

seenews

MAY 2021

Contents

A Message from the Chairman	2
see News Bulletin Board	4
Fife Bus	5
see Support	6
NVT – Supporting clients after a stroke and brain trauma	7
see Community	8
see Technology	10
App Chat	13
see Fundraising	15
The Optician at seescape	16



We are here for you

In this edition of seenews, find out how seescape has adapted our services and remain committed to supporting our clients.



A Message from the Chairman

By Doug Stalker

Hello everyone. Since our last newsletter so much has happened! We have experienced another lockdown across the country since Christmas; a programme of vaccinations against COVID-19 is well underway and during all of that, seescape has been working very hard to support our clients.

Throughout this we have maintained support and advice to meet your needs at this unprecedented time. We have also worked to protect you and our staff from COVID-19 transmission.

Adapting the way we provide support to you was something that posed a challenge for our Sight Support team which the team has worked hard to overcome. By thinking differently, the team has ensured the quality of support offered has continued since the first lockdown last March.

Our Optician service has been able to remain open during the most recent lockdown and we are now providing additional clinics on behalf of the NHS. Glaucoma and Diabetic Retinal Screening operate at Wilson Avenue alongside our Low Vision and Optometry client clinics.

For those of you who are members of our Community Engagement groups, I know you are all keen to meet up with friends now the rules are being relaxed. But I know when meeting up wasn't possible, you were having regular phone calls to keep in touch and have a chat.

A huge thank you to our volunteers who have maintained regular contact with our groups. Our thanks also go out to our volunteer befrienders who adapted quickly to support clients by phone.

The Assistive Technology team hasn't been able to offer face-to-face appointments in the usual way. However, we have been able to deliver webinars and training online as well as offering phone and email support, all of which is working really well.

Over the last year we have learned so much about what we can deliver remotely but just as effectively, all of which will inform future decisions about how we deliver services. Hard to believe most of us didn't know what a Zoom call was 12 months ago!

I hope you feel that seescape has remained available and here to support you as we all adapt and learn to live with COVID-19. If you have any suggestions for improvements or additional services we can provide, please get in touch on 01592 644 979 or by emailing us at info@seescape.org.uk.

A recent change that perhaps not everyone is aware of is that Carl Hodson, our Chief Executive, moved to a new role at the end of February. In the four years since he joined seescape, Carl helped build the organisation into a modern and more responsive client focused service. The Board, and I am sure all of you, wish him every success in his new role.

I am however, delighted to say that Lesley Carcary will take up post as our new Chief Executive on 24 May. She brings with her over 16 years' experience of working in the charity sector and is really looking forward to leading the team to overcome some of the post COVID challenges we now face including reviewing and evaluating how we operate; how our services can best be delivered in the future to reflect lessons learned from COVID; how we work with and can continue to work in partnership with other sight loss organisations and how we can promote technology solutions for our clients.



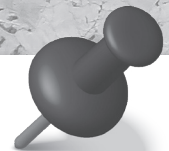
It's been a long hard 12 months but as summer beckons and rules are being relaxed let's hope 2021 sees us resume some form of normality in how we lead our lives. In the meantime, please stay safe and well and look after yourselves.

All the very best

Doug



see News Bulletin Board



Our services remain open as we continue to work from home in line with Government guidance. We are able to offer support by telephone, zoom and face-to-face, where appropriate. As the country continues to open up post-Covid, we regularly review how we operate and offer support. Please call our helpline on **01592 644 979** or email us **info@seescape.org.uk** for advice and support.

The Optician at seescape is open and operating safely with enhanced PPE. Please call us on **01592 646 728** for an appointment. We look forward to welcoming you for your eye test.

Remember to check our website, **www.seescape.org.uk** and social media for information on our latest Assistive Technology social hubs, keeping you up-to-date on the latest technology developments.

We are delighted to announce that we are officially a Volunteer Friendly organisation after achieving the Volunteer Friendly Award. We achieved this accolade for the way our team involves, manages and supports volunteers. Well done to the team for achieving this.

Following the flooding last August the reinstatement work is finally finished and our new flooring looks great. Although the building is still closed, we look forward to welcoming visitors to the building on an appointment basis going forward when Government guidance allows.

