

u3a in Scotland Charity SC030370 NEWSLETTER SPRING 2024



Letter from the Chair,

This may be my last article as chair of u3a in Scotland. I will have been in post for 3 years, come the AGM in June.

At that time of my appointment, we were still in a partial lockdown, which fortunately, is no longer the case.

Zoom has many advantages but it is no substitute for meeting people in real life, however, it was very quickly realised that it was a great asset for bringing together those who lived far apart and by deciding to hold committee meetings for the Executive of u3a in Scotland on Zoom, it meant that there was no bar to anyone from any part of the country being on the committee.

For the first two years, I had a Zoom licence from the Trust, so our meetings had no cost. I was no longer doing Zoom tutoring so the Trust withdrew the licence and we had to take out our own licence in May 2023 but, even that cost is far lower than the cost of hiring a meeting venue for about 10 occasions per year, plus the travel expenses for all committee members, on each of those occasions.

The u3a in Scotland committee, like many other committees throughout the UK, u3a and other organisations, is struggling to recruit members. In order to try and mitigate any possible shortfall at the AGM, a proposal to change the constitution will be put to members at an SGM during the Spring Event on 18th March.

If your u3a is struggling to find committee members when the current ones have reached their permitted time limit, you too might want to consider some fall-back provision by extending the time limit; just check it through with the Trust first. They know how everyone is placed and will be sympathetic. It's better than a u3a having to close because they can't get committee members.

The Trust itself is in a state of flux. You may have attended or will be attending, a presentation on Fit for the Future and u3as will have a say on the final outcome at the Trust AGM in October, whether in person or by a postal vote, prior to the event.

Whatever the outcome of events at the u3a in Scotland AGM in June, I won't be going far, as I will still be involved with the organisation of Summer School, which you can read about elsewhere in this newsletter.

Anne Walsh

Letter from the Trustee for Scotland

Dear All

I hope you have all been able to enjoy a bit of (almost) Spring weather. It is so very nice to see the brighter weather and gardens with Spring flowers.

In my role as Trustee I have been touring Scottish u3as , mostly using Zoom. My aim is to have some input with all Scottish u3as. Issues are sometimes relevant to local circumstances but common themes emerge eg. finding people willing to stand for the committee or be group leaders, costs and availability of suitable premises for meetings...to name but a few. The vexed question of how long can someone be on a committee also gives food for discussion.

The use of Beacon for admin purposes often comes up with those who use it saying they find it very useful.

There have also been fruitful meetings of Chairs and Treasurers. The next Treasurers meeting is on Thursday 7th March at 10am on Zoom when Harry Whiteside (retired Chartered Accountant) will answer questions and discuss the question of whether we should be a charity. Look out for the link. After this I plan to invite Membership Secretaries and Group Coordinators to a sharing session on Zoom.

As you will be aware there are proposals to change how the u3a Trust is governed. The project is known as Fit For the Future. The proposals include the setting up of a Council alongside the Board. At present I am the Scottish Trustee on the Board. Liz Thackray, Chair of u3a Trust, will be making a Zoom presentation of Fit for the Future on the 18th March as part of u3a in Scotland's Spring Forum. Please try and make it.

I do appreciate that your main priority is your own u3a but as a movement we are unique and its important to move forward as one. Liz Thackray will also be visiting Scotland in June, more information to follow as soon as I finalise a programme with your help and support.

Liz Ervine

u3a Scotland Speaker Swap Initiative

u3a Scotland have contacted all Scottish u3as to try to set up a Speaker Swap initiative. Initially we are trying to find out who is the Speaker Organiser for each u3a so that we can swap speaker information whilst always ensuring GDPR compliance.

If you are a Speaker Organiser for your u3a and haven't yet got in touch, please drop Allison Kershaw an email to let her know your contact details. u3ascotlandspeakerswap@gmail.com

Two of our more remote u3as have invited any member who is holidaying in their area to get in touch if they would like to give a talk. They will be made to feel very welcome but unfortunately no travel expenses will be paid.

So if you're intending to visit Orkney or Oban and willing to give a talk, do check their websites and you can contact the Chair and/or the Speaker Organiser via Message Bird.

Similarly, I'm sure that the Speaker Organiser in your own u3a would also be delighted to hear from you too.

