



ANNUAL REVIEW - 2025/2026

A Summary of Activities and Achievements

SWAY Annual Review 2025-2026



A Big, Big Year

This past year has been, quite possibly, the most eventful and challenging year yet in the life of SWAY. We have opened the Hub after a tricky ride through planning, fundraising and various other obstacles. We have expanded the team to include Steph (Manager), Abbi (Administrator) and later, Jack (Youth Worker). We have begun to see the Hub develop its life at the heart of the South Wight and find our place in the community at Chale Green.

At the heart of all we do remains the commitment and passion to reach out to the young people and families of the South Wight, with the hope and focus we find in the Christian message which remains our inspiration and guide in all we do.

Jo signs off as Chair after 5 years

The Chair asked me to reflect on the highs and lows of my 5 years as Chair. At first I thought it would be easy, with some obvious highs and lows, but the more I thought about it, the more complicated it became. A hierarchy developed, with issues vying for positions of importance. The more recent experiences battling with the ones I struggled to remember the details, forcing them to the back of the list.

There are obvious highs. I recognise that Richard Webb would be writing his story of how the Hub came about and what his aspirations for it are. I knew

Pete Johnson would highlight the great times had by the young people over the year. Both of these are key to the charity and I salute them as tremendous highs.

Likewise, there are substantial lows. Learning that we could not build on The Green at Chale and that we had to divert and pay for the sewers on the estate were just two. There are unglamorous events that I witnessed in the day-to-day running of the charity that are often less obvious but vital.

Five years ago we were struggling to come out of Covid. It was really tough not to have physical contact with the young people; a low that we still recognise as a challenge today. It took creative thought that we otherwise would not have had, but many ideas were forthcoming which we still carry forward today, such as the 'Scafell Pike challenge' and 'Zoom cooking'. Ongoing grant applications are wearing and time consuming and rejections are ten times more than acceptances, and then they are seldom at the amount submitted. The energy of arranging events that no one or few attend can be disappointing. I am also disappointed that we have failed to reach out to more Ventnor young people due to restraints on time and resources, but it's something still to strive for.

At the beginning of each academic year we are not sure which young people will be with us again or how many new ones will attend, but I have had the privilege of watching many of them blossom in confidence over the years at the various SWAY groups or activities. We are tremendously proud of those that stay with us in some capacity as adults and they give us credit by just being part of SWAY.

There are a couple of instances that are not unglamorous that I have to mention. The work of SWAY volunteers was rightly rewarded in the presentation of the Kings Award for Voluntary Service. The Lord Lieutenant presented this during the fabulous official opening of the Hub. It was a great celebration of the work of SWAY as well as the new facility. The Hub, planned and delivered during my term, will be a different, broader experience for SWAY and I will watch with interest as it offers a range of opportunities for us to expand our offer of hope and focus to the community as well as to the young people. I am sure that the few remaining hiccups, such as a drive that is currently inaccessible for wheelchairs, will be a distant memory soon, just as the lack of broadband internet is becoming!

My thanks go out to all our staff over my term, the valuable volunteers and our supporters without whom we are nothing. Thank you to parents, schools and young people for coming on this journey with us. My SWAY journey has been an honour, with some ups and downs, but nothing beats watching young people join SWAY, have experiences beyond those they have known, form friendships and memories. This is a reward in itself. May it long continue.

Chair's Report, Peter A Johnson

Having taken over from Jo as Chair in April, I have felt the heavy responsibility of that role as we venture into new territory with The Hub building, to go alongside all of our work with young people and families.

These are challenging days for charities with ever-increasing needs all around us in society, and ever more demands on grant funding bodies, which therefore brings a double pressure on charities. We are so conscious of the great need for support, guidance and hope amongst our young people and families. Our expanded team of staff, volunteers and trustees are at full stretch in meeting these needs. It is a privilege to lead such a committed, talented and loyal group of people. As a larger team we make a big difference in so many lives.

But you can never stand still or rest on your laurels, so we have to push forward. Gaining financial stability is vital over the next 6 months. With a larger base, the financial need is greater. From a small group of interested and committed individuals on the IOW we gain around £16k a year for our work. We are extremely grateful to this generous giving. However, we need to see that giving double in the next year or so, to enable us to function. If you can help us in this endeavour, please let Abbi know.

We are about to welcome some new Trustees on to the Board, which will be very good news indeed and an answer to many prayers. Do read and enjoy this very full Annual Review and please keep on supporting and praying for us all in SWAY.



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. Ventnor remains in our patch and our ambition is to do more in the area, in partnership with people based in Ventnor.

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 understood. Indeed, we welcome all, whether of any or no faith. 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.

We always aim 'to provide hope and focus to the youth and families of South Wight' and help them towards stronger community engagement and individual resilience.



