



SIGHT MATTERS

Optic Topics

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**A newsletter for blind & visually
impaired people**

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Sight Matters is a trading name under Manx Blind Welfare Society
Manx Registered Charity No. 132



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Introduction

Happy New Year and welcome to our latest edition of Optic Topics.

Starting a new year always brings a natural moment for reflection and looking forward. It is quite an honour for us to begin 2026, especially as this year marks our **90th anniversary** supporting the blind and visually impaired community on the Isle of Man. Nine decades of dedication is a significant milestone, built upon the trust and engagement of people like you.

In celebration of this landmark anniversary, we have been developing a range of exciting plans and initiatives throughout the year.

Support us in our 90th year! **90 for 90**

We're inviting individuals, families, community groups, and, crucially, our corporate partners, to embrace the number **9/90** as a catalyst for creative fundraising. This isn't just a challenge; it's a chance to dedicate your passion to support our vital work, ensuring we can continue our mission for the next 90 years.

How to Take on the '9' or '90' Challenge

The concept is simple: think of an activity, event, or personal goal centred around the number 9 and use it to raise sponsorship or a direct donation.

The beauty of the '9' Challenge is its flexibility—it can be physical, mental, social, or skill-based. Get creative and make it your own!

Some examples could be:

Walk, run, or cycle 90 miles over a month.

Do 9/90 minutes of non-stop exercise (e.g., yoga, dance, or a gym circuit)

Give up a luxury (like coffee or a favourite snack) for 90 days and donate the saved amount.

Learn a new skill for 9 minutes a day for a week and be sponsored for the achievement.

Host a community bake sale selling 90 handmade treats.

Host a quiz night and charge £9 per person for a maximum of 10 tables (totalling 90 people or more).

Ask 90 friends, family members, or neighbours to donate £1 each

The 90-Minute Blitz: Dedicate 90 minutes of company time to a specific activity (e.g. a sponsored 'silence' challenge or a collective walk

Get Your 2026 Supporters Pack

We are pleased to announce the launch of our 2026 Supporters Pack, marking this important milestone as the charity celebrates 90 years of supporting blind and visually impaired people across the Isle of Man.

The pack has been created to help individuals, community groups, schools and workplaces engage with this special anniversary in a practical and accessible way.

To ensure inclusivity, the Supporters Pack is available in both printed and online formats, allowing people to choose the format that best suits their needs.

The 2026 90 for 90 Supporters Pack contains:

An overview of Sight Matters' 90-year journey
Ideas for activities and events that people can organise independently

Planning tools and templates

Guidance on sharing stories and progress

The pack has been designed to be clear, structured and welcoming, helping participants feel confident in taking part.

How to Access the Pack

Printed copies of the 2026 Supporters Pack can be requested from Sight Matters, and the online version is available through our website and social channels.

MBWS AGM

Our AGM will be held

On: **Wednesday 18 March 2026 3.30pm**

At: Sight Matters, Corrin Court, Heywood Ave,
Onchan

Please find the agenda below:

Annual General Meeting
Manx Blind Welfare Society
18th March 2026
Corrin Court at 3.30pm

1. Notice calling the Meeting & Quorum

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Minutes of the 2025 AGM
Minutes of the EGM

4. Matters arising from the minutes.

5. Chairman's Report

6. Treasurer's Report

7. Chief Executive's Report

8. Election of Officers:

Chairman: Mr. Bob Dowty offers himself for re-election

Vice-Chairman: Mrs. Jayne Hughes offers herself for re-election

Treasurer: Mr. Michael Taylor offers himself for re-election

Secretary: Ms. Cathryn Bradley offers herself for re-election

Auditor: Messrs. Ernst & Young

Trustees: The following who have served as members of the executive/trustees during the past year offer themselves for re-election:

Mr. Roger Ingrey; Mr. Mark Grace; Mr. John Riley; Miss Angela Bridson; Miss Rebecca Hill; Mr. Gary Leeming; Ms. Gail Yeowell.

