by ladies captain, Frieda Pring for her 2022/23 captaincy and benefited from fundraising events organised by Frieda throughout the year.

Every little helps

A huge thank you to those who voted for us in their local Tesco store's Golden Grants community scheme. Every little helps as they say, and every blue token which was used to vote for **iSightCornwall** has helped us to secure vital funding.

We were delighted to receive the following grants; Newquay and Padstow, £1,000; Callington, £1,500; Wadebridge, £1,500; St Ives, £1,000; Penzance, £1,350.

And we are so pleased to be nominated in the Falmouth Killigrew Tesco Express, the Falmouth Discovery Quay Express and the Helston Tesco Superstore. Local shoppers in those areas will be able to request a blue token with every shop and use it to vote at the community grants area in store until January 2024.



Clyde's cookbook

A huge thank you to long-standing **iSightCornwall** member and supporter Clyde, who has donated £187 following the sale of his cookbook.

Created using recipes from his granny and those he has learned from years of baking, the book has proved to be a big success and was a dream come true for Clyde. The book came about with the help of the Truro Creative Writers group as well as the team at Perranwell Hub and Imagine If Partnership. Clyde chose to split the profits between **iSightCornwall** and The Wellbeing Hub in Perranwell. Thank you Clyde!



Aspects Holidays

A Cornish holiday business has donated £1,000 to **iSightCornwall** after being nominated by a member of their team. Aspects Holidays staff member Jackie said: "In the past year, we've donated almost £40,000 to a variety of charities in Cornwall and across the UK and personally, I felt that **iSightCornwall** would massively benefit from our support. My nephew's girlfriend was recently registered blind and the charity has helped her so much. I was very pleased to be able to nominate them."

Tractor Run

A Tractor and Land Rover run in Lanlivery, with help from Lostwithiel Young Farmers Club, has raised an incredible £1,792 for **iSightCornwall**.

Dozens of people took part in the event, which saw vintage and modern tractors as well as Land Rovers making their way through fields and across land, ending at the Boconnoc Estate. Crowds of people waited at the finish line, keeping warm with teas and coffees and raising money through a raffle supported by local businesses.



Cornish Marathon

Two friends have raised a fantastic £1,910 for **iSightCornwall** thanks to their 'marathon' effort.

In 2022, Nicola Vosper was left severely sight impaired following major surgery to remove a tumour. She has spent the last year adapting to the change and, with the support of family, friends and **iSightCornwall**, she has slowly regained her confidence to start running again, something which she used to enjoy so much. With her husband Fran and friend Jane Stedman, Nic started off running short distances whilst getting used to being guided.

In just 12 months, Nic had built up enough confidence to take on the Cornish Marathon with Jane as her guide. It was Nic's sixth marathon but her first since losing her sight. However,

she was in good hands - Jane is a veteran runner with well over 300 marathons under her belt. Using a figure of eight dog rope to connect them, the pair built up an understanding and trust with each other.

They set themselves a fundraising target of £1,000 which they almost doubled thanks to the generosity of friends, family, local community groups and members of Bugle Blues Bowling Club which Nic attends.

Proudly wearing their **iSightCornwall** t-shirts, Nic and Jane finished the Cornish

Marathon with a time of five hours, twelve minutes and 45 seconds, smashing Nic's target of five and a half hours. Fran ran 17 miles alongside them as an additional guide runner and friends and family lined the route to cheer them on.

Nic said: "I am so lucky to be surrounded by brilliant people who have encouraged and supported me every step of the way. Getting out and going for a run just picks me up, I feel miserable if I'm stuck indoors for too long and it's been fantastic to be able to get out there and do something I enjoy."



The Hub Carnon Community Methodist Church

After hearing our appeal on BBC Spotlight, members of the Hub Carnon Community Methodist Church got in touch and asked us to do a talk at one of their meetings.

They then held their annual Christmas Fundraiser in aid of **iSight**Cornwall. The event raised a fantastic £911 through craft stalls, cake sales, a tombola, raffle and some very popular bacon rolls.

