

livelife

The magazine for HASSRA members



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HASSRA
Living Life 



Volunteering with the National Coastwatch Institution



After 27 years serving as a volunteer HASSRA Athletics Team Manager, I was ready for a new challenge when I finally handed over the baton. Living between Fleetwood and Blackpool on the North West coast, I had often wondered about the distinctive “leaning tower” at Rossall Point – and what purpose it served.

I soon discovered it is home to the National Coastwatch Institution (NCI), a voluntary search and rescue organisation that works alongside the RNLI, Coastguard and Border Force. Although less well known, the NCI plays a vital role in coastal safety. Its motto, “Eyes Along the Coast,” reflects its network of around 60 stations positioned across England and Wales, from Fleetwood to Filey. All stations are staffed entirely by volunteers, and as a registered charity, each relies on fundraising to operate – with volunteers even contributing towards their own uniforms. Importantly, no maritime background is required. Volunteers come from all walks of life, and full training is provided, including a short assessment to achieve Watchkeeper status and completion of a VHF radio course.

The primary responsibility of a Watchkeeper is to remain vigilant for anyone in difficulty – whether at risk of being cut off by tides or swept out to sea. At Fleetwood, for example, tides can rise up to 10 metres and engulf an area within 15–20 minutes,

making early intervention critical. Watchkeepers also maintain logs of vessel activity and respond appropriately to any incidents, including liaising with the Coastguard and other emergency services where necessary.

Shifts vary seasonally, with summer hours typically running 10:00–14:00 and 14:00–18:00, and shorter shifts in winter. Stations operate 365 days a year – even on Christmas Day. Ideally, each watch is staffed by two volunteers, although limited numbers can sometimes mean covering shifts alone. Increasing volunteer numbers helps ensure stations remain open and available when they are needed most.

While some stations experience quieter periods, others – particularly on the south coast during summer – are much busier. However, even one successful intervention makes the role worthwhile. At Fleetwood, this was recently demonstrated when a former Chair of HASSRA Fylde played a key role in helping to save two fishermen cut off by the tide. This individual has since been nationally recognised by the NCI and will receive a Certificate of Recognition from the High Sheriff of Lancashire.

As a member of the HASSRA Retired Members Forum, I would strongly encourage anyone living near the coast to consider volunteering with the NCI. It offers a rewarding way to stay active, support your community, and make a real difference.

For more information, or to find your nearest station, visit: www.nci.org.uk

By Nick Hume

Welcome to the Summer Edition of Livelife

Welcome to the latest summer edition of Livelife, where once again the heart of HASSRA shines through every page. From inspiring personal journeys to memorable team experiences, this issue is a true celebration of what makes our community so special – connection, support and shared success.

We're delighted to highlight the incredible range of opportunities available to members, whether that's developing new skills, accessing grants, or simply coming together for a well-deserved moment of fun. Stories such as our Business Unit Grant escape room adventure and Bal Garcha's inspiring leadership journey which earned her the Business Sponsor of the Year award, reminding us of the power of teamwork and determination. We're equally proud to showcase the wonderful volunteering opportunities available, including with the National Coastwatch Institution, where members can make a real difference while staying active and connected.

This edition also captures some truly unforgettable moments. Our Buckingham Palace Garden Party features bring together the experiences of members who were honoured to attend these prestigious events, reflecting the pride, recognition and shared celebration felt across our community. These special occasions highlight the impact of public service and the value placed on those who go above and beyond.

We also reflect on a memorable HASSRA National Awards celebration, made all the more significant as it marked Peter Schofield's last attendance as our National President. We extend our sincere thanks for his unwavering support and dedication over the years, which has helped shape and strengthen HASSRA for the future.

As always, we are proud to celebrate the achievements and commitment of our members. Here's to a summer of opportunity, inspiration and continued success – enjoy the issue!



Whatever you have planned this summer whether it's vacation or stay-cation – make sure you check our offers page to save a pound or two – and don't forget your sunscreen!

hassra.org.uk/products

Jacky Sneddon
Editor

To contact HASSRA please select the relevant **Help Desk**:



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You Can Escape – with a Business Unit Grant

Tell Us Once (TUO) is a cross-government team that informs services like DWP, DVLA, HMRC and HMPO that someone has died. Instead of having to contact each organisation separately, citizens can do it all in one go.

Simple, supportive, and a huge help during a difficult time.

We're a small team spread right across the UK, from Inverness down to Canterbury, and from Cardiff across to Newcastle. Because we work remotely, our chances to get together in person are pretty rare... usually just two or three times a year. So, when we do meet up, we make it count!

After a colleague returned from Liverpool raving about an amazing night out at an Escape Room, the idea was planted. With a team meeting already booked in Liverpool, it felt like the perfect opportunity to give it a go.

Escape Rooms aren't exactly cheap, but thanks to a successful HASSRA Business Unit Grant (and some generous support from our Senior Leadership Team to cover the rest), we were able to make it happen – and it was absolutely worth it!



We split into teams for some friendly competition: the Pirates of Wales and Scotland versus the Cowboys of England. Cue dramatic showdowns, frantic clue-solving, and lots of shouting over maps, locks and puzzles. Each game lasted an hour, and in a twist worthy of a film finale, both teams escaped within seconds of each other. So, no clear winners – but definitely plenty of bragging rights!

Beyond the laughs, it was a fantastic team-building experience. We saw collaboration, communication and problem-solving in action. The escape room naturally boosted morale and gave everyone a chance to shine. Leadership styles emerged under pressure, and everyone had to pitch in as the clock ticked down.

And that feeling when you finally crack the final puzzle and escape? Unbeatable.

To top it all off, we headed out for dinner afterwards – still buzzing, still laughing, and probably still debating who really won.

Safe to say, it's a team day we won't forget anytime soon!

By Sarah Colby Browne



[Click here to find out more about the Business Unit Grant or to make an application.](#)

HASSRA National Awards 2025

**Special Guest Sir Peter Schofield KCB,
DWP Permanent Secretary & HASSRA President.**

The HASSRA Major Awards for Achievement 2025, held in May 2026 at The Slate, Warwick University, proved to be a truly sparkling celebration of dedication, compassion, and community spirit.

Bringing together volunteers from across the network, the evening shone a spotlight on those individuals who consistently go above and beyond in support of HASSRA members. Set against an elegant backdrop and filled with warmth, laughter, and pride, the event captured the very essence of what makes HASSRA so special – a shared commitment to making a difference in each other's lives. Each award presented recognised not just outstanding achievement, but the everyday kindness and selflessness that underpin the organisation.

This year's ceremony also carried particular significance as it marked the final attendance of Sir Peter Schofield as HASSRA National President before his departure from the DWP. His longstanding support and dedication were warmly acknowledged throughout the evening, adding a poignant note to the celebrations. As winners took to the stage, their stories served as a powerful reminder of the invaluable role volunteers play, inspiring others and strengthening the HASSRA community. It was an unforgettable occasion – one that honoured past contributions, celebrated present successes, and looked ahead with optimism to the future.

CATEGORY	TROPHY	WINNER	HIGHLY COMMENDED
Best Regional Association	President's Cup	HASSRA Wales	HASSRA North West
Best Volunteer	Rachel Lomax Trophy	Clint Williams HASSRA South East	Paul Neate HASSRA Wales
Best Large Club	First Vice President's Cup	HASSRA Sunderland HASSRA North East	Abbey Orchard St. S&SC HASSRA London
Best Small Club	Sir Michael Partridge Trophy	Jarrow HASSRA North East	
Wellbeing Award	Sir Robert Devereux Trophy	Neath HASSRA Wales	
Best Recruiting Club	Neil Couling Trophy	Slough HASSRA South East	
Best Innovation	Sir Peter Schofield Trophy	Telford Newton House HASSRA West Midlands	
Best Sportsperson	Terry Green Trophy	Caroline Todd HASSRA Fylde	
Best Arts, Crafts & Non-Sporting Contributor	Sir Leigh Lewis Trophy	Susan Sewell HASSRA North East	
Best Single Activity Club	John Nunn Trophy	Norcross Cricket Club HASSRA Fylde	
Best Newcomer	Andy Graham Trophy	Hollie Riste HASSRA Wales	Lucy Lanaghan HASSRA North East
Best Business Sponsor	Lesley Strathie Trophy	Bal Garcha HASSRA London	Heather Taylor HASSRA East Midlands
Most new Regional Cinema Members	The Cinema Society Trophy	HASSRA East of England	

HASSRA MERIT AWARDS

HASSRA MERIT AWARDS	HASSRA REGION
Gina Allsop	HASSRA London
Neil Couling	HASSRA London
Adrian Brewer	HASSRA South West

HASSRA HEROES

HASSRA HEROES	HASSRA REGION
Elaine Bates	HASSRA North East
Angela Murphy	HASSRA North West
John Dunnachie	HASSRA Scotland
Simon Jarrold	HASSRA Yorkshire & Humber
Lynda Bean	HASSRA East Midlands
Hope Fisher	HASSRA West Midlands
Jenny Ford	HASSRA Wales
Jaime Sim	HASSRA Fylde
Philip Carter-Goodyear	HASSRA East of England
Nicholas Oconnor	HASSRA South East
Gavin Jackson	HASSRA South West
Sarah Dean	HASSRA London





Leading the Way: Bal's Inspiring Impact on HASSRA



Bal Garcha's recognition as Business Sponsor of the Year reflects the profound difference one committed leader can make. During the nomination year, her vision, encouragement, and hands-on support have driven the remarkable revival of the Unicorn House Club at Bromley Customer Service Centre. Once inactive since the Covid period, the club has been brought back to life and is now flourishing – with growing membership, renewed visibility, and a stronger sense of connection across the workplace. From the outset, Bal demonstrated complete confidence in the club's potential, supporting a full restructure that addressed long-standing governance and financial challenges while laying solid foundations for sustainable growth. A key strength of Bal's leadership is her ability to empower others. She encouraged the formation of a

dynamic and committed volunteer committee, trusting them to make decisions and take ownership of the club's direction. This has resulted in a cohesive, motivated team delivering meaningful activities that resonate with members. Alongside this, Bal has been a visible and passionate advocate for HASSRA, consistently promoting the value of membership and ensuring colleagues understand its role in supporting wellbeing. Her presence at events – from breakfast mornings to festive initiatives and team-building activities – reinforces her belief that a positive, connected workplace matters.

The impact of her sponsorship is clear and measurable. The Unicorn House Club is once again fully operational, with increased engagement, stronger volunteer capacity, and improved staff morale through regular wellbeing-focused

events. Perhaps most importantly, Bal has embedded a culture of inclusion, participation, and positivity that reaches across teams and colleagues throughout the site.

Bal exemplifies what it means to be a Business Sponsor: she leads with trust, champions with energy, and aligns HASSRA's values with wider organisational priorities. Her dedication has not only rebuilt a club but created a lasting legacy of community and wellbeing – making her a truly deserving winner and an inspiration to others across HASSRA.

To learn more about the 2025 Major Awards and what it takes to be a winner [check out this link.](#)

Turn up the Temperature with HASSRA

Turn up the temperature and don't miss your chance to enter HASSRA's Summer Giveaway – created in direct response to member feedback around the rising cost of living and designed to ensure every region shares in the rewards. With 12 winners guaranteed (one from each region), you could be in with a chance of winning £1,800 in cash – the equivalent of a typical annual UK fuel bill. There are no strings attached, so whether you use it to help with bills, boost your savings, or treat yourself, the choice is entirely yours.

Make sure you're a subscribing member and get your name in the draw – this is one opportunity you won't want to miss!

**ENTER
HASSRA
Competitions
& Prize Draws**

HASSRA Development Fund – From Setback to Success

I want to say a genuine thank you to HASSRA for supporting my development through the Development Fund.

Being awarded the grant helped me fund and complete my football UEFA C Licence, and I'm grateful not only for the support in applying but also for the confidence it gave me.

After reapplying following the disappointment of the previous year, this award felt like recognition of my commitment to progressing in coaching and it motivated me to make the most of the opportunity. I also took steps to reduce the total cost of the course, which helped me access it more sustainably.

The UEFA C Licence was delivered by England Learning and ran from August 2025 to December 2025. It was a strong blend of learning formats: four online days and three face-to-face days. The course wasn't just theory, it demanded real coaching practice and clear evidence of development. On each face-to-face day, I had to plan and deliver a coaching session, then be assessed and signed off to the required high standard. That structure pushed me to be more organised, more reflective and more confident in how I communicate and lead.

The biggest impact for me has been the improvement in my confidence, knowledge, and leadership. I now feel more equipped to design sessions with a clear purpose, adapt in the moment, and support players in a way that's both challenging and encouraging. I've also become better at evaluating my own coaching: what worked, what didn't and what I need to do next time to get more out of the group.

Since achieving the licence, it has opened doors to new opportunities. I've been able to coach U12 and U13 at Hull City Ladies, which is a fantastic environment and has given me valuable experience working within a semi-professional women's club pathway. Alongside that, I've applied what I learned as Head Coach for Hull Schools Girls U13, and I'm proud that the team has progressed to a Champions Cup national final in June, against Poole & Dorset Schoolgirls. Reaching that stage has been a huge moment for the players and for me as a coach – and I know the learning from the UEFA C has helped me support them more effectively.

I see this qualification as a major stepping stone in my coaching journey, and I'm aiming to progress to UEFA B in the future. Thank you again to HASSRA for helping make this possible – your support has directly contributed to my development and to the opportunities I can now offer young players.

By James Robson

The HASSRA October Double Lottery Draw is back!

This special draw features twice as many winners as our regular draws, with 300 cash prizes available, including two £20,000 top prizes and four £10,000 prizes.

Tickets must be in place by 31 August 2026 to be included in the draw.

More prizes. More winners. More chances to win!



To find out more about the HASSRA Development Fund or to make an application, please [click here](#).

HASSRA – Staying Connected into Retirement

The newly formed Retired Members Forum has made a strong and encouraging start, bringing together an initial group of 15 members and already holding two productive meetings. During this early phase, the Forum has established its leadership, with Les Cook appointed as Chair and Catriona Patterson stepping in as Deputy Chair. Together, they are helping to shape the direction of the group and ensure it reflects the voices and interests of retired members. There is a clear commitment to building an inclusive and engaging space where retired colleagues can stay connected and involved in HASSRA initiatives.

A key challenge identified so far is raising awareness – making sure members know the Forum exists and understand its purpose of improving inclusivity and access for retired members. Encouragingly, progress is already being made with the launch of the Retired Members Grant, which has funded activities including Walking Cricket and a Domino Tournament. With

summer now underway, it's an excellent opportunity for members to put forward ideas and apply for funding to support new activities. Importantly, these opportunities are not exclusive to retired members, reinforcing the Forum's aim of fostering wider participation and community engagement.

In addition to Les and Catriona, the Forum originally included Sue Barton, Tim Bull, Paul Dutton, Michelle Dyson, Carol Goodbody, Lloyd Hills, Nick Hume, Kim Jones, Linda Payne, Reg Rudge, Peter Smith, Jacky Sneddon and Ian Townsend. More recently we have welcomed Mandy Howells and Della Tucker to the group.

If you have any ideas to put forward for the attention of the Forum, please use the [Retired Members Message Board](#), and if you want to find out more about the Grant and how to apply then [Check Here](#).



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Scones, Stories and Remembrance: Bringing Teams Together in Tribute

HASSRA was very much in our thoughts when we had a meeting at Solihull for the CFCD Recruitment and Estates meeting in March this year. Thanks to the Business Unit Grant HASSRA kindly awarded us, we were able to purchase teas and coffees- which always gets a meeting off to a good start and we also bought scones and cakes for an afternoon tea. This formed an event that we ran in memory of a colleague, Maria Dodson who died shortly before Christmas.

By hosting an afternoon tea and game session, the attendees at the meeting made donations towards the Mary Stevens Hospice who had cared for Maria and is a charity that is close to her family's heart. A donation of £50 was made to them following the event.

During our meeting, I was able to promote HASSRA Live and the many benefits it offers to members. We also talked about the festivals held at Warwick in July and September. For a geographically dispersed team, this offered the chance to meet up and generate some healthy competition amongst HASSRA regions!

By Jackie Arnold



Click to find out more about the Business Unit Grant or to make an application.

Have you entered a Tasty Tuesdays Competition yet?

A huge thank you to our partners at Tastecard for their generous support in providing 1,000 free Tastecards for us to give away through various regional and national competitions. Have you entered a Tasty Tuesday yet, or taken part in one of your regional competitions? With so many great places to save, it's a fantastic opportunity not to be missed.

tastecard

Tastecard have also gone a step further by offering a free Tastecard to every new member who signs up – so if you know a colleague or ex-colleague who isn't yet a member, be sure to point them our way. And as an added bonus, they'll also receive a free cinema ticket, kindly provided by the Cinema Society! Who Can Join?

**Enter HASSRA Competitions
& Prize Draws**

Buckingham Palace Garden Party

On 6th May, I had the honour of attending the first Buckingham Palace Garden Party of the season. I was one of 8,000 invited public service and community workers from across the UK, and having been nominated by Dave Barrow HASSRA National Chair, I was absolutely astounded to be chosen. The day began with a five-hour train journey from Cornwall to London, accompanied by my stepdaughter. After a quick outfit change at our hotel, we headed straight to the Hyde Park entrance, fascinators and brollies in hand just in case of rain.

The palace gardens were stunning, with beautifully manicured lawns, a lake, and magnificent trees. We met so many lovely people throughout the afternoon: a couple from "up North" who shared their table while we enjoyed dainty sandwiches and tea; two medical professionals who worked at racecourses; and a few local ladies who helped us navigate the tube stations.

When the Royal Party emerged – The King, Queen Camilla, Prince Edward, Sophie, and Princess Anne – there was a great cheer. They walked among the guests, chatting and shaking hands. After they had tea in the Royal Tent, we were fortunate enough to get closer and take some photographs.

I was surprised that the King was not as tall as I had imagined, and Sophie was even more striking in person than in photographs. The Yeomen of the Guard, in their colourful uniforms, were a constant presence, and I even managed to share a cheeky joke with one of them during the walkabout.

Once the Royal Party returned to the palace, we enjoyed one last cup of tea and chatted with other guests who had been lucky enough to speak directly with the King. It was a fascinating and memorable experience – one I feel incredibly fortunate to have had, and one I will always treasure.

By Dawn Crow



A Special Honour After a Challenging Year

When I was told I'd been nominated by our lovely treasurer Tracey to attend a Royal Garden Party for my work with HASSRA, I was genuinely taken aback. Her words – describing me as “an absolute star” and “an inspiration” – felt surreal, especially after the kind of year I've had.

Following the sudden loss of my husband, just finding my footing again has been a challenge. Tracey's nomination spoke about how I'd managed to keep my chin up, return to work, and throw myself back into HASSRA with the same energy and positivity. To be recognised for simply continuing to show up and support others means more than I can really put into words.

As Chair of one of the largest HASSRA clubs in the country, spread across seven sites, I'm always busy – but I love it. For me, it's about bringing people together, creating opportunities, and making sure our members feel valued. Tracey kindly said that without me, we wouldn't be able to offer all the fantastic events, deals, and opportunities we do, which was incredibly humbling to hear.

The truth is, I've always been happiest shining a light on others – nominating colleagues and celebrating their

achievements – so finding myself in the spotlight felt both surprising and very special.

For the day itself, I took my best friend Jo, who is also a HASSRA member. We spent much of our time simply looking around in awe, constantly saying how amazing everyone looked. The atmosphere was something else – so warm, friendly, and welcoming.

We chatted to people everywhere—in queues, during the event, and even on the way back to the tube. At one point, we even bumped into two other Plymouth HASSRA members in the gardens—it just shows, we really do get everywhere!

It was an unforgettable experience, but more than anything, it's the recognition behind it that means the most. Knowing that, even during difficult times, what you do makes a difference is something I'll always carry with me.

By Nikki Densham



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