A Brief Summary of the Year

The year began with a glorious opening of The Hub. That included the presentation of the King's Award for Voluntary Service by the Lord-Lieutenant, Susie Sheldon, to our Chair, Jo Richards. It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces on this red-letter day, which had been a long time coming, but when it arrived was one to remember. The Hub remained open for tea and cake in the afternoon, which saw many folk drop in to see the new building. A perfect day finished with our Brecons' Awards Evening for our young people.

Here is an abbreviated list of some of the events and activities SWAY has seen this past 12 months.

- 2 nights of carol singing in Niton and Brighstone involving 13 young people and 11 adults
- 3 Young Leaders' evenings for an average of 10 young leaders
- 1 Seniors' Tea organised by the 7 Young Leaders
- 1 Corf Camp with 35 young people
- 6 day residential trip with 29 young people and 9 adult leaders
- A new Chale Youth Group meeting weekly regularly welcoming 10 children on average each evening
- 2 Harbour Church visits for 12 - 15 young people
- And very healthy numbers at both Niton youth groups: Rock Solid on Mondays (10 average) and Roots on Thursdays (20 average) held throughout term time.
- 2 night hikes for 25 young people
- A Stars of Wonder concert at St Mary's, Brighstone, where several SWAY young people performed
- 3 Navy organised evenings
- A half term holiday club in The Hub for a group of local children (9)
- Another successful run of 5 Zoom cooking for 19 different families
- 4 successful River Project groups involving 16 Year 6 children from our 3 Schools: that means 120 River Project mentoring sessions and 3 River Project events
- A privileged guided tour of Quarr Abbey, which gave a small group of young people and adults access into the inner workings of a Benedictine Abbey
- A Teens Hangout on Tuesday evenings, which has been appreciated by a small contingent of local youngsters.
- A Maths Club for Year 11 young people ran with enthusiasm and good numbers (as many as 8 on some occasions - who knew Maths could be such fun?) for much of the year in Niton before the Roots Youth Group.
- Tour of HMS Severn during Cowes week for 2 Young People.

In all, this has involved around 100 young people in 32 different activities or events, some of which have involved significant planning and resourcing.

In January we commenced a Café Church in The Hub in the afternoon of the 4th Sunday of each month, which has attracted between 10 and 24 people, a monthly Food Pantry at The Hub, a Cuppa, Cake & Craft Group, a Thursday morning Games Group, a series of Summer Fun mornings in The Hub for local children, which has made the Hub feel lived in and used well. We look forward to this increasing and being fully utilised in the years to come.



Brecon Beacons' Summer Residential

Peter A Johnson

Our summer residentials are always great fun and a highlight of the year, but I would maintain that this year was truly exceptional. It was Olivia's last residential and she stated in her moving, closing talk on the last evening, that the residentials have been her highlight of each year in her time with SWAY.

We stopped at Perth Y Pia again and we filled about every bed in both barns. The weather was glorious, though maybe a trifle too hot. We did a 10-mile stretch of Offa's Dyke with spectacular views eastward to the Malvern Hills and northward, the Long Mynd.

The group enjoyed a great day of adventure climbing Dinas Rock in the morning and jumping off 4m-high rocks into the Mellte River below in the afternoon. There was a lot of 'gung-ho' required for that leap. The scenery in that canyon was a step up from last year's gorge walking, that's for sure.

Phil Wells led us through a half mile-long deserted railway tunnel, in the dark, with no torches or phones, relying only on a stick to feel the tunnel wall with our left hands and a long rope we all held, connecting us together on our right. It was quite an experience for many of the young people,





experiencing complete darkness and yet walking on. It became the subject of his talk later that day: faith, even in dark places and the power of being together.

We returned the next day to the canyon to visit the famous Sgwd yr Eira waterfall, where some of the group cooled down with a bracing swim in the pool below the waterfall.

The early morning Bible Studies on John chapter 1 were well attended, before our plentiful breakfasts. The thoughts for the day focused on the theme of mountains and valleys, and how they might relate to our lives. There were some superb talks here, which were appreciated by all the group, as leaders and two young people shared their own experiences and wisdom.

In all, Brecons 2026 was a memorable time that will live long in the minds of those who attended. Thank you to all who supported the trip.



Olivia finishes Moorlands College

During the last three of my four years as a youth worker with SWAY, I have been studying at Moorlands Bible College. It has been a great challenge as well as a great experience. Learning how to apply theology to my work has helped me develop and grow as a person, as well as in youth work. I am grateful for the opportunity SWAY has given me, where I have been able to work alongside young people and build some positive relationships with them. One of my favourite parts of the last few years has been the summer residentials because of the amazing activities we were able to do, but also because we were able to get to know the young people better and have deeper conversations with them about our faith. Another highlight for me has been when some of our young people accepted Jesus into their lives.