Thanks to our supporters

Aspects Holidays
Cape Cornwall Golf Club Ladies
Cellar Charity Shop
ClayTAWC
Community Centre
Clyde Pascoe
Helston Marathon Challenge Team
Holy Trinity
Wednesday Club
Joyce's 90th birthday party
Kenwyn Church

King Arthur Lodge
Lanlivery Charity
Tractor and Land Rover Run
Mullion Golf Club
Newquay Lions
Nic and Jane's
Cornish Marathon Challenge
Old Chapel Cellars
Par St Mary's
Bright Hour Ladies
Perranwell Hub
Shortlanesend Chapel

Tesco Golden Grants
The Friendship Gardeners
The Hub Carnon Community Methodist Church
The Saltash Forum
Thelma's 100th birthday party
Trefoil Guild,
Threemilestone
Tywardreath Methodist Church



AGM

This year's AGM took place on Friday 13 October and whilst that date might be unlucky for some, that didn't stop over 90 people from joining us to enjoy the day.

Returning to St Erme Community Centre for the 166th AGM, the main hall was packed with members and volunteers who travelled from all over Cornwall to be there.

The morning began with a speech from Chief Executive Carole Theobald who

welcomed attendees and gave a brief overview of the charity's activities over past year. The microphone (which will be working next year!) was then handed to Chair of Trustees, Ian McCormick who led the voting on motions to adopt last year's minutes, the annual accounts, and the election of trustees to the Board of Directors.

Vice-Chair and finance trustee, Clare Green gave an overview of iSightCornwall's finances and explained the cause of recent financial challenges as well giving an outlook for the future.



Following the closure of the AGM, Carole presented the 2023 Volunteer Awards. There were three categories of awards, Outstanding Contribution, Special Recognition and Member's Choice.

Following the awards, attendees were entertained by a musical performance from iSightCornwall member, Chris Jewell. Representing the Guitar Club, Chris showed off his musical prowess with a range of guitar work, singing and even a bit of comedy.

Proceedings then took a break for the all-important pasty lunch before the entertainment continued with singing from the BLIS (Blind in Song) Singers. Bringing some iconic Cornish songs to the day, attendees were encouraged to join in with Lamorna, Cornwall My Home and Trelawny.

The excitement continued with the return of bingo. Once again Paddy from the BUGS Shooting and Launceston Lunch clubs kindly stepped up to be the caller. Prizes were on offer for a line, four corners and a full house with the grand prize going to volunteer Jill Raftry.

After the bingo fun, the tables were cleared to make room for Townsend Dance Club members, led by Alyson, to show off their moves whilst also giving attendees the opportunity to join in.

Speaking after the event, Carole said: "I was so pleased with how successful our 166th AGM was, I hope everyone who attended had as much fun as I did. I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who came along, to the volunteer drivers who ensured our members could attend, to the trustees for joining us, to Paddy for his fantastic bingo calling and to Jill and Paul who organised the pasties we all enjoyed for our lunch.

"Our AGM is such a wonderful occasion as we can share what we have been up to throughout the year but also hear the stories and experiences of our members and volunteers."

Save the date

The next AGM will take place on Friday 11 October 2024.



Volunteer awards



The AGM gives us the perfect opportunity to honour the fantastic contribution that volunteers make to the charity. We have over 140 volunteers and we couldn't do what we do without them.

Outstanding Contribution Award

This is presented to our valued volunteers who have reached a milestone in their time with iSightCornwall.

Lindsay Rodda

Lindsay worked for the Cornwall Community Volunteer Service which ran clubs for people with visual impairments until its closure in 2013. Determined not to let the clubs disappear, Lindsay volunteered to take over the running of the Townshend Dance Club and it became affiliated with iSightCornwall. This year she received the Outstanding Contribution Award for 10 years of volunteering.

Viv Busby

Viv Busby has also been volunteering for Townshend Dance for 10 years as a driver and club secretary. In fact, it was through playing badminton with Lindsay that she got involved (Lindsay recruited her entire badminton group to help out!) Viv still works too but she always makes sure she's available on a Thursday afternoon for the dance club.

Vic Coop

Vic is a volunteer driver and there's barely a club he hasn't driven for! Whether it's singing, dancing, bowling or shooting, Vic has been to them all. And when the covid pandemic sent us into lockdown, Vic volunteered to be a telephone befriender for people who

were feeling isolated. We were delighted to present Vic with the Outstanding Contribution Award for 10 years of volunteering.