Sadly we have again been the victim of thoughtless vandalism, with 6 windows needing replacement during lockdown. Every incident is reported to Police and we provide CCTV footage to assist their investigations. If you would like to make a donation towards the costs of replacement, please go to our website, **www.seescape.org.uk** or Facebook seescapefife.

Fife Bus – Free Accessible Transport

In light of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, Fife Council has reviewed their free accessible transport services to ensure public safety.

The Fife Bus service encompasses the Dial-a-Ride and Ring and Ride services, providing a one-to-one transport service for essential travel may it be for medical appointments / GP visits or essential shopping trips.

The service aims to protect vulnerable people by offering the single passenger service and cancelling the previous group journeys offered by Dial-a-Ride.

All vehicles will only allow one passenger at any one time and drivers will maintain hygiene protocols including wiping down seats, surfaces and door handles to fit with Government regulations surrounding COVID-19.

Note: Service availability may vary depending on which area of Fife you are from. It is best to contact Fife Bus directly to find out about the service in your area.

How to book?

Booking line are open from 9.00am to 2.30pm Monday to Friday. Booking can be made the day before e.g. call on a Monday for a Tuesday appointment. However bookings can be made on a Thursday for Fridays and Saturdays, and on Fridays for Sundays and Mondays. Bookings cannot be guaranteed due to demand, and be aware that buses can arrive ten minutes before or after the time you have booked.

To book a Fife Bus or for more information please contact Fife Bus directly on: Tel: **03451 55 11 88** Email: **fife.bus@fife.gov.uk**

Text: **07985 737 018** – please note this number only accepts text messages and not calls.

Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) 01592 269 654. Volunteers provide Community Transport for trips where mobility issues can make it difficult, if not impossible, for you to use public transport or if you live in rural areas with limited transport. Trips usually include getting to or from hospital or to a GP appointment but can also include trips to the shops, into town or to social activities.

see Support

In the last edition of **seeneews**, we told you how our sight support team continues to support you, our clients, during lockdown. And whilst the team was able to return to carrying out home visits for a short period in late 2020, the majority of our support continues to be telephone based.

seescape is very proud to say that, despite the incredibly difficult circumstances we all face, we have still been able to support people with sight loss across Fife and provide much needed aids and training.

Below, Sight Support Worker Abi Tait shares a story about one client she has been able to support and the difference this input has made. We have changed the client's name to 'Jane' as although she wished to share her story, she also preferred to remain anonymous.

Jane's story

Recently I supported a lady named Jane who suffers from wet Age Related Macular Degeneration. Unfortunately, she lost the vision in her right eye completely following an infection which really affected her confidence and her ability to complete household tasks

Jane had issues with coming to terms with the loss of vision in her right eye, struggled with reading, missed / overfilled her cup, lacked confidence when outside, getting in and out the shower, and really missed knitting.

I referred Jane for counselling and completed a low vision assessment resulting in a x3.5 LED magnifier being issued. I also tried an around the neck easy viewer magnifier so Jane could get back knitting again.

A liquid level indicator was issued so she could make a hot drink safely and advice was also given to purchase a one cup boiler. A white walking stick was posted out so Jane had extra support outside and made people aware she had low vision. Jane was also referred to Occupational Therapy for handrails in the shower to increase Jane's confidence and safety.

Since my initial assessment with Jane, we have been back in contact to review how she is getting on. Jane has finished counselling and felt it went very well, and she has also completed a Living with Sight Loss course which she found worthwhile. Jane is back reading and knitting again, and also feels really safe getting in and out the shower now that handrails have been installed. Jane has also purchased a one cup boiler and invested in LED lighting in her kitchen.

Jane said she is very happy with the input that she has had from seescape.

She is finding the one cup kettle she purchased on our advice much easier to use. She has also purchased a magnifier with a light which she is finding easier to use as it is on a stand.

NVT – Supporting clients after a stroke and brain trauma

Neuro Vision Technology (NVT) was developed in Australia for people who have suffered vision loss (Hemianopia) or neglect due to stroke or trauma to the brain. The eye is healthy, however the signals from the eye cannot travel to the brain to form an image and therefore the person does not realise that they cannot see on the affected side and they bump into doors and furniture and knock things over or cannot find them or they may not be able to read as they are not starting at the beginning of the sentence, therefore what they are reading does not make sense.

