



THE HIGH SHERIFF OF THE ISLE OF WIGHT

Mrs Gay Edwards

27th August 2009 *Old Vicarage, Watergate Road, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 1YP*
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Dear David

As you know, on Friday 7th August I went to the UKSA pontoon in Cowes to see the Even Keel Project boats, meet some of the people who look after them and hear about the Project. I was most impressed by the nature of the boats. They are clearly hugely flexible in their use, being very attractive to sailors of considerable ability, yet suitable for those with special needs together with one or even two instructors. I was struck by the dedication and skill of the people enabling those with disabilities as instructors. I was also very interested to hear from you, as the all-important leader of the Project, about your hopes and plans for the future of the organisation. There is clearly a great deal of hard and imaginative work being done to great effect.

Simon Dear, one of the Commissioners working for the Children's Services of the Local Authority, and I were delighted to watch a group of young people with a variety of special needs as they were fitted with safety equipment, helped into the boats and taken off for their first sail. It was a moving and encouraging experience to watch and we could see from their faces that it was a most thrilling experience for the young people in the boats. I was impressed by the care taken to get them settled before they cast off and the patience shown by the instructors with some challenging behaviour in their guests. The young people out on the water that day could not have had that experience without the Even Keel Project and it gave the people who brought them to Cowes a terrific lift to see their friends or family members have so good a time. Their faces were good to watch too.

For people who live on an Island where sailing is taken so much for granted, but who cannot access the water without other people to help, the Project is of enormous value and is very much appreciated. The self-confidence that can be given by this special treat to some of the people who are understandably nervous can make an enormous difference to how they see themselves and how that can affect their approach to other activities. The day I went it was youngsters who were on the water, but of course all this is true for older people too. Sport in whichever form we are able to take part is demonstrably good for all of us, both physically and emotionally.

I would like to congratulate you on the Even Keel Project, the way it works now and your vision for the future. I very much hope that you will continue to be given help with the funding for this Project which can make such a great difference to the lives of those who have so much less choice than the rest of us have.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Rutter'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'D' and 'R'.

David Rutter
The Even Keel Project
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