Mr. Mark Furness, who has served as a co-opted member of the Board 2025-26 offers himself for election. Ms Sarah Kelly also offers herself as a member of the Board.

9. Any other business.

A copy of the summarised minutes from last year's AGM were sent out with the Optic Topics in July 2025. If you haven't received it or would like another copy, please contact us on 674727 or enquiries@SightMatters.im

Members details

If your personal details change (for example, if you cancel your landline telephone number or change your email address), please remember to let us know so we can keep our records up to date.

Over 18's activity club

Please find a list of activities being held:

Monday 12th January - National Treasures, House of Mannan- Peel 2pm

Discover the Isle of Man's national treasures in this exhibition showing Bronze Age Jewellery to Viking silver and gold. This exhibition will bring together collections from Manx National Heritage and the British Museum.

Saturday 7th February – Ceramics Session (for members living South and West of the island), Corrin Court 10-12.30pm

Would you like to try your hand at creating your own small clay sculpture? This session will be facilitated by Erika Kermode, a renowned ceramic

sculptor and artist whose work is inspired by wildlife and the natural environment.

Saturday 28th February – Guys and Dolls, Gaiety Theatre 2.30pm

Brought to you by Douglas Choral Union, following their 2025 hit 'Chicago', 'GUYS AND DOLLS' is a classic musical romantic comedy packed with charm, wit, and unforgettable characters.

From the bustle of Times Square to the dance clubs of Havana and even the sewers of New York, Guys and Dolls takes audiences on a colourful journey of love, luck, and laughter. At its heart, it's a story that reminds us life isn't black and white—everyone has their flaws, and love has a way of winning out.

Friday March 13th - Carpenters Gold, Gaiety Theatre-7.30pm

Carpenters Gold supremely captures how the originals were 'live in concert' and is the most accurate Carpenters tribute show on the stage today. It includes their greatest hits, including Goodbye to Love, We've Only Just Begun, Sing, Jambalaya, Yesterday Once More, Superstar, plus many more with a standing ovation sing along finale!

Friday 20th March - Manx Aviation and Military Museum 10am-12pm

Ivor Ramsden, the museum's Director and a true fountain of knowledge, will be leading a guided tour of this remarkable museum. Dedicated to the Manx men and women who served their Island in the cause of freedom, it also honours those from other nations who came to our shores through wartime service, as well as all who have lost their lives in aviation accidents on the Isle of Man — in both war and peace.

The museum's scope extends beyond military history; it also celebrates Manx civil aviation, telling the captivating story of local achievements by both individuals and organisations.

Monday 23rd March – Ceramics Session (for members living North and East of the island), Corrin Court 1.30-4pm

Would you like to try your hand at creating your own small clay sculpture? This session will be facilitated by Erika Kermode, a renowned ceramic sculptor and artist whose work is inspired by wildlife and the natural environment.

Friday 19th June - Oh What a Night, Gaiety Theatre 7.30pm

OH WHAT A NIGHT! takes you back in time on a musical journey through the incredible career of Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons. It combines infectious personalities, amazing vocals, slick harmonies and even slicker dance moves to deliver a show full of energy and nostalgia which always leaves audiences wanting more. Don't miss the ultimate celebration of one of the world's greatest Rock & Roll bands!

If you would like to be considered for any of the events listed above, please contact **Julie on 674727.**

Transport can be provided for any of the events, numbers are limited so please get in touch.

More events will be added as they're announced! Feel free to reach out by phone or email if you'd like to be kept informed about what's coming up.

New -Stroll & Natter Group in Ramsey

Held once a month the Stroll & Natter Group offers members the chance to stretch their legs, meet up with others, and enjoy a friendly chat at their own pace. The walk is followed by a relaxed cuppa,

providing a lovely opportunity to socialise and unwind together.

If you are interested in attending, please call Julie on **674727**, who will advise you of upcoming dates and the meeting place. Please note that transport is not provided for this event

Safeguarding Matters

A copy of our Safeguarding policy is available in your preferred format on request.