Assessment

A general assessment is carried out using specialist equipment called Neuro Vision Technology light box.

There are also Pen & Paper tasks where appropriate and Mobility Observations, which ascertain the level of training required.

Training

NVT Light box: Encourage scanning into affected field. Also assess cognitive ability to shift task and problem solve.

Pen & Paper exercises: Tabletop exercises are used for people who have a left sided sight loss.

Mobility: Indoor dynamic target recognition / scanning techniques, as well as outdoor scanning techniques and road and controlled crossings.

Since lockdown I have been checking in with clients and giving advice over the phone regarding scanning and giving pen & paper exercises where appropriate. The really exciting news is that soon I will no longer be the only person in Fife offering this service as Elaina and Abi from our Sight Support team are currently taking the NVT training course, which will mean that we can assess and train more people. The future of the service is looking good!

If you have any questions regarding the NVT service, please do not hesitate to contact us on **01592 644 979**.

Karen Simpson, Specialist NVT Trainer.

see Community

By Kirstie Henderson, Community Engagement Co-ordinator

Creating connections with seescape through Community Engagement services

The last year has been a challenging one for all of us in different ways. Adapting our community engagement services so that people can still connect and keep in touch, on the telephone and online, has been a learning experience for everyone.

Our telephone befriending service, available to people living with sight loss in Fife, has emerged as a new way for seescape clients to have contact and share interests with a Volunteer Befriender, without having to leave their home. Regular befriending telephone calls offer connection and companionship, as well as supporting people with feelings of loneliness during the pandemic.

Some of our social groups also host weekly calls with their members, to join in and have a chat, hear from guest speakers, such as author Val McDermid and local historians, learn about services available, and enjoy other activities such as quizzes, sing-alongs and sharing stories.

Below we share some thoughts from one of our clients who has benefited from the telephone befriending service – we have changed her name to Maisie to protect her anonymity – and Barbara who is one of our volunteer befrienders.

Maisie started chatting to her volunteer telephone befriender in December 2020. They now share weekly chats and enjoy talking about many things, whether it is favourite holiday destinations, good recipes, nature and wildlife, favourite music to listen to, or family. Maisie had this to say about her experience with befriending:

“I really enjoy chatting to Barbara, she’s a lovely person and it gives me something to look forward to. It helps to pass the time, when we talk on the phone and the time goes by so quickly. She is very friendly and we have built up a good rapport. She checks that I have the support that I need and how I’m getting on. This has been reassuring of late, as I have been in and out of hospital getting a lot of tests recently. It’s nice that Barbara checks in and gives me a sense of connection with somebody else. We both live on our



own so can share tips and offer encouragement also.”

Barbara has this to say about the experience of being a volunteer telephone befriender:

“It’s a two-way thing for me. It also gives me a purpose to the day and connection with somebody else. It’s not hard work, my befriender has a great personality and it also gives me a real boost to hear how she is getting on. We have built up a good relationship through sharing stories, experiences, talking and laughing, as we both have a similar sense of humour. You have to laugh together also and I’m really looking forward to the day we can meet in person as we have built up a good connection on the phone.”

If you or someone you know would like to speak to Seescape about our telephone befriending service, including opportunities to do peer to peer befriending, or any other aspect of community engagement, including volunteering opportunities or social groups, please contact me:

By phone: Main office - **01592 644979** or Mobile - **07946 288 712**

By email: email: **kirstie.henderson@seescape.org.uk**.

SEE TECHNOLOGY

by Stuart Beveridge

Let Your Glasses Do The Talking

In December 2020, a new and truly life-changing innovative wearable Assistive Technology device was launched for visually impaired people by a company called Envision who are based in the Netherlands.

Envision began by developing a fully accessible app for smartphones which is designed to assist with managing everyday tasks such as:

- Reading printed and hand-written text (mail, newspapers etc.)
- Describing what's around you when you take a photo
- Colour recognition
- Barcode recognition
- Facial recognition
- Locating different objects such as chairs, tables, phone, etc.



