Q3 2026 | ISSUE 50

livelife

The magazine for HASSRA members



ISSUE

HASSRA Living Life

Watching Over the Bay



When I retired from the Department for Work and Pensions in 2023, I knew I needed something to keep my mind active. Having often looked out towards Rossall Point Tower – the "Leaning Tower of Fleetwood" – from nearby Fleetwood Golf Club, my wife and I attended an Open Day organised by the Fleetwood branch of the National Coastwatch Institution (NCI). With a lifelong interest in radios, radar screens, weather stations, live ship tracking and binoculars, becoming a volunteer seemed like the perfect fit.

Rossall Point Tower provides a commanding view across the Fylde Coast section of Morecambe Bay, an area renowned for having one of the highest tidal ranges in the UK. At low tide, the sea can be as much as two nautical miles from the shore. To many visitors, a sandy beach appears harmless and flat, but Morecambe Bay is anything but predictable; the tide advances from several directions, rapidly filling deep channels that can leave those unfamiliar with the area stranded in serious danger with little warning.

That reality became very clear during a watch in July 2025. At around 9.30 am, my colleague and I spotted two fishermen making their way out towards Wyre Light, the remains of a lighthouse situated approximately two miles offshore. We continued to monitor their progress, but as the morning passed it became increasingly apparent that they were not heading back to shore.

Two hours later, with the incoming tide beginning to flood the channels behind them, we contacted HM Coastguard at Holyhead and expressed our concerns. The response was immediate. The Fleetwood Coastguard Rescue Team was alerted and arrived at the tower within ten minutes.

After assessing the situation, they agreed that the fishermen were in immediate danger and requested the launch of the inshore lifeboat. By this point, the two men had realised the seriousness of their situation and had begun making their way back towards shore. They successfully crossed the first two channels but then encountered the final and deepest one. As they struggled through increasingly deep water, the lifeboat arrived just in time and the crew rescued both men from neck-high water, more than 250 metres from safety.

Following the incident, HM Coastguard classified the rescue as "two lives saved", recognising the importance of our swift decision to raise the alarm. More recently, my colleague and I were honoured to receive a Certificate of Merit from the National Coastwatch Institution, the organisation's highest award. While the recognition was greatly appreciated, the real reward was knowing that two people returned home safely that day.

> *Volunteering with the National Coastwatch Institution has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my retirement.*

If you live near the coast and have an NCI station nearby, I would strongly encourage you to consider becoming a Watch Keeper. New volunteers are always welcome, and the work truly makes a difference.

Most importantly, wherever you are, stay safe near water. Sometimes danger can be much closer than it appears.

By Simon Woodrow

Welcome to the 50th Edition of Livelife

As autumn settles around us, I am delighted to welcome you to the 50th edition of HASSRA Livelife magazine.

It is a real privilege to edit this milestone issue, packed with inspiring stories, regional photographs, and achievements showcasing the positive impact HASSRA has on our community's wellbeing. Inside, you'll find features on Gardens in Bloom, Life-Saving Awards, physical challenges supported by the HASSRA Development Fund, and an important focus on dementia, alongside our regular regional updates and festival round-up.

Of course, we also have plenty of opportunities to win. Our Advent Competition is now live, featuring luxury prizes from brands such as Jo Malone, Hugo Boss, Elemis, Temple Spa, Tom Ford, and Hotel Chocolat. Plus, thanks to your feedback, our ever-popular **Christmas Cracker** competition has now launched with a prize structure we know you'll love. And, with two chances to win we hope you'll love it even more.

For our creative members, the **Photography** and **Art** Competitions are now live. A special thank you also to the DWP Communications Team for mentioning HASSRA in Connect - we greatly appreciate the support.

As the air turns chillier, please take care, stay safe, and wrap up warm.



I hope you enjoy celebrating this 50th milestone with us and look forward to many more editions to come.

Jacky Sneddon
Editor

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HASSRA Living Life

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A Hidden Oasis: The HASSRA Garden Club

Tucked away down a quiet lane lies a very special place. Whenever visitors arrive, one of the first things they say is, "You'd never know this was here." Hidden beside a busy main road, the HASSRA Garden Club is a thriving oasis of greenery, community and wildlife. Founded in 2015, the club has grown into a vibrant hub where members cultivate an abundance of fruit, vegetables and flowers using organic methods. Pesticides and herbicides have no place here; instead, the focus is on working with nature and creating an environment where wildlife can flourish.