Our **Safeguarding Officer** is **Cathryn Bradley**
Our **Deputy Safeguarding Officer** is **Michelle Ferrer**

Being Guided by a Sighted Person

We teach sighted people, staff, volunteers, carers etc, how to guide a person with a visual impairment, but have we taught you how to be guided?

Do you know what it means when your guide moves their arm behind their back, or how to interpret the instructions they are giving, where to safely position yourself when being guided? If the answer is no or I'm not sure, contact Michelle

Ferrer or Julie Cannon and they can arrange some training with you.

Meeting the needs of people with Monocular Vision

Monocular vision means sight in one eye only. Vision is usually normal in the good eye. People with monocular vision may adopt a compensatory head posture, turning their head to one side more than usual.

Key features:

A person with monocular vision may have difficulties with activities which involve judging distance, depth and speed. Most people, however, learn their own ways to overcome these problems. There are a few activities that are limited by having good vision in one eye only.

What are the implications?

Field of vision:

On the affected side the field of vision is reduced by about one third.

A person with monocular vision may be unaware of people and objects on his/her blind side.

Depth of vision:

A person with sight in one eye may have difficulty judging distances and depth.

Hand-eye co-ordination:

Difficult activities can include pouring liquids, threading, cutting out and tying shoelaces.

Judgement of speed and distance:

Outdoor court activities may be frightening because of fast moving groups of people or objects.

Navigating busy pedestrian areas and road crossings can also impact on a person's confidence.

Strategies to support individuals:**Inside:**

Make sure that everything of importance is either in front of the person or to their good side.

The person supporting them should sit on the person's good side when working with them.

When using text, this should be placed on the person's good side.

Try to maintain eye-to-eye contact with the persons sighted eye.

Outside:

People with monocular vision may be reluctant to join in some activities and may need some encouragement.

Ball games will be more difficult for a person with monocular vision.

During or when watching sports activities, the person will need to be positioned so that he/she has a good view of the pitch with their 'seeing eye'.

Vigilance and extra support may be needed when in busy or unfamiliar areas.

Try to keep walkways free of obstacles and be aware of half opened windows and doors. The person may have difficulty judging the depth of stairs and kerbs.

Road safety issues should be emphasised, as the person may be less aware of traffic approaching on their 'blind side'.

Nutritional Supplements

There are many nutritional supplements available which claim to be good for your eyes. One of the formulations has been shown to help people who are at high risk of developing wet age-related macular degeneration (AMD), by reducing the rate of worsening. It is not clear whether the other supplements that are on the market are of benefit or not. The general advice remains for individuals to eat a good balanced diet and not to smoke.

Can nutritional supplements prevent or cure eye disease?

The Age-Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS)¹ showed that one particular formulation (available commercially as Ocuvite Preser Vision AREDS formula) could help slow down the progression to advanced AMD if the patients were at high risk of developing the condition. However, for most people there was no significant benefit of taking the supplement. Since the AREDS study, several new formulations of nutrients have been developed and some are currently being tested. Until these studies have been completed we do not know whether these are beneficial in slowing down the progression of AMD.

Without definitive scientific evidence of the effectiveness of these supplements, the general advice is not to smoke and to eat a good balanced diet which contains lots of coloured fruit and vegetables.

Are there any dangers in taking nutritional supplements?

The formulation used in AREDS contained much higher concentrations of some of the ingredients than is normally recommended for daily intake. One of these, beta carotene has been linked to an increased risk of lung cancer in smokers and so the formulation is not recommended for people who smoke.

Vitamin E supplementation is associated with an increased risk of heart failure in patients with diabetes or vascular disease. It is therefore recommended that you discuss your individual case with your optometrist before taking any nutritional supplements.

Is there anything else I can do to protect my eyes?

AMD has been linked to smoking and obesity so we would recommend that you try to keep to a healthy weight and stop smoking.