The app is now used by many visually impaired people all over the world and is hugely popular. After a lot of positive feedback, Envision decided to integrate the app into a pair of Smart Glasses. This has now been achieved and I am delighted to say that the Envision Glasses are now available for purchase in the UK.

The glasses have all of the app features as well as an explore mode which will tell you what's around you in real-time and they also have a video-calling feature. This feature really does give these glasses an advantage over other wearable solutions as it allows you to connect with a sighted family-member, friend or carer, who can then describe what they see through the camera of the glasses from the screen of their own smartphone.

A constant and reliable internet connection is required to use the glasses,

but this can easily be achieved either by connecting the glasses through Wi-Fi or via the personal hotspot setting which is found on most up-to-date smartphones. You can also connect headphones or certain hearing-aids to work alongside the glasses either by using Bluetooth or through the USB-C charging port.

So I think it's fair to say at this point, that these glasses really do have everything covered. It's also worth mentioning that all the information conveyed through the glasses is spoken or audio feedback, but if you are used to listening to a screen-reader on your computer or smartphone, then you shouldn't have any issues with this.

The glasses are operated using a touchpad which is found near the front of the right leg of the frame, so again, if you are used to using the VoiceOver or TalkBack screen-readers on your smartphone or tablet, you will have no issues whatsoever in terms of learning how to use them.

My User Experience

I actually pre-ordered the Envision Glasses and have been using them since November. I can honestly say that they are one of the best purchases I have ever made and are worth every penny. I mainly use them for reading my mail, which is a great experience, as it means I don't need to rely on my Mum to read it for me. At Christmas I used the glasses to read a handwritten card sent by my neighbour. This is the first time I have been able to do this independently and I was really impressed in terms of how accurately the handwriting was captured and read.

I also use the glasses when out-and-about with my Guide Dog to describe my surroundings. On a recent walk, I went to my local park and took a picture of what was in front of me. I was told that there was a tree next to a bench. I was absolutely amazed by this, as I have walked around that park time-and-time again for the last 15 years and had no idea that they were there!

The video calling function is my favourite feature though. I mainly use it when I'm stuck with a particular task such as organising tins in my cupboard or if my computer is not working and I need someone sighted to tell me what is on the screen. I now have all of my family members' contact details stored, so if I'm ever struggling, I can just call one of them directly from the glasses and they can help me out. Think of the possibilities! I have always had difficulty knowing when to step-out to get on buses as I had no idea what number

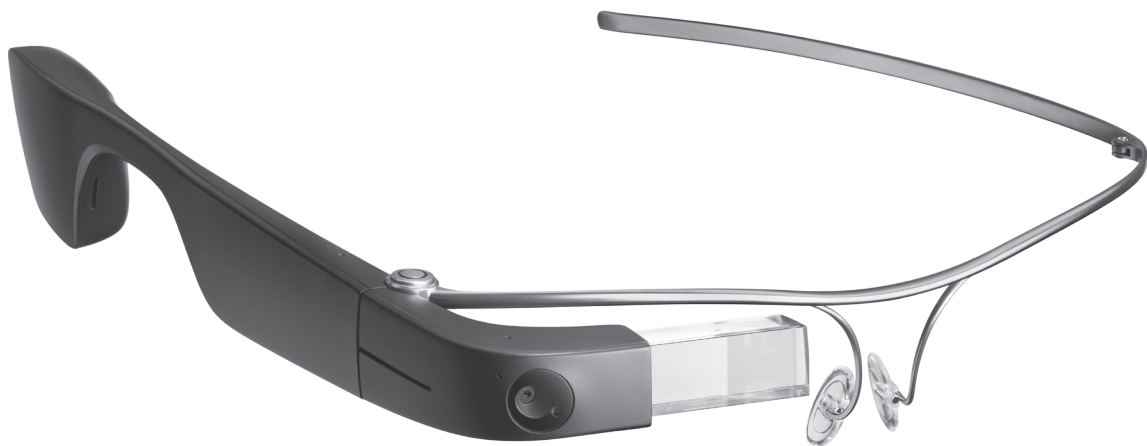
of bus was approaching. Not anymore, I can just call my Mum and she will be able to see the bus approaching through the camera of my glasses and keep me right. I also have serious problems finding an empty seat when I eventually manage to find the correct bus. Again, not anymore, as I can just call a family member and they can direct me to an empty seat.

