



ANNUAL REVIEW - 2024/2025

A Summary of Activities and Achievements

INTRODUCTION

We looked forward to celebrating our 10th year as a charity last September and the year has certainly proved to be a momentous year for us, as this Annual Review will surely tell. We approached it with many hopes and dreams, as well as a few difficulties and challenges.

Apart from our regular youth groups, we have held 41 different events or activities involving 102 different young people, 34 of those young people have attended 5 or more events. It is interesting to note that of that 34, 17 young people have attended more than 10 events during the year. There were also occasions when family activities included younger siblings and parents: in particular for our Summer beach morning at Ventnor and Cowes Week Navy Flagship tour, Bushcraft with Wild Roots in Whitwell and Community Fun on The Green at Chale, with Kathryn, our Young People and Families' Worker. This level of activity has involved an enormous effort from our staff team, our trustees and our valued volunteers, without whom none of this would be remotely possible. We say it every time, but it is profoundly true.

We hope to sketch this year out in summary form for you in this Annual Review. But first, here is our Chair's Report from Jo Richards:



SWAY CHAIR'S REPORT

Jo Richards

When I come to write this piece for the SWAY review, it amazes me. How can so many new activities and events take place on top of the already capacity programme offered through the regular sessions: and with no more staff hours? I stand back in awe and wonder as to how this has been achieved; but that would be forgetting our underlying ethos, our faith that is our greatest guide, provider and inspiration and the force behind all that is SWAY, that can achieve so much more than we can on our own.

We celebrated our 10 years up and running in 2024 with those of our wonderful supporters, volunteers and staff who have come with us. So many understand that the need is still relevant, perhaps more so nowadays as depressing statistics reveal the ever-increasing numbers of disengaged young people, crime data and mental health factors.

From Ventnor to Brook, SWAY seeks to engage young people by offering activities, friendship and support with the issues they face. Sometimes we are able to strengthen their own resources through our staff and at other times, we can offer support through specialist connections. Families, often not sure who to turn to or having exhausted other limited resources, need someone to listen to them. SWAY can be that non-judgemental friend at those times.

This year has seen the building of The Hub: a community facility offering a meeting room, hall, café and top-up shop in the heart of SWAY's rural area. It will also give SWAY a base. This exciting development will launch the charity further into community work and seek to give a range of agencies a location to provide wider support. It requires a change in the structure of SWAY, but should not alter our work beyond expanding it.

As always, our necessity to fund the work means the need to access major grants and seek financial support wherever possible. Thank you for all donations of any kind.

This Annual Review gives just a glimpse of all that is SWAY. It is a record of the achievements of young people, staff and volunteers and it is our hope for all to come. Enjoy reading it and thank you for all your support.



AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Our aims and objectives remain unchanged from previous years: to serve the young people and families of South Wight through activities that engage and grow them as individuals, as well as bringing them together to enjoy healthy relationships in a positive environment. Although we are still at the beginning of our partnership with the churches in Ventnor, we include the area of Ventnor and Upper Ventnor as part of our area of work. We are keen to build on this in the year to come.

We endeavour to offer practical support and advice where requested. Our Christian values and mindset remain core to our approach in all things, though usually implicit and understated. We seek to meet young people and their families where they are, helping them to explore their potential and become more independent and responsible. This is done through conversation, activities and mentoring.

As always, we aim 'to provide hope and focus to the youth and families of South Wight' and help them towards stronger community engagement and individual resilience. With the opening of The Hub in Chale, we are clearly developing our work, but the ethos and modus operandi remain constant.



SUMMARY OF THE YEAR

Rather than producing the usual table of activities, this year we decided to produce a rolling snapshot of the groups and events.

The regular youth groups in Niton and Ventnor have been running as usual. Ventnor youth group has run most Wednesdays supported by Olivia, but there have been times when other workers have been unavailable and the group has had to be cancelled. We are trying to find a way for this to be overcome, for the need is there, but we have yet to resolve this lack of leaders. We also need funding for this area of work.



The 2 Niton groups, Rock Solid and Roots, have run each week in term-time throughout the year, averaging 10 and 15 respectively. These are vibrant groups, resourced by some fantastic volunteers.

The River Project groups for Year 6 children, 2 from St Francis Primary School in Ventnor, 1 from Niton Primary and 1 from Brighstone Primary, have run throughout the year and with great success. This is a hugely important group for SWAY, but also for those who find themselves sharing lunch each week with SWAY members. To have witnessed the growth in confidence and involvement of these 14 Year 6s over the year, is to see something of the value of this project. We are looking for funding for this project next year, but are under no illusions about its value and importance.