Although there is no definitive scientific evidence of the effectiveness of nutritional supplements for most people we believe that good health advice is to eat more dark leafy green vegetables (e.g. spinach and kale) which contain carotenoids (lutein and zeaxanthin) as these may help to protect your macular (the central area of your retina) from damaging blue light. We also believe that including oily fish in your diet may be beneficial for AMD.

National Grid Supports Sight Matters' SUN-Raiser Solar Project

We extend our sincere thanks to the Board of National Grid for their generous £25,000 contribution towards our SUN-Raiser solar array project.

Their support has played a significant role in bringing this important installation to life. The project will help reduce our long-term energy costs, improving sustainability while enabling us to focus more of our resources on services and support for blind and visually impaired people across the Isle of Man.

Sight Matters Lunch Club Supported by Co-op Local Community Fund

We are pleased to share that our Lunch Club has been officially listed as a supported cause under the Co-op Local Community Fund.

This recognition reflects the importance of community-based services for people living with sight loss. The Lunch Club offers more than a weekly meal: it provides companionship, routine and a welcoming space where members can build friendships in a relaxed and supportive environment. For many people living with sight loss, opportunities for social contact can be limited due to mobility challenges and reduced access to transport. The Lunch Club helps address these barriers through home-cooked meals, accessible venues and support from our volunteer minibuss service.

Being selected by the Co-op will help Sight Matters sustain and develop this vital service, ensuring that members continue to benefit from safe, inclusive and socially connected experiences.

How Co-op Members Can Support the Lunch Club

Co-op members can choose Sight Matters Lunch Club as their nominated local cause through their membership account by:

Logging into the Co-op app or website

Navigating to the "Your cause" or local community section

Searching for Sight Matters Lunch Club (Cause 95581)

Confirming the Isle of Man as their local area

Once selected, everyday shopping with Co-op helps generate support for the Lunch Club through the Local Community Fund.

School Banger Sing-a-Long – sponsored by Nedbank Private Wealth

This February, we're inviting you to ditch the winter blues and dive headfirst into the joyous, slightly embarrassing memories of your school days with our **"School Banger"** event.

Forget complex challenges or expensive galas—this is about gathering your friends and colleagues for a light-hearted sing-along of all those classic school assembly songs you know (and secretly love), with a pint in hand. Along with the worst raffle ever and a cheesy disco to top off the night - it's the perfect way to spend a Saturday night

When: **Saturday 20 February 7.30pm**

Where: Manx Legion, Market Hill, Douglas

Price: £20

How to get tickets: phone 674727 or email
events@SightMatters.im

Quiz Night

Always popular – get your friends together for our Quiz Night! It doesn't matter if you're a seasoned Quizzer or not – this is a great way to spend a Friday night with the team at Sight Matters! Soup provided, byo drinks & snacks. Teams of 4-6, smaller numbers will be popped into a team

Friday 6th March, 7pm, Sight Matters

£15 ticket

Coffee Morning

Get ready for Spring with our Easter Coffee Morning. Meet up with your friends over coffee, cake & chat. We'll have all your favourite stalls ready for you.

Thursday 2nd April, 10.30am, £2.50 entry (stalls open at 10.30am)

Easter Trail

Following the success of this last year, we will be opening up the Freedom Field between 7th and 10th April (9am-4pm) to look for clues to complete a quiz. Trail sheets will be available in reception

An Evening with Janet Gray MBE – sponsored by Callin Wild & Douglas Rotary Club

On Friday 20 March 2026, the Empress Hotel will host an inspiring evening with Janet Gray MBE – a world champion water skier whose story of resilience and determination has touched audiences across the globe.

Janet lost her sight suddenly at the age of 21 due to a rare form of glaucoma. Rather than allow blindness to define her, she went on to become a three-time World Disabled Water Ski Champion, breaking barriers and setting records in a sport not typically associated with visual impairment. Her journey became even more extraordinary following a near-fatal training accident, after which she fought her way back to reclaim her world title once again.

Her visit to the island, organised by ManninSight, a fundraising arm of Sight Matters, offers a rare chance to hear directly from someone whose life embodies strength, perseverance, and the refusal to give up. Janet's message is clear: sight loss doesn't close doors—new ones can open with the right support, mindset, and determination.

Event Details

Date: Friday 20 March 2026

Venue: Empress Hotel, Douglas

Price: £65 per person

Includes: A three-course meal, tea and coffee, Janet's talk, and an opportunity for audience questions

Tickets: Available **<https://sight-matters.idloom.events/dr-janet-gray>** or phone Sight Matters on 674727

Tables of ten are available, and individual tickets can also be purchased.

This promises to be an uplifting and memorable evening in support of Sight Matters' work, and we encourage early booking due to expected demand

Dining in the Dark – sponsored by Simcocks

On Saturday 25 April, join us for an unforgettable evening designed to awaken your senses and broaden your understanding. As you navigate a delicious, multi-course meal in complete darkness, you'll discover the rich textures, nuanced flavours, and aromatic bouquets of your food like never before. Conversations will flow more freely, laughter will resonate more loudly, and your appreciation for the everyday gift of sight will undoubtedly deepen.

This isn't just a meal; it's an immersive journey that offers a small glimpse into the world of individuals who live with visual impairments, fostering empathy and awareness in a truly memorable way. Every ticket purchased directly contributes to our vital work, helping us continue to support local blind and visually impaired people.

Come, tantalise your taste buds, engage your mind, and open your heart. Secure your spot today for an evening that promises to be enlightening in the most unexpected way.

Date: Saturday 25 April 2026 7pm

Location: Sight Matters, Corrin Court, Heywood Ave, Onchan

Price: £75 per person to include a bottle of wine

Tickets & Information: email
events@SightMatters.im or phone 674727

Recognition for Inclusive Digital Innovation

We were delighted to win the Ensuring Accessible Services Trophy at the inaugural Digital Poverty Alliance Awards ceremony. It was awarded for the work undertaken with local tech company SQR and recognised the collaborative and innovative piece of work to improve access to secure digital identity services.

A thoughtful moment was SQR's decision to produce a braille version of the trophy inscription, allowing braille readers to experience and share in the achievement in the same way as sighted visitors.

The award also recognised the vital role played by Sight Matters members and project testers, whose lived experience helped shape the design, testing and impact of the work from the very beginning. Their involvement ensured that the outcomes were practical, meaningful and built around real-world use.

SQR kindly donated the trophy to us and it can be seen in the reception at Corrin Court.

Accessible Digital Learning with MHFA England

We have worked in partnership with Mental Health First Aid (“MHFA”) England to ensure that digital learning is genuinely accessible to blind and visually impaired learners.

This collaboration focused on improving the accessibility of online learning platforms and course materials, helping remove barriers that can prevent people with sight loss from engaging fully in professional and personal development. By reviewing content, testing systems and providing detailed feedback, our members helped create learning experiences that are more inclusive, flexible and usable.

Looking Ahead

Both projects demonstrate what can be achieved when accessibility is prioritised from the outset. SQR’s work in secure, inclusive digital identity and MHFA England’s commitment to accessible learning closely align with our mission to reduce barriers and increase independence for people living with sight loss.

TT Spectator Site Voluntary Donations

There has been a substantial increase in the number of spectators to the TT Festival since Covid in 2020. Glen Vine has become a popular location for viewing the event where speeds of over 180 miles per hour are achieved by competitors. Following the increasing number of spectators, one of our members, Bridget Le Moignan, has allowed a number of visitors into her garden for a voluntary donation to Sight Matters. Donations received over the past four years are: -

2022 - £309.70

2023 - £389.64

2024 - £400.96

2025 - £828.88

Total £1929.18

Spectators from the UK, France, Germany, Spain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand have commented that they have no problem donating to such a valued and worthwhile Island charity and congratulated Bridget on her fundraising activity. Well done Bridget!

Manx Macular Support Group

Registered Charity 1258

It's now late November as I write this article and am sad that our charity Manx Macular Support Group will be dissolved on December 31st. We tried for over two years to find new and younger Trustees to take over but to no avail. We even approached the AG's office and other agencies to help us. Our problem is most trustees are having health problems and are now over eighty years old. It was sad to hear from the Charities commission many, many smaller charities are now dissolving, caused by the fact that no younger people are coming forward to take over the running. For example, as Chair I'm currently involved in at least three days a week either going out to give presentations, write to members or receive phone calls from members requiring help. I am eighty in a few months and simply can't sustain the level of energy required any more to Chair the charity. So, on Friday 21st of this month we held an EGM where it was unanimously agreed that as the Charity was unsustainable it would begin winding up and become dissolved on December 31st. 2025

For years I've admired Sight Matters and everything they do so after chatting with Cathryn

Bradley it was agreed she would give me a letter to enclose with the one advising our members of the charity being wound up saying they were most welcome to join Sight Matters. I hope everyone does.

On a brighter note, Sue Cowley, a fellow Trustee, and I have asked and been accepted to be volunteers at Sight Matters. We shall therefore be contactable through Sight Matters for anything to do with a macular issue. I'm also happy to continue giving presentation either individually or to organisations on Macular degeneration bookable through Sight Matters.

Finally, I'm not happy that Manx telecom has sold off their email service to a company in Brisbane Australia. So, we are told this change will bring about a fee of £6.50 a month per email which I'm not prepared to pay for a company that operates from the other side of the world. So I now have a new email and ask anyone who wishes to contact me to use this from now on

nhmarine123@gmail.com The trustees have agreed to keep **assistance@macular.im** operating for twelve months in case someone out there doesn't know we have dissolved. May I take this opportunity of wishing everyone all the very

best for the future and looking forward to continuing to write in optic topics about all matters macular albeit with a different hat on.

Nigel H. Malpass -Chairman, Macular Support Group

House of Keys General Election

The House of Keys General Election will take place in September 2026, and it is vital that as many eligible residents as possible are registered to vote ahead of this important event.

You can update your details online in minutes ([**https://services.gov.im/electoral-register/**](https://services.gov.im/electoral-register/)) or return the paper form before Thursday 19 March 2026, which will be delivered to your home.

- Eligibility: Everyone aged 16 and over who has been resident on the Isle of Man for at least one year is entitled to vote.
- Online registration: We are strongly encouraging individuals to register online, as this allows them to manage their own information quickly and effectively.

- Support for vulnerable individuals: There is support available.

For those unable to register online, there are alternative options available:

- Returning forms by post (with freepost available for those unable to cover postage costs)
- Handing completed forms in at Government and local commissioner offices
- Registering anonymously for individuals who are vulnerable or at risk
- Ensuring that homelessness is not a barrier to registering or exercising the right to vote
-

Donations

Thanks to everyone who gives us donations because as you are all aware the society is reliant upon fundraising, donations and legacies.

MBWS audio library

If you need an up to date catalogue or a list of the newest books, please let us know and we will forward one onto you.

Complaints Procedure

Whilst we appreciate the positive feedback that we receive on a regular basis, there may be times when we have not provided an acceptable standard of service. If you do have a problem or concern and you are able to make a member of staff aware of it at the time, they will endeavour to resolve the matter quickly. If this is not possible then we have a complaints procedure available on request in your preferred format.

A standard digital version of Optic Topics can be obtained from the Manx Blind Welfare Society on request.

Special dates for your diary

Saturday 20 February 7.30pm- Back to Assembly school event – The Manx Legion

Wednesday 18 March 3.30pm – MBWS AGM at Sight Matters

Friday 20 March 7pm – An evening with Dr Janet Gray MBE – The Empress Hotel

Friday 6 March 7pm – Quiz Night – at Sight Matters

Thursday 2 April – Coffee Morning at Sight Matters

Saturday 25 April – Dining in the Dark – at Sight Matters

Saturday 16 May – Wellbeing Day

Saturday 13 & Sunday 14 June – Onchan Secret Gardens