David Dunne

David has been volunteering with the charity for 15 years. During that time he has been a driver for a number of clubs, helped fundraise for the charity through store collections and has even taken groups on mini breaks across the UK. He also drives people to their hospital appointments and is often requested by name. David is currently the treasurer for BLIS Singers but sadly for us is stepping down at the end of this year. We would like to thank David for everything he has done for the charity over the past 15 years.

Brian Palmer

Brian has been a fundraising volunteer for the charity for 20 years. Brian manages all of the tin collections in the Par and St Austell areas, picking up the tins when they are full and dropping off new ones to stores and hospitality venues. Along with his wife Vera, he has also taken part in many store collections in the area too.

Christine Fuller


Christine is one of our longest standing volunteers having been with us for 25 years. She joined in 1998 as the organist for BLIS Singers and has been with the club ever since. Christine makes sure that the group is accessible to everyone with sight loss by teaching everyone the lyrics and creating large print song sheets.

John Treleven

Perhaps our longest standing volunteer, John has been with the charity for 30 years. John is a volunteer driver who helps clients get to their various appointments. And although John has had to take step back recently for health reasons, we wanted to take this opportunity to honour his achievement with the Outstanding Contribution Award.

Special Recognition Award

These awards are presented to volunteers who have gone above and beyond for people living with sight loss.



Margaret was presented with her certificate at a surprise ceremony attended by Carole Theobald.

Phil Askew

Phil joined us in the summer of 2006. He is a volunteer driver for both Bugle Blues and Saltash BAPS and it's not unusual for him to do a round trip of 100 miles just to ensure that our members can enjoy these clubs. After 17 years of volunteering and who knows how many miles in the car, Phil has thoroughly earned this award.

Maurice Hocking

Maurice has been volunteering at Saltash BAPS for over ten years. He is the club's Treasurer and for years he drove the minibus that would get the members to and from the club as well as taking them out for Christmas meals. Maurice retired from minibus driving last year but he is still an integral volunteer at the club which is why he was presented with the Special Recognition award.

Margaret Palmer

Margaret has been fundraising for charity for many, many years making and selling her beautiful craft work. In 2019 we were very grateful that Margaret turned her fundraising attention to **iSightCornwall**. Since then, Margaret has collected hundreds, if not thousands, of used stamps for our stamp appeal. The sale of these used stamps raises hundreds of pounds for our charity each year. But even before 2019, Margaret was known to us through the Gweek Visually Impaired Bowls Club where she used to cook meals for the club members.

Chris Kemp

As well as being a volunteer driver, a range officer at BUGS, and soon-to-be Treasurer of BLIS Singers, Chris has spent the last 12 months helping Dom with Assistive Technology appointments. Not only was Chris on hand whenever Dom



needed a driver to get to a home visit, he would also attend the appointments to guide Dom with any activities that needed a certain level of sight. We wanted to thank Chris for his support during this period on top of everything else he does which is why he received the Special Recognition Award.

Michael Reeves

Michael has been a member of the guitar club for 21 years. Eight years ago, the club needed a new organiser or it could have faced closure. Michael stepped up to the role and has been running it ever since as well as making sure everyone keeps up with their practice at home. Unfortunately, Michael was unable to attend the AGM so he was presented with his certificate at home by some of his fellow club members.

Gloria Sandow

Gloria is like one of the team at the Sight Centre having volunteered with us every week for six years. If anyone has ever had a follow up call from their low vision appointment, it is Gloria you will have spoken to. Gloria worked for Cornwall Council for many years and got to

know the ROVIs which is why she chose to volunteer for us when she retired. And we're very glad she did!

Pat Thomas

Pat has been a volunteer with iSightCornwall for 13 years. For many years she ran the Gweek Bowls Club and more recently has been a volunteer driver and helper at Townshend Dance Club. Pat was presented with the Special Recognition Award for her dedication to the clubs over the years.

Members' Choice Award

This is a special award chosen by the iSightCornwall members and presented to the volunteer who has made the biggest difference to them.