We always ask for feedback from our River Project children and families: the following quote is a particularly encouraging one:

"X has really benefited from making new friends & trying new experiences, from tasting new foods with Zoom cooking, learning new skills with cricket and canoeing, making new relationships with peers through socials at Pizza Hut. This has built X's resilience up and improved his understanding of social interactions. Thank you for all your support with X: he has really enjoyed the experiences SWAY has to offer."

The series of Zoom Cook Alongs led by Kathryn Alvis have once again been successful in engaging young people in cooking healthy meals and sharing their efforts with their families. We have held 7 Cook Alongs largely led by the young people themselves. We are looking to restart again this winter. To do this we need someone to head this up and some funding from some different supermarkets who, it has to be said, have been very supportive in the past.

We have enjoyed 2 trips to Harbour Church in Portsmouth which are always engaging for the older young people and we hope to continue this in the year ahead.

We have also held the following activities/ events:

- 2 night-hikes involving 37 young people
- 2 Navy organized events involving 30 young people
- 2 nights of carol singing round the villages of Niton and Brighstone involving nearly 30 people
- 4 Young Leaders' events involving 14 Young Leaders, including nearly 40 people at our celebration on Compton Beach where Gold Awards were given to Floss Fladgely and Sophie O'Reilly for their excellent volunteering through the year
- 3 events (Pizza Hut, Ice skating and Snacks and Ladders) organized for the River Project children
- 2 afternoons of Cricket at the Ventnor Cricket Club for some keen cricketers
- A Corf Camp involving 25 young people and 20 adult visitors on a beautiful weekend in May
- An afternoon of swimming and pickleball at the West Wight Sports Centre
- Several sessions at Chale Green outside the partially built Hub seeking to engage the community and young people of the area
- A pancake evening at Brighstone where many pancakes were consumed in double quick time by many young people from Brighstone Primary School
- A frenetic Headhunters evening (21 young people and some interested adults) and a fun-filled evening playing Disc Golf (17 young people and more interested adults)

On top of all this, there has been an ice-skating session, an Easter egg hunt, the Shorwell summer fair, a crabbing afternoon, a YFC/SWAY BBQ, carparking at the Chale Show and Brighstone Horticultural Fair, a Navy Ship tour in Cowes Week and a trip to Robin Hill. As you can see, the SWAY team has not been idle in engaging young people and getting them together in all manner of activities and events.



THE 10 YEAR CELEBRATION AT NORTHCOURT

As has already been mentioned it has been our 10th year anniversary and we have sought to make the most of that occasion. We wanted to try and raise some much needed funds this year as part of our celebration. We have made some modest progress in this.

Stars of Wonder in Brighstone £180

Mottistone Carols £305

Roots Christmas coffee morning sale and Rock Solid Fundraiser: £775

Poetry reading marathon £50

Pancake evening £180

Counting the pennies from Lynbottom Reclamation £1114

Totalling £2604, which is all very helpful towards funding our work.

To start all this fundraising we had a lovely canape lunch at Northcourt Manor in November provided by Valentino's from Carisbrooke, where 7 of our Young Leaders helped serve the food and drinks to a wide selection of guests, that included our MP, Richard Quigley and the Lord Lieutenant, Susie Sheldon. Three excellent talks were given on the work of SWAY from Kathryn Alvis on the challenge and rewards of the families work, Olivia Stemmet on the value of youth work and Lucy Peckham on how SWAY has benefited her as a young person. This was followed by an illustrated history of SWAY from Peter Johnson with some humorous moments from 10 years of activity and a summing up by our Chair, Jo Richards.

Now it is over to Olivia for her to tell us about life as our Trainee Youth Worker.



TRAINEE YOUTH WORKER'S REPORT

Olivia Stemmet

Being a part of the youth work this year has been a great privilege. The River Project has run well this year and we have been able to develop positive relationships with these children from Year 6. It has been amazing to see how they have grown and that some are starting to attend other activities held (there were 3 children attending our summer residential from this year's River Project).

Rock Solid and Roots have been great to help run and I am so grateful for the volunteers. We would not be able to continue these groups without them. At Rock Solid we have had a new small group of year 6s and it has been great to get to know them and have them in the group. I am looking forward to continuing to work with all of these young people in the next year within Roots and Rock Solid.

It has also been a great privilege to help run the Young Leaders' programme and see how these young people have developed in their leadership roles. In particular it has been amazing to see those who volunteer at Rock Solid get more involved and develop this alongside the other leaders. We have recently had a celebration for the Young Leaders which I would say was definitely one highlight of my year, as we were able to celebrate the hard work they put in with a beach BBQ. I am also very excited to welcome more young people as Young Leaders in the next academic year.