Youth and Families' Worker

Kathryn Alvis

My role as family worker continues to be full of variety. This year it has included everything from starting the new youth group at The Hub in Chale; weekly sessions in schools through the River Project; 1:1 mentoring with young people; responding to referrals from outside agencies and signposting families for support.

I really enjoy seeing people grow in confidence to take on new challenges or overcome obstacles. There's lots of opportunity for seeing confidence grow in all aspects of my role - sometimes it's young people learning a new skill in youth group (they surprised me by asking to learn to crochet!); sometimes it's a young person learning to cook and sharing their new skills with their family; and sometimes it's in the privilege of hearing a parent's request for help and walking alongside them to find solutions.

I'm looking forward to building on my current workload, and more, over the next 12 months.





First Year with SWAY, Abbi - Administrator

I started with SWAY in September 2025 and I love my job. I am certain God has placed me here at the right time and I'm delighted to be part of the team. My role is hugely varied - emailing parents, carers and volunteers about events, collecting parental consent for activities, updating the website and our social media channels, general finances and payroll, creating the posters you see displayed at The Hub, taking minutes for Trustee meetings and anything else the team can find for me to do!

Most recently I joined the team on the Brecons' Residential Trip - what a fantastic experience! I so enjoyed getting to know our young people more and taking part in the various challenges lined up for us.

No two days of my job are the same, for which I am very thankful - variety is the spice of life!

I've been so encouraged by the support of the volunteers and our partnerships with Chale Parish Council, numerous churches and individuals. Here's to more adventures with SWAY!

Manager, Steph Flux

Even after 25 years as a teacher, I don't think I've ever had a role that was so varied, complex or busy. From ordering toilet roll holders and liaising with tradespeople to networking with other professionals, applying for grant funding and deep-diving into the terrifying worlds of compliance and HR, this job has it all!

But the best bit? Well... the young people, of course.

The Brecons' trip in 2025 seems a lifetime ago, and I'll admit to a little FOMO hearing the stories from this year's trip team. Fortunately, I've still had plenty of contact with our young people in my day-to-day role. Whether it's stepping into supporting the River Project, helping out at youth groups or serving yet another ice cream in the shop, it's a genuine privilege to spend time with these amazing young people.

One particular highlight was taking two local teenagers to visit HMS Severn during Cowes Week. They don't know me particularly well, but seeing their usually cool and cynical faces light up with excitement as they got to play with fire hoses, explore equipment and climb around the ship was an absolute joy. The guidance, encouragement and opportunities we provide really can make all the difference. For some young people we get to see that change happening before our eyes; for others, we may never know the impact we've had. Either way, it matters.



The importance of what we do is brought into even sharper focus at the fortnightly Young Futures Panel meetings with other agencies. Surrounded by glorious sunshine and our beautiful Island countryside, it's easy to forget some of the challenges faced by children living within our

communities. Every agency around the table is stretched, underfunded and oversubscribed. It's both humbling and encouraging to know that our relatively small charity is playing such a significant role in the wider picture of Island life.

To misquote a well-known saying: we may not be able to change the world, but we can change the world for some of these young people.

The other best bit? The people I get to work alongside, of course! None of it happens because of one person; we have an amazing team. The wisdom, encouragement and support of our trustees have helped me rise to what has often felt like an enormous challenge. It seems there's no question too small, too complicated or too daft that one of them can't answer.

Abbi's humour and incredible efficiency in the office, Kathryn's calm wisdom and experience, and Olivia's determination to make sure every young person has a fantastic time, have all been invaluable as we've settled into our literal new home. Jack rejoined us in April and has proved his worth time and again. He has a natural instinct for working with young people and understanding the challenges they face; it genuinely feels as though he's always been part of the team.

Then there are our volunteers. They continue to leave me in awe of their generosity of spirit. Whether it's rolling up their sleeves to tackle whatever needs doing (shop duties, anyone?), being available at remarkably short notice, or sharing the wisdom they've gained through their own life experiences, they each make an enormous contribution to SWAY. A few have also provided a fair amount of impromptu pastoral support, prayer, encouragement and wise advice that has undoubtedly helped keep me sane!

When I applied to SWAY last year, I honestly wasn't sure whether I could do this job. Thankfully, there were people who believed I could and encouraged me to take the leap.

Have we achieved everything we hoped to in our first year at The Hub? Not yet. Some things have taken longer than we'd planned, and the learning curve has often been steeper and rockier than I imagined. There are still plenty of challenges ahead. We need sustainable funding, we need a full-time youth worker, and yes - we definitely need more volunteers (hint, hint!).

Has it been hard? Yes.

Has it been fun? Definitely.