Judy-Anne Reeve

Judy only joined us as a volunteer earlier this year, but she is testament to the huge impact a volunteer can make in just a short space of time. Judy is a walking buddy to Jean who says that walking buddies is the best thing we've ever done. This is in no small part down to Judy and that is why she was presented with the Members' Choice Award.

Energy Suppliers

Priority services register

With wintery weather ahead, now is a good time to sign up to the Priority Services Register. It was created to ensure those in need are able to get information about interruptions to services more quickly and have their services restored as soon as possible. You will be eligible if you have sight loss, are over the state pension age or have a long-term health condition.

Electric

The National Grid's Priority Services Register (PSR) provides extra help and additional support during a power cut for elderly, very ill or disabled people, or those who rely on power for medical equipment.

To sign up, visit: www.nationalgrid.co.uk/priority-services or call **0800 096 3080**.

Remember, you can always call 105 for free during a power cut for help and advice.

Gas

Each gas supplier holds its own priority register. Contact your supplier directly and ask to be added.

Some providers will be able to offer you information and bills in a more accessible format and being on the register means you may be able to get advance notice of planned works, free gas safety checks, help reading your meter as well as extra help and advice.

In an emergency you can also call the free National Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999**.



Water

Signing up to South West Water's Priority Services Register will mean you can receive assistance in reading your meter as well as getting your bill and important information in a more accessible format such as large print, braille or audio CD.

You should receive notice of any planned works and outages and if you have a health condition which needs access to water then an alternative supply will be arranged.

To sign up, visit: www.southwestwater.co.uk and scroll down the page until you reach 'practical help' or call **0344 346 1010**, between 8am-6pm Monday to Friday, and 9am-1pm on Saturdays.

Accessible smart meters

Smart meters help you to control your energy use by adopting energy efficiency measures that can help save money on your bills. They come with an In-Home Display, which shows how much energy you have used and automatically sends your meter readings to your energy supplier.

But did you know that that there is an Accessible In-Home Display available for blind and partially sighted people?

The Accessible In-Home Display has all the features of a regular unit, but with additional accessibility features which include:

- Tactile buttons with audio feedback of button press
- Text-to-speech function for screen navigation
- Adjustable volume for the text-to-speech function
- Coloured LEDs which indicate electricity usage
- LED push button to replay speech
- Large typeface
- High contrast colour scheme optimised for visual impairments and colour blindness

These devices are also suitable for anyone who has difficulties with dexterity or memory loss. They are offered at no extra cost to selected customers, but they are not yet available with every supplier. In order to find out if you can get hold of an Accessible In-Home Display, please contact your energy supplier directly.

Winter eye care advice

Our eyes can go through a lot in the colder months so we've put together a guide on how to keep your eyes healthy through the winter.

UV Rays

Most of us are aware that we need to wear sunglasses to protect our eyes in the summer but did you know that the official advice is that we should be wearing sunglasses whenever the UV Index rises above three? This can happen even on a cloudy day and throughout the winter months.

The UV Index measures the strength of the sun. It doesn't have to be hot and cloudless for UV levels to be high. UV levels are graded from low (1-2) to extremely high (11+), and it is important to take action when UV levels are medium which is three or above.

UV radiation can have both short and long-term effects on the condition of our eyes. It can damage the eye's surface tissues as well as the cornea and lens. UV rays can burn

the surface of the eye much like sunburn on skin. In fact, according to the Eyecare Trust, our eyes are 10 times more sensitive to UV radiation than our skin.

Long term exposure to UV radiation is a significant risk factor for cataract development, which is the leading cause of blindness in the world.

To protect your eyes from UV exposure it is important to wear good quality protective sunglasses that block out 99 to 100 percent of both UV-A and UV-B radiation. You also want glasses that screen 75 to 90 percent of visible light. Wraparound sunglasses offer the best protection and those with grey lenses still allow proper colour recognition.

In order to get UV forecasts for the UK, you can visit the Met Office website www.metoffice.gov.uk or download the free Met Office app.

Wind and central heating

Cold winter winds and central heating can play havoc with your eyes leaving them feeling dry, gritty, and sore – especially at the end of the day when symptoms are often at their worst. Cranking up your central heating can also trigger conjunctival hyperaemia (blood shot eyes).