Nestled within the fantastic HASSRA Sports Ground on Fleetwood Road South in Thornton-Cleveleys, the club sits alongside Norcross Cricket Club, bowls, football and table tennis facilities. The site is also home to 21 allotments, a veterans' garden and, most recently, a superb new bar and pavilion.

During the summer months, gardening here becomes a truly multi-sensory experience. The gentle hum of bees mingles with birdsong, while the unmistakable thwack of a cricket ball and the cheers (and occasional groans!) from players and spectators drift across the grounds. The site is home to five beehives housing around 160,000 bees, as well as a wildflower meadow, bog garden and ponds, making it a genuine haven for local wildlife.

Gardening communities are known for their generosity, and the HASSRA Garden Club is no exception. In 2021, the site was expanded to create a purpose-built, fully accessible allotment garden for Trinity Hospice and Brian House Children's Hospice. Designed to be accessible for all users, the space features hard-standing pathways, raised beds, dedicated herb gardens, a sensory bed and a cutting garden filled with flowers. Beautifully planted and maintained by volunteers, the space is today enjoyed by a variety of groups from both the hospice and the wider community.



The garden is lovingly cared for by volunteers, and any support is always warmly welcomed. Last year, the club partnered with Community 10,000, adding the garden to the list of projects where colleagues can volunteer their time and make a meaningful difference.



> *Our first Community 10,000 event at the gardens took place on 23 September 2025, and what a day it was.*

Volunteers enthusiastically tackled a long list of jobs, helping to keep the space looking its very best while preparing it for future growing seasons. Fuelled by delicious homemade cakes and cookies provided by garden club members, the team set to work transforming the Trinity Hospice allotment garden. Every weed was removed by hand, with volunteers celebrating the satisfaction of pulling up even the most stubborn roots. As no pesticides or weedkillers are used on site, tasks that would normally take days were completed in just a few hours thanks to the incredible team effort. Raised planters were treated and preserved, sprawling blackberry brambles were cut back, tree branches were shredded, beds were weeded and grass areas were strimmed, leaving the garden completely transformed and ready for the next season's planting.

After all that hard work, refreshments were well deserved. The team gathered at the cricket club's fantastic new pavilion, where they enjoyed drinks on the terrace and reflected on a rewarding day.



One volunteer said:

"We had a fantastic time taking part in our Community 10k day as a team. It was incredibly rewarding to see the impact we could make in just a few hours. The garden we helped tidy is visited by several groups, including the Living Well Group from Trinity Hospice, which supports people living with dementia, and Brian House Children's Hospice.

The garden is maintained by a small group of dedicated volunteers, and it's a huge task for them to manage alone. Thankfully, some of the volunteers joined us on the day. As not all of us were experienced gardeners, they provided guidance, equipment and plenty of encouragement, not to mention an impressive supply of homemade cakes!

The sun was shining, and the day gave us a great opportunity to catch up and connect as a team outside the usual office environment."

Since that first event, volunteer support has grown dramatically. More than 60 volunteers have now contributed their time across multiple sessions, with further events already planned. Their efforts have enabled the club to complete more projects, maintain the gardens to a high standard and continue providing valuable support to the local community.

If your team is looking for a meaningful way to spend a Community 10,000 day, this is a wonderful opportunity. Not only will you make a genuine difference, but you'll also enjoy a rewarding day outdoors, meet inspiring volunteers and help support a space that benefits so many people. It's a truly worthwhile cause and a fantastic way to spend time together as a team.

By Louise Beavers



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With more than **1,000 members taking part**, this year's HASSRA Festivals were bigger and better than ever. Delicious street food, fantastic entertainment and a vibrant outdoor disco created an incredible festival vibe, as competitors, participants and volunteers danced under the stars to the biggest hits of the 80s and 90s.







HASSRA Festivals 2026 *Turn Up the Volume!*



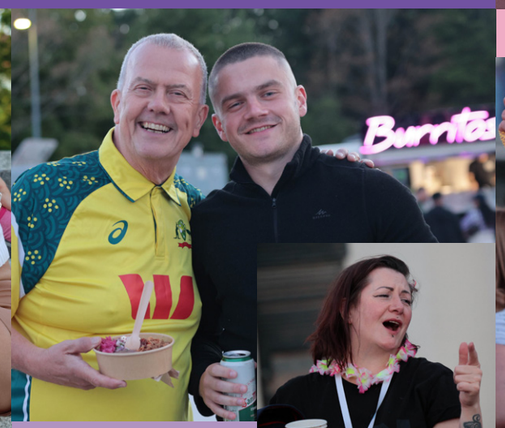
"Great food, great friends, great memories – HASSRA Festivals 2026 delivered the ultimate feel-good celebration."















CLICK HERE to see the Full Results for July & September HASSRA Festivals & Sports Events





Faster, higher, stronger - ready to compete to win!

















Past and present **HASSRA legends** enjoying life to the full and proving that the best adventures are the ones enjoyed together.

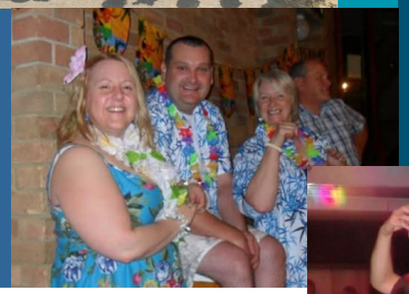






A look back at the Festivals and Events throughout the Livelife Years











Celebrating Success and collecting the silverware.







Grease is the word - or is it Aloha? **Truly Special Events.**

Celebrating 50 issues of Livelife

Here's a look back over the last 14 years of Livelife...

Starting way back in December 2012

HASSRA Lincolnshire Members Take on YMCA Sleep Easy Challenge

On 6th March, HASSRA Lincolnshire members Graham Metcalfe, a recently retired Partnership Manager, and Ian Fisher, a CFCD Team Leader, swapped home comforts for a night under the stars to support YMCA Lincolnshire's annual Sleep Easy event for homelessness services. Both had personal milestones to mark: Graham was retiring after 40 years of public service, while Ian was celebrating his 40th birthday on the night.

Equipped with basic materials to build a shelter, advice from veteran participants, and a hot meal from the Rapid Relief Team, the pair spent 12 hours outdoors. City noise, dropping temperatures, and hard ground made rest difficult, but the experience gave both men a humbling insight into the harsh realities of rough sleeping – and a deep appreciation for the security of having a home to return to.

Reflecting on the challenge, Ian described it as:

Humbling: *"The noise and cold were bearable because we knew we could leave if it became too much. People sleeping rough do not have that luxury."*

Eye-opening: *"We saw first-hand the passion of YMCA staff and volunteers. Their essential work supporting vulnerable people across Lincolnshire relies heavily on community fundraising."*

Proud: *"Our original £500 target was quickly passed, reaching £1,500 by midnight and more than £1,868 in total."*

Watching donations roll in overnight provided plenty of motivation despite managing with less than three hours of sleep, placing them among the top 10 fundraisers on the YMCA JustGiving campaign.

While normal life resumed on Monday with hot showers and comfortable beds, the experience left a lasting impression on both men. HASSRA Lincolnshire is extremely proud to have supported Graham and Ian's incredible effort. Their message is simple: *when celebrating a milestone, consider using it as an opportunity to support a cause that makes a real difference.*

Well done, Graham and Ian!







Understanding Dementia: Awareness, Support and Resources

Dementia affects millions of people across the UK, including those caring for loved ones or colleagues. To support those affected, it is essential to understand the condition, recognise its signs, and know where to access help.

Dementia is not a single disease, but an umbrella term for symptoms caused by brain damage. Alzheimer's disease, Vascular Dementia, Dementia with Lewy Bodies, and Fronto-temporal Dementia are among more than 100 types. Contrary to popular belief, dementia is a medical condition rather than a normal part of ageing. While age is a key risk factor, it can affect younger people too – over 70,000 individuals under 65 in the UK live with the condition.

As one of the UK's major health challenges, dementia currently affects nearly one million people, a figure set to grow. Consequently, more workplaces will have employees balancing caregiving roles or living with the condition themselves. Despite the benefits of early diagnosis, an estimated one in three people with dementia remain undiagnosed, often due to fear, stigma, or lack of awareness.

While memory loss is well known, dementia also impacts communication, concentration, decision-making, mobility, and perception. Individuals may struggle with familiar tasks, process information more slowly, or undergo personality changes. Recognising these early signs and seeking medical advice helps ensure timely access to support and services.

For DWP colleagues affected personally or through caring responsibilities, support is available:

THE DEMENTIA HUB: A central source for information, guidance, and resources.

DEMENTIA SUPPORT TEAM (MS TEAMS): A space to share experiences and seek advice.

LET'S TALK DEMENTIA CALLS (MS TEAMS): Held the first Thursday of each month to discuss challenges and connect with others. Contact **beverley.adey-morgan@dwp.gov.uk** for an invite.

ADMIRAL NURSE SUPPORT: Specialist guidance available to current and former civil servants via a partnership between the **Charity for Civil Servants** and **Dementia UK.**

Whether you are living with dementia, caring for someone who is, or simply want to learn more, support is available. By increasing our understanding and having open conversations, we can help create a more informed and supportive workplace for everyone.

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Beverley Adey-Morgan

CHARITY FOR CIVIL SERVANTS

DementiaUK
Helping families face dementia



Representing Wales at One of the UK's Toughest Triathlons

Representing Wales at the Northumbrian Half Distance Triathlon was one of the proudest moments of my sporting journey.

To earn my place in the national middle-distance event, I first had to qualify at a race in Cardiff in 2025, where I finished second in my age category. That result secured my opportunity to wear the Welsh vest and compete against some of the country's best age-group athletes.

Held at Kielder Waterside Park in Northumberland, the Northumbrian 70.3 is widely regarded as one of the UK's toughest middle-distance triathlons. While anyone can enter the open race, places in the national event are limited. Around 400 competitors took part across age categories ranging from 18 to 80 years old, creating a highly competitive and inspiring atmosphere.

The race itself consisted of a 1.9km swim, a demanding 90km bike ride and a 21.1km trail run. After travelling north and preparing with fellow Welsh team members, race day began before dawn on the shores of Kielder Water. There was a real sense of pride standing alongside the Welsh team, ready to take on such a challenging course.

The day quickly became a battle against both the course and the elements. Cramp struck after the swim, but I managed to continue onto the bike leg, which proved to be one of the toughest rides I have ever completed. With almost 4,000 feet of climbing, strong winds and heavy rain, it was a relentless test of endurance. The half-marathon trail run added a further 2,000 feet of elevation, and when cramp returned it became a case of digging deep and refusing to give up.

Although I have competed in triathlons for more than 15 years and completed Ironman Wales on several occasions, I was genuinely pleased simply to finish this event. It was one of the most physically demanding races I have undertaken, and my legs certainly felt it afterwards.

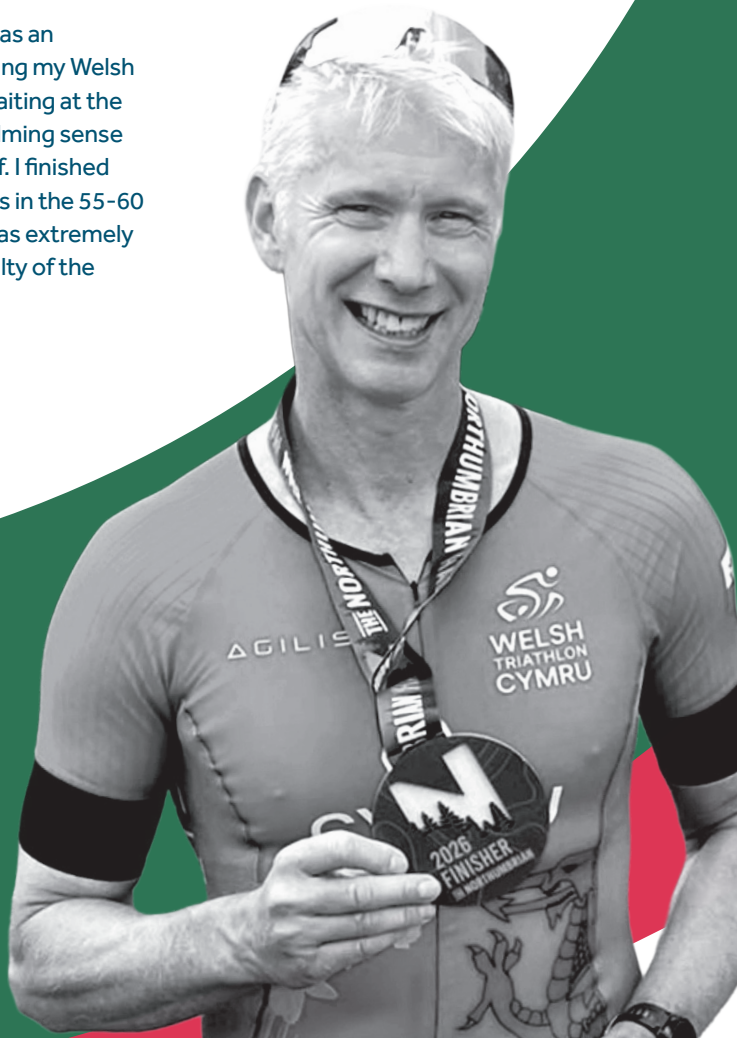
Crossing the finish line was an emotional moment. Seeing my Welsh teammates and family waiting at the end brought an overwhelming sense of achievement and relief. I finished 7th out of 15 competitors in the 55-60 age category, a result I was extremely proud of given the difficulty of the course and conditions.

This opportunity would not have been possible without support from the **HASSRA Development Fund**. The funding helped cover travel and kit costs, removing a significant financial barrier and allowing me to focus on training and competing.

The experience reinforced what can be achieved through determination, perseverance and the right support. I hope my journey encourages other colleagues to pursue their own ambitions. Through initiatives such as the **HASSRA Development Fund**, HASSRA helps members develop new skills, take part in sporting activities, and invest in their health and wellbeing, making goals that once seemed out of reach become achievable.

By Jonathon Hadfield

"I am incredibly grateful for HASSRA's investment in my sporting development and the confidence they showed in me."



Looking Back: The Year That Changed HASSRA Forever

Reflecting on 2020 for the 50th edition of our magazine

When the UK entered lockdown in March 2020, life changed overnight. For HASSRA, a society built on bringing people together, suspending face-to-face activities presented one of the greatest challenges in our history. Yet what emerged was a digital transformation that changed how we worked forever.

With members isolated, maintaining contact and supporting wellbeing became our priority. Instead of pausing our programme, we quickly adapted, creating new online events to keep members connected, engaged, and entertained from home.

A packed virtual programme followed. Regular online quizzes provided much-needed fun and friendly competition. We launched Let's Get Cooking with the Devon Cookery School, letting members learn recipes and share the experience online.

Creativity also flourished. Our Rainbow Competition showed support for NHS and key workers, while Valentine's, writing, art, and photography contests proved hugely popular. Gardening competitions were adapted for balconies, patios, and window boxes so everyone could participate.

We also introduced activities to help members stay active and positive. Let's Get Moving shared workout videos on YouTube, while Living La Vida Lockdown celebrated home DIY and language learning. For gamers, Let's Get Gaming hosted a Call of Duty tournament, and our online choir proved music could still connect people across miles.



Seasonal activities continued throughout the year, including the Summer Staycation photo-sharing initiative and World Book Day bookmark design contests.



The biggest success story was the Smart Quiz. Introduced to keep members connected during lockdown, it became one of HASSRA's most popular activities and remains a permanent monthly feature attracting around 200 participants.

Looking back, 2020 was about far more than shifting activities online; it was about supporting our community through an uncertain time. It proved the resilience, creativity, and commitment of our volunteers.



While traditional activities have returned, the digital connections we built allow us to reach members in new ways. As we celebrate the 50th edition of this magazine, we reflect on a remarkable chapter. The pandemic changed how we worked, but it never changed our purpose: supporting member wellbeing, bringing people together, and ensuring everyone remains part of the HASSRA community.