

Chard's Talking Newspaper charity celebrates 40th anniversary milestone

A TALKING newspaper charity in Somerset has celebrated its fortieth anniversary, making it the longest running of its kind in the county.

Chard-based Newline officially became a registered charity in 1986 to support visually and physically impaired people to access the news, formalising an earlier incarnation, *The Western Cassette*, which began in 1975. By 2012, the audio recordings had migrated to USB sticks, replacing cassettes.

Over the forty-year period, the charity's dedicated volunteering teams of readers, pouch-preparers and recorders have created and edited weekly audio recordings of local news articles for hundreds of 'listeners' across south Somerset and further afield. In addition, Chard's Newline weathered the storms of the Covid pandemic at a time when many talking newspapers across the country were forced to close down.

Newsline's fortieth anniversary milestone was officially marked at the charity's AGM, held on August 26, 2026, at The Choughs Hotel in Chard. Attendees included the former Mayor of Chard, Cllr Toria Bates, and David Bracher, husband of the late Val, who served selflessly as chair for more than 10 years, and who sadly passed away in June of this year.

Reflecting on the charity's fortieth anniversary, Treasurer, Anne Fruin, remarked: 'We are pleased to celebrate this anniversary and hope to be able to run for many years to come. We still have amongst us some of the original recorders.'

As part of the evening, Cllr Toria Bates presented Newsline with a cheque for more than £1,300, as it was one of the chosen charities from her mayoral term between 2025-26.

Speaking about the evening, Cllr Bates said: It was a bittersweet honour to present Chard and Ilminster Newsline with the money I raised for the charity during my time as Mayor. Val's absence is felt so acutely, but I am confident in the passion and determination of the committee to keep her vision alive & maintain this essential service for years to come.'



L-R Front: Cllr Toria Bates, Sue George, and Marion Edwards; L-R Back: Maureen Edwards, David Bracher, Pamela Everitt, Anne Fruin, Hilary Hooper, Graham Everitt, and Sue Williams. The picture on the table is of the late Val Bracher, Chairman from 2016-2026.

Toria continued: 'Everyone involved should be so proud of the strength and determination they have demonstrated since Val's passing; I am, and I know she would be. I can't wait to see what is next for them'.

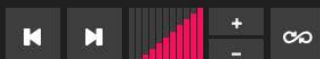
Volunteers of the charity still record on a weekly basis from a dedicated studio in the grounds of Chard's almshouses, Harvey's Homes, which was opened in July 1990 in memory of David Durie, a Newsline reader.

Current long-serving volunteers include Marion Edwards (since 1996), Hilary Hooper (since 2012), Pamela and Graham Everitt (since 2014), along with David and Julie Peadon, Sue George, and Glyn and Maureen Edwards.

Newsline is always looking for new volunteers, including recorders. In addition, if you are interested in receiving the service on a weekly basis, and if you would like to find out more, please visit www.newslinechard.com



New Music Track 1
Newsline



00:00



1. New Music Track 1 - Newsline



2. Newsline 21 Track 2 - Newsline