The possibilities are endless and to be honest, the only thing that will hold you back when using these glasses is your own imagination.

The really cool thing is, this is only the beginning! Work is currently being done so that you will be able to control the glasses using your voice and there may even be the possibly of a navigation feature before too long. Exciting stuff!

Price: The Envision Glasses currently retail at £2,695.

Interested?: Sight and Sound Technology are the UK distributor. However, we do work closely with Sight and Sound, so if you would like a demonstration or for more information, please contact me on **01592 644 979** or email **stuart.beveridge@seescape.org.uk**.



“ The glasses have all of the app features as well as an explore mode which will tell you what’s around you in real-time and they also have a video-calling feature. ”



By Stuart Beveridge

seescape have a new app!

Last year, we started a new project which is all about helping clients to take control of their financial affairs using online banking. While training and support is on offer, we did come up against a problem that in all honesty we hadn't actually considered. How do we help clients do their banking confidentially without accessing all of their private information?

We then decided to ask the banking sector if they had any apps which would allow people to try online banking and see what it was all about and how it worked. So essentially you could use a test app and decide if online banking was the right thing for you. Unbelievably, no such app existed, so we decided to create our own.

Thanks to a company who develop apps called Waracle, we now have a test app which is designed to give someone who has no experience of using online banking the chance to try it out in a fail-safe way. Currently the app is available for iPhone and is fully accessible using the VoiceOver screen-reader or with magnification.

Features of the app include:

- Get your current bank balance
- Find out if you have pending transactions
- Access information about previous transactions
- Ability to make a bank transfer.

I had the pleasure of working on the development of the app with Waracle and am absolutely delighted with the results. It's one of the simplest apps I have ever used, but at the same time, really does give the user a brilliant overview of how online banking works. I really do believe this app will give more of our clients the confidence to do their own banking online.

For more information or to arrange a demonstration, please get in touch by calling **01592 644979** or email **stuart.beveridge@seescape.org.uk**.

OrCam Read Smart.



Will hearing sell-by-dates, pricing, mail, menus, newspapers and books help you?



Sale Price: £1800
RRP £2000

Perfect for those at home, work and school. Great for those with moderate low vision, reading difficulties, including dyslexia and reading fatigue.



Orcam Read is a highly sophisticated lightweight smart camera. Using AI technology, it instantly reads any printed or digital text from books, newspapers, smartphone screens, computers, and more. It is intuitively operated, with just the press of a button. Either listen via the mini speaker on the device or through headphones (wired or bluetooth). Orcam Read is the most efficient smart pen on the market, with Speed Reading and the only one with Full Page Capture. It is designed for all ages and does not require an internet connection.

Freephone: 0800 145 6115 For a FREE home demonstration or for more information.

In Partnership with

VIP Diaries

see Fundraising

By Sally Cameron, Fundraising Manager

Like all charities it has been a difficult year for fundraising. Without the ongoing support from donors, we simply would not have been able to continue to deliver all our services – so thank you to everyone who has supported us.

seescape has also received some generous legacies which will help to ensure we are here for those who need our services now and into the future. If you are interested in finding out more about how you can leave a lasting gift for future generations then please get in touch.

Have you heard about our new lottery? Playing seescape's weekly lottery is an easy way to support our work. For just £1 a week you could win up to a fantastic £25,000!

It's easy to join just head to www.seescape.org.uk/lottery or call seescape on **01592 644 979** and we can send you a joining form.





The Optician at seescape

Here at seescape Opticians we are pleased to announce we can now book in eye examinations for all our patients and clients

When we originally opened after lockdown we were only seeing urgent and emergency appointments but as restrictions are easing we are now open for everyone!

If you are due your eye examination check-up you will shortly be receiving a letter to call us for an appointment but if you are having any issues or would just like to be seen as soon as possible, please get in touch on **01592 646 728**.

Our testing days are Monday and Friday



Expanding horizons for people
in Fife with sight impairment

seescape is the operational name of Fife Society for the Blind. Registered Scottish Charity number SC001354.
Fife Society for the Blind is a company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland number SC164278.

If you no longer wish to receive our newsletter please email info@seescape.org.uk