You can avoid dry eyes in winter by reducing the setting on your central heating, but only if it feels comfortable to do so. You can also wear glasses outdoors to protect your eyes from the wind, avoid car heaters, particularly at face level and avoid direct heat such as gas or electric fires.

It's important to speak to your optometrist if you feel like your eyes are dry. They can offer lubricating eye drops or other advice.

Respiratory Infections

Respiratory infections such as common colds and flu can inflame your conjunctiva (the clear membrane that covers the whites of your eyes) leaving your eyes feeling sore and irritated. You can reduce the risk of this by washing your hands thoroughly before touching your eyes.

Eye Tests

Winter is a good time to get your sight tested as poor light conditions can mean your eyes have to work harder, making them more susceptible to fatigue and eye strain.



Assistive Technology

iSightCornwall's assistive technology adviser, Dominic Hall paid a visit to the Queen Alexandra College (QAC) Sight Village in Exeter in September to discover the latest advances in technology which can help blind and partially sighted people.

The Sight Village is an annual event which is described as the UK's leading exhibition for blind and partially sighted people. With over 60 exhibitors showcasing their products, there was plenty for Dom to explore.

Amongst the electronic magnifiers, the HumanWare Explore 12, Optelec Compact 7 and Optima Lunar Range had some really interesting new features. But what really caught Dom's attention were the advances being made on the mobility side of technology. From smart canes with GPS and audio instructions to wearable devices which can help you to navigate and avoid obstacles.

Dom has chosen his three favourite pieces of mobility tech from the event (in no particular order) to review.

Biped

Biped is a smart harness, worn on the shoulders, which gives you GPS instructions and helps you detect obstacles. It uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) and self-driving car software from the Honda Research Institute.

Dom says: "I was really intrigued by the Biped device, it's quite light and sits on your shoulders. The cameras and AI mean it can tell you about incoming obstacles, people and even traffic. It will then play short beeps via Bluetooth headphones to alert you of any danger. The company are working on bringing GPS instructions to the device which will provide turn-by-turn instructions such as 'in 20 metres, turn left'."

To learn more about Biped visit www.biped.ai.

StellarTrek

Created by HumanWare, who are behind the popular Explore range of electronic magnifiers, the StellarTrek is described as a 'digital orientation and mobility assistant'. It looks like a remote control which is about the size of your hand and uses GPS, cameras, and AI to guide you to your destination.

Dom said: "If anyone with sight loss has ever tried to use an existing sat nav application, you probably know how frustrating it is to try and follow the guidance with audio commands alone. Especially when the application gets you to within 50 yards of your destination before leaving you to find your own way.

"The StellarTrek uses voice guidance to get you to the door of your destination. It can also use the built-in cameras to read barcodes, recognise colours and scan text to read aloud. It is taking technology which is already well-proven to help people with sight loss, such as text-to-speech, and combining it with new AI features to help create new devices."

Find out more at www.humanware.com/stellartrek.

WeWALK Cane

The WeWALK Cane combines the familiar white cane with smart technology, allowing you to navigate, check bus and train timetables, and detect above-ground obstacles with ultrasound whilst still retaining the standard white cane's ground feedback.

Dom says: "Anyone who uses a cane already knows how handy they can be but imagine if your cane could also give you directions, find the nearest bus stop or alert you to obstacles that you're approaching. That's the idea behind the WeWalk Cane. I particularly like the fact that when the WeWalk navigates you, it gives you directions in the form of clock positions so, for example, instead of saying turn right, it says 'turn to 2 o'clock' to give you more precise and easier to follow commands.

"The WeWALK does use an integrated app on your smartphone but the cane itself actually has a built-in touchpad so you can leave your phone in your bag or pocket and control the WeWalk's features via the touchpad."

Find out more at www.wewalk.io.



Bugle Blues
Bowling

Clubs and activities

Affiliated clubs

BLIS Singers

BLIS Singers have settled in nicely to their new home in Shortlanesend Village Hall and meet fortnightly on Tuesday afternoons. They gave us a lovely performance of some Cornish classics at this year's AGM and will be focusing on Christmas songs for their last meeting of the year in December.