These past two years at Moorlands have taught me a lot and helped me to gain more confidence. I am grateful to have SWAY as my placement and that my skills have been developed through being encouraged to lead when I do not always feel I am ready to. I am surrounded by a great team which has also helped. My time at Moorlands has given me new friendships and connections that I hope to hold onto in the future. What I have been taught at Moorlands has also helped me in my placement and how I work. I now only have one more year left which I am excited about and it will be busier than before. Currently this is what my future holds but I have started thinking further ahead and I hope to stay on with SWAY for a little longer after I complete my degree. After this I will start looking at where I can move onto but the hope is that whatever I do I will be supporting young people in some way and I will be able to teach them about God.



YOUTH AND FAMILIES' WORKER'S REPORT

Kathryn Alvis

This year has been a year of new beginnings for me - new to the role of Youth and Families' Worker; new to the work of SWAY; and new to Island life! As I've settled into these new beginnings it has been a joy to step into a role that has clearly been so ably done by those who have gone before me. In conversations with families, young people and professionals alike, I have heard of the positive difference that SWAY is making in the lives of those with whom we work.

It is a great privilege to walk alongside families, to be a listening ear and an encouraging presence, as they tackle challenges that can feel too much to face alone.

In a recent case study, one parent, who has been supported through our families' work, eloquently shared how knowing that she has access to support provided by SWAY has lifted a weight off her heart. Knowing that she is not alone has lifted her sense of guilt, worry and isolation, and brought her a sense of security which she hasn't experienced elsewhere. Knowing that her children have access to SWAY activities has reassured her that they will continue to be offered opportunities and experiences even though life's circumstances may make her own world feel quite limited.

Offering family support enables SWAY to understand the wider context which young people are growing up in, and gives opportunity to support, and value, everyone in the family home.

It is inspiring to see the perseverance and aspiration of the young people and families I have worked with, and it is a joy to share in their successes. This year they have taken on challenges; stepped into new opportunities; studied hard for GCSEs; been offered college places and taken on part-time jobs. They have a lot to celebrate!

Alongside supporting families, I have also enjoyed co-leading the River Project with Olivia; mentoring two young people after school; leading Zoom Cook Along through the winter months; and hosting community activities in Chale, near to the site of the new Hub.

I look forward to continuing to support families and young people and, as the Hub brings new opportunities, reaching out into the wider community too.

THE BRECON BEACONS' REPORT

Peter Johnson

I think it is fair to say that our SWAY Residential trip is the culmination and highlight of our work each year. This year was no exception, in fact it was a resounding success. Our new Hub/SWAY Manager, Steph Flux, was drafted into the trip almost at the last moment, on account of family commitments for another leader. Steph fitted in really well, but perhaps was not quite prepared for the exertion of all the activities we undertook. Nevertheless, she came through with flying colours, if tired legs!

This year we asked the young people for some of their comments and reflections on the trip. Before I launch into those comments, allow me to outline the programme. The Brecons are nearer than the Lakes, so we arrived by 16.00 and once settled in, were clambering up Table Mountain just above our base at Perth Y Pia, which is just outside Llanbedr on a very steep hillside. What inspiring views we were greeted with at the top and a marvellous first photo opportunity (see the photos).





Day 2 found us driving across to Dinas Rock for a day of caving and gorge walking. This challenged the boundaries of some young people, but everyone got out in one piece and enjoyed the experience.

Day 3 was a day-long walk up Sugar Loaf Mountain, which found a few grumbles emerging amongst the young people.

Day 4 was a trip down the Big Pit, which was both educational and very moving, led by ex-miners. This was followed by an afternoon of shopping in Abergavenny and some frivolous purchases by the young people.

Day 5 was the completion of the three peaks of Abergavenny, as we climbed the dramatic ridge leading to Skirrid and the heather-covered Bloreng. We finished with a swim in the nearby Fisher's Pond, witnessing Olivia beat Jack Lloyd in a 250m swimming race (though actually Isaac Borman would say that he beat them both, though he didn't start at the same point).

As ever, Pete Taylor fed us royally. No one went hungry, that's for sure! We had some talks hopefully helpful to the young people - 'when things go wrong in life', 'stressed about the future', 'when I'm afraid' and some moving testimonies of God's goodness and love from some of the leaders.

Now over to the young people.

Emi (first time with us on the trip and aged 12) - *'It was exciting, more dangerous than I thought it would be, but real fun. The gorge walking was super fun.'*

Ruby (age 15) - *'Playing guitar and singing with Pete was one of my highlights.'*



Ace (age 15) - *'I have been with SWAY for 5 - 6 years. Every year I have enjoyed it even more. I am a young leader with SWAY. The responsibility they have taught me for life in general has helped so much. As much as I complain on every walk and activity, I secretly love it (don't tell the leaders). All the leaders are so lovely, they make everything so amazing and enjoyable.'*

Jacob (Leader and resident poet and aged 24) - *'We have had the perfect cross-section of Welsh culture. We have wandered its streams and rivers, mountains and hills, caves and mines. Above and below we have known Wales and we are all the better for it.'*