Am I glad I came? Absolutely.

A dream realised and built

Richard Webb

The minutes of the Board meeting of the 8th May 2019 record that a paper concerning the possibility of running the Chale Green Café was presented. Then on the 2nd October 2019 it was reported that the Chale Green Stores were closing and all negotiations were halted. However, in January 2020 the Board was presented with a 'Consultation Paper on the Provision of a Community Hub in Chale' which was accepted.

At a Board meeting in April 2020 a progress report was presented and the minutes read: 'It was agreed that work on the project should continue with prayers for a specific sign of confirmation from God that this is the Lord's plan.' The specific sign we asked for was that somebody not involved with SWAY should come forward with a significant donation. Within a month we received news that an anonymous donor had offered £200,000 towards the cost of the project. We took this as a sign that we should proceed and moved ahead to bring the dream to life.

When I described the project to another engineer he said, 'it would never happen' because there were 'too many hurdles to jump'. Some of the hurdles were:

- Our original plan involved building on part of the Chale Green. We discovered as part of the planning process that this was not possible because the owner of the common land could not be traced.
- The land on which it might be possible to build The Hub had previously been owned by the Church of England as Glebe land and in selling it to Southern Housing they had imposed three restrictive covenants, the key one being that no permanent build could be erected on the land, so we had to go through a legal process to get this restriction lifted.
- The land which we could purchase had two main sewers passing through it which sterilised the land. So we had to get permission from Southern Water to divert the two sewers.
- There were other 'minor' hurdles such as a contaminated land survey, a tree survey and a flood risk investigation, let alone the IW Council's planning policies.

I am pleased to say that on the 2nd November 2023, 4 years 6 months on from when we first discussed the idea of a community facility we received full planning approval for the construction of The Hub on land which we owned. On 10th November 2025 we took formal occupancy of The Hub. Our testimony is that the building which cost £700,000 was funded totally by gifts and grants from individuals and charities and no debts.

So, what happens next? The Hub will provide a base from which SWAY

will operate, plus it will be a huge resource for working with young people, families and the wider community in the South Wight Area. At a time when our young people face mega challenges of identity, families are finding ever increasing pressures, and the need for community cohesion is greater than ever.

SWAY, as a charity formed from the vision and energy of two churches, has always dreamt big and planned accordingly. We envisaged what a Community Hub in Chale Green could be and do and 6 years later we are beginning to see that dream take shape. We are profoundly grateful to God and to many supporters for the realisation of this dream. The building may be completed, but this is just the end of the beginning. We look forward in anticipation to what may unfold in God's good time and God's good provision.

Treasurer's Report, Andrew Gardner

The predominant feature of the year in terms of the charity's finances has been the completion of the community hub building project and the commencement of operations from this new facility in November 2025. The overall cost of the project came in at a little more than originally budgeted, but any excess is being financed comfortably from SWAY's reserves. The actual figure is yet to be determined, due to a small number of loose ends still needing to be tied up. The initial operating costs within this first year have been very much as expected, but grants applied for and obtained to help cover these running costs have been almost twice what was predicted when we set budgets a year ago.

Despite all the new activity generated by the startup and operation of The Hub, SWAY's core youth work services have continued uninterrupted and largely as planned. Costs attributable to this side of our work have therefore been approximately on budget, apart from savings on the salary of an additional youth worker we are still trying to recruit. Added to this, we have benefitted yet again from the amazing and welcome successes emanating from those who apply for grants to support this side of our work, to such an extent that grant income has exceeded expectations and the original budget. We also continue to be blessed by the regular donations made by a small number of very faithful and loyal supporters, both individuals and churches, for whose contributions we are exceedingly grateful.

Due to the successes in grant sourcing and to the salary savings, we expect this year to end with a small surplus, that will be a welcome contribution to the small overspend on the building project. The challenge for the future will be to maintain the grant funding, which is becoming noticeably more difficult to find, and to support the community hub with income streams generated from its own activities.

Looking Forward, Peter A Johnson

Following on from our esteemed and reliable Treasurer, I wonder how to conclude this Review. We are so grateful for all the support and giving towards our work in this last year, but I am under no illusion with the financial challenges facing us. We have always been provided for in the past and so maybe we should have that confidence going forward. But I approach this coming year with a certain amount of trepidation.

Moving forward to the first anniversary of being in the Hub, we do face huge challenges in running The Hub effectively and for the benefit of the charity. We have to garner greater support for the charity from funders and this is a key focus for us over the next year. We are re-launching our Subgroups in the light of our new Trustees and new opportunities, hopefully making our work more efficient and effective. Remember: we can't stand still, we must move forward and we have never felt this to be more imperative than now. We are counting on you like never before to get behind us and help us in whatever way you can.





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