Bugle Blues Bowling Club

The Bugle Blues bowlers recently welcomed a team from Imerys Bowling Club for a friendly competition and despite being the only team with sight loss, the Bugle Blues team won. The club will soon be launching a fundraising campaign to raise money for a new short mat to replace their current one which is around 20 years old!

BUGS Shooting Club

The BUGS shooters had a very successful summer league with every member taking part in one of the leagues. Dan Lowe finished the highest, coming third in League 1 followed by Kevin Sleeman finishing sixth. Joe Tredinnick also had a fantastic season winning his league for the first time since joining the club 24 years ago. Vic Powell came sixth in the same league. Relative newcomer, Michelle Kemp has already moved up to League 6 where she came fourth and newest member, Tracy Ritchie came second in League 8 in her first ever tournament. Well done to everyone involved.

Dance Club, Par

The club held a summer festival event in June to attract new members and following on from the success of that event, they now meet more regularly. The Par Dance Club meetings take place monthly on Monday afternoons in Par Methodist Church.

Dance Club, Townshend

There was a very special celebration at Townshend Dance Club in October for Thelma Hearn's 100th birthday. Her friends at the club put on a lovely buffet of

homemade treats, topped off with a fantastic cake made by volunteer Sharon Miles.

Thelma generously used the occasion to raise money for other people with sight loss, asking for donations to **iSightCornwall** instead of gifts. A collection on the day raised £80 which was presented to chief executive Carole Theobald who attended the party and thanked Thelma for her kind gesture.

When asked for the secret to reaching 100, Thelma said: "Just keep going, don't sit down all day, keep active. Dancing has helped me, it keeps the body and the mind healthy, and it keeps me young!"

Thelma Hearn's 100th birthday celebrations





Saltash
BAPS saying
goodbye to
Daisy

Guitar Club

After a fantastic solo performance from Christopher Jewell at the AGM, the club picked up a new member who was keen to learn how to play. The Guitar Club meets on Friday afternoons in Falmouth from 2pm.

Launceston Lunch Club

The Launceston Lunch Club turned out in force to the AGM with around 20 of the members and volunteers coming along to enjoy the day. Their last outing for the year will be the Christmas meal in December, then they will be taking their annual break in January. The club will return in the first week of February.

Saltash BAPS

It's been another busy few months for Saltash BAPS with plenty of entertainment and speakers at their regular meetings. They've also been on a few excursions including a trip to Kernow Mills for a cream tea and some shopping, plus a Tinsel and Turkey weekend in Falmouth. Members of the club were sad to say goodbye to Daisy in September who has moved out of Cornwall to be closer to her family. Club organiser Shirley Evans said: "We will miss her very much, she was always happy, always smiling."

Non-affiliated clubs

ABLE Bowling

The club meets fortnightly in Shortlanesend Village Hall on Monday afternoons from 2-4.30pm.

BATS

BATS is a sailing club for visually impaired people that is based at Mylor Yacht Club. They also offer fishing trips and gig rowing.

Bude

A new social group has been set up in Bude that meets monthly in the Kerensa Hotel. Members get together for a chat and to listen to guest speakers.

CABS

CABS Shooting club meets every Wednesday afternoon at the Rifle Club in Helston.

Newquay Art Club

A new art club for visually impaired people has been set up by DISC Newquay. The club meets every Monday morning from 10.30am in the Sandy Lodge Hotel.

Optimists

The Optimists are a social group that meet every other month in the Britannia Inn in Par.

Christmas orders

If you still haven't bought your **iSightCornwall** charity Christmas cards or 2024 Large Print Calendar yet, you can purchase them whilst stocks last by calling us on 01872 261110 or by visiting our online shop at www.isightcornwall.org.uk/shop.

Christmas closure

The Sight Centre will be closed for our annual festive shutdown between:

4pm on Thursday 21 December 2023 – 9.30am on Tuesday 2 January 2024.

Any phone messages left during this time will be picked up when we return.

We hope you have a lovely Christmas and a happy new year!





iSightCornwall

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.

Outlook is also available as:

- 🔸 Audio USB stick
- 🔸 Audio CD
- 🔸 Large print (22pt) plain text
- 🔸 Online audio via our website

Useful Telephone Numbers

The Sight Centre
01872 261110

Cornish Talking Newspaper
01872 277762

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

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www.isightcornwall.org.uk

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