Allison Kershaw

Helensburgh and District u3a Science Group

On 19th January we held the 50th meeting of our u3a Science Group of Helensburgh & District u3a. Our meetings consist of talks by leading experts in their field (some members but usually external speakers and mostly leading academics) and are open to all our u3a members.

We are a relatively new u3a in Helensburgh and District having started in 2018 and we now have around 250 members. Our science meetings attract over 50 members each month.

We had a celebratory meeting today with balloons and a cake and an excellent talk by Dr Gavin McPherson on CERN and the origins of matter. Our 50th Meeting received a lot of publicity in our local press.



Peter Holmes
Chair, Helensburgh & District u3a Science Group

Online Across Scotland Laughter Yoga Group

The Online Across Scotland laughter yoga group has been meeting on Zoom for years. Laughter makes you happy, so we laugh, we stretch, and we breathe...and laughter connects people, so we've become friends.

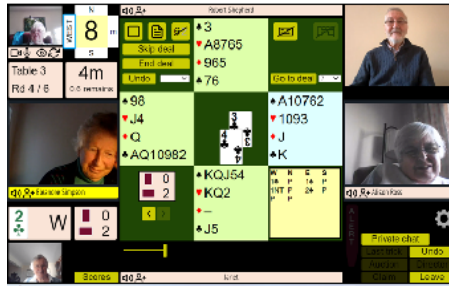
Then we realised that, although in theory we come from all over Scotland and beyond, many of us live in Glasgow or Edinburgh, so we decided to meet – in a real restaurant – and have lunch. So here we are in Glasgow.



Despite the fact that we actually know very little about each other, we've laughed together so much that we feel we know each other very well – because laughter just does that to you. It's also gentle cardiovascular exercise, and very helpful if you have breathing problems.

For more information contact Judith Walker at judy.laughing@gmail.com

Online Across Scotland Bridge Group



U3AOAS Bridge is up and running. We run a beginners' group and a Play and Learn on a Friday morning. This year we have over 40 members - with only 5 beginners - but the rest are enjoying the Play and Learn.

The group has grown out of Inverness and Black Isle U3A bridge group. When Covid started we quickly adapted to playing and teaching online and attracted people from many diverse areas of Scotland, but everyone had to join the Inverness and Black Isle group. We spent time helping people with the technology and have continued to operate online since. We are now part of U3A Online Across Scotland and any U3A member may join.

The beginners follow a 20-lesson course with notes and videos, and an opportunity to replay the hands after each lesson. Instruction is given online with supervised play and plenty of opportunity to ask questions.

In the Play and Learn we play 12 boards, then an experienced bridge player goes over the bidding and play. Again, there is plenty of opportunity to ask questions. Sometimes the hands are on a topic and there is a short lesson before play. On the RealBridge platform we use you can see and chat to the people at your table and you will meet 12 opposition people each week. It is sociable.

We have our own website <https://www.bridgewebs.com/u3aoasbridgegroup/> and members have access to the members only pages where all the lesson material is stored. Also, the weekly links for playing are displayed there and results shown for the Play and Learn for those interested.

We charge an annual £24 for the use of the bridge platforms, and this is payable to U3AOAS.

Membership is open to any Scottish U3A member. If you would like to join the Play and Learn any time or the Beginners in the autumn look at our website and contact U3AOAS group coordinator.

One member's comment:

"Playing bridge with u3a online is a great way to enjoy bridge and improve your game. The informal atmosphere allows for discussion of the play and themed hands allow the practice of new and old techniques and conventions. Review of the hands after the game helps by pointing out errors and highlighting possibilities. It has helped to consolidate my enjoyment of the game."

Lanark u3a : A Scottish Celebration

A packed audience of around 100 u3a members and guests attended 'A Scottish Celebration' on 17th January. The show opened with a rousing rendition of traditional and contemporary folk music from the Ukulele Group led by musical director, Ian Murray.



Author and storyteller, Alison Galbraith, told a tale from Lanarkshire about the 'Fairies of Melvin's Craig'.

Hilary Spoun then assembled a set from her Scottish Country Dancing Group to dance 'The Rose of the West' and the 'Indian River of Strathspey'. The audience then joined in, and Hilary had everyone 'twizzling' (twists and turns!)

Tom Barrie, who accompanied the Ukulele Group, gave two solo performances ending with an appreciation of our national Bard, Robert Burns, and singing 'Rantin Rovin Robin' which, Alison led us to believe, