

Buckle up

Dame Irene Lucas-Hays DBE DL

High Sheriff of Tyne and Wear 2023-24

It was a great honour to be installed as the fiftieth High Sheriff of Tyne and Wear on 3 April 2023. I knew it was going to be busy combining my High Sheriff's duties with my day job running Hays Travel, but I was determined to meet as many of the people and organisations doing excellent work to help others in our region that I could fit in. What followed was an astonishing and enriching year.

Supporting young people to reach their full potential, whatever their personal circumstances, has been a common theme throughout my career, so making support for young people my focus as High Sheriff was the natural choice.

I was delighted to work with the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland to allocate financial support to organisations working with youngsters through the annual High Sheriff's Awards Fund.

For 2023-24 we supported 37 organisations and gave out £43,000 in awards; the awards evening hosted at the Stadium of Light, home to Sunderland AFC, was a personal highlight. It was a wonderful evening where we celebrated the achievements of the children and young people involved and the valuable work the organisations do. I was honoured to meet and congratulate representatives from community organisations from across Tyne and Wear and present them with their certificate.

Now, as I hang up my ostrich feather hat and head back to focusing on



With Cllr Dorothy Trueman (Mayor of Sunderland) and Cllr Harry Trueman for the citizenship ceremony at Sunderland City Hall



With members of the Bad-Landers Motorcycle Club for South Tyneside Armed Forces Day
Credit: Tim Richardson

the day job, I say to all those taking up this ancient office: buckle up, you're in for a tremendous year!

My highlights include:

- Being thrilled by the spectacular Armed Forces Day celebration organised by the Bad-Landers Motorcycle Club with South Tyneside Council. The bikers raise a great deal of money for our armed forces and their respect for serving and veteran personnel is clear. The cacophony of noise generated by their parade of 500 motorbikes was absolutely incredible.
- Spending a moving time at a commemoration service of the Falklands War, populated with wonderful stories and evidence of the camaraderie that exists in our armed forces, full of authentic recollections and gratitude.



With recipients of High Sheriff's Awards Photo: Focal Point Photography



On a visit to Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

- Joining armed forces personnel and veterans at Sunderland's Remembrance parade and services to pay tribute to those who fought in conflicts past and present.

- Being fascinated by the expertise on display during a complex training exercise with Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service.

- Enjoying an evening of amazing music, dancing and food to mark India Independence Day, as a guest of the Indian Association North East.

- Representing His Majesty The King when I witnessed a cohort of new British citizens take the Oath of Allegiance at Sunderland City Hall.

- Visiting South Tyneside Magistrates' Court, where I was impressed by the compassion and respect those in office displayed to people experiencing challenging times.

- Celebrating the voice of young people at the Key Awards.

- Meeting the passionate team at Community Grocery Newcastle, who are delivering a fantastic service to those struggling financially – their corned beef pie is exceptional!



On a visit to South Tyneside Magistrates' Court with District Judge Zoe Passfield, Nicola Burns JP (Family Panel Chair), Chris Graham JP (South Northumbria Bench Chair) and Doreen Stoneman JP (Youth Panel Chair)