Dave Stewart (Leader and driver and age - undisclosed!) - *'This was a true 'Beacon' adventure: hills, valleys, underground caves, mines, water gorge and of course the experience of fellowship and friendship, which leaves a lasting impact on everyone's lives, which they can add to their book of memories.'*

Anna (one of the Year 6 River Project young people and age 11) - *'I hated the caving, but the gorge walking was fun. The Big Pit was fun and you got to experience how people used to work down there in the past.'*

Toby (another Year 6 River Project young person and age 11) - *'I was really unsure about doing the big jump in the gorge, but the instructor talked me through it and then pushed me in anyway!'*

Sophia O'R (one of our Young Leaders, age 15) - *'I was in my element in the water - gorge and pond. I enjoyed the Big Pit lots.'*

Jack (newly adult at 18) - *'I enjoyed completing 3 jigsaws with some of the younger ones, but was disappointed to lose to Olivia at swimming.'*

Tom (first time from Brighstone, age 11) - *'I had done a simulation of caving in the past, but it was really good to do the real thing.'*

I think they all enjoyed their time at Perth Y Pia, it is safe to say.

THE TREASURER'S REPORT, Andrew Gardener

From a financial perspective, the past year has been one of mixed fortunes. Finding sufficient and appropriate funding for the ongoing youthwork of the charity has continued to be a challenge as charitable funds become harder to find and competition from other charities for available funding increases. However, due to sterling efforts by certain members of the board and supporters, some new sources of funding have been found during the year (notably the Trusthouse Forte Grant covering the next 3 years) and the amount of required funding has eased somewhat due to fewer staff being employed than originally planned, albeit there is a need for an additional youth worker that recruitment efforts have so far been unable to fulfil. Overall, the year is expected to end with a final outcome close to a break even.

On the other hand, funding for the community hub construction project has been sourced from grant funders and donated by some very generous individuals to a total of almost £700,000, which should be sufficient to see the project to its conclusion and its opening for use in the latter part of September. The Hub opening brings new financial challenges in terms of the regular running costs of the building and all that will be required to resource the activities that it will be used for. Yet more funding is being sought to provide for at least some of this and new ways of building income sources will be needed to ensure The Hub's future.





THE HUB REPORT, Richard Webb

There is light at the end of the tunnel!

After 5 years of planning, fund raising and negotiating, construction of The Hub commenced on the 6th January 2025. The building is timber framed, timber clad and is equipped with solar panels on the roof. The Hub has a multi-use hall which will seat 60, plus a kitchen, café area, office, meeting room and a small 'top-up' shop. A formal opening is booked for the 25th September. Last minute challenges have included getting an electricity meter installed (you will not believe how complicated an easy job can be!) We are now focussing on the kitting out of The Hub. As the construction comes to the end, our next task is to develop a programme of activities, which will maximise the facilities that The Hub offers.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

We always end these Annual Reviews with a glance to the future and this year it is no different, as there is so much to which we look forward. We have the exciting opportunity of opening a physical hub, long in the planning, with all the possibilities that this holds for our work. So much work, prayer and finances have gone into this building. We have all sorts of dreams and hopes for how this space can be used. We can't wait to get started.

But we do have some gaps that need filling in the equipping and financing of this Hub. We have raised the funds for building The Hub, but there is a need for equipping it which is not yet covered. We need blinds, furniture, AV equipment and chiller cabinets for the top-up shop.

Mindful of the generosity of so many of you over the years towards this work of SWAY, we hesitate to present to you a list of items for which we are seeking funding. We ask you to cast your eye over it to see if you might be able to help with any of it.

Projector for main hall	£500
Screen – drop down	£400
Patio for the area outside the Bradbury Room	£1200
Planting – shrubs, bushes and beds	£500
Furniture for the SWAY Office	£500

If you can help in providing any of these items or towards any of them, please get in touch with us by email: swayoffice1@gmail.com or phone 07880951243. All contributions will be very gratefully received.

Alternatively, if you could consider becoming a regular supporter for SWAY through a regular donation, that would be so helpful to us for planning and decision-making. We do have some regular financial supporters and we are very grateful knowing SWAY has this regular support. We are also planning to establish a Friends of SWAY group as we open The Hub. More details to follow upon opening.

The other matter as we think about the coming year, is the arrival of our new SWAY Manager in the form of Steph Flux, already mentioned in the Brecons Report. We are excited to welcome Steph and look forward to her working with us from September in this new venture for the Charity.

As we look to the opening of The Hub in September, we are grateful to God for all His provision and guidance, to you all for your support and interest, and to our wonderful staff and volunteers who make it possible to serve the young people and families. We hope you have enjoyed reading through this review of the year and will continue to stand with us in this important and vital work amongst young people and their families in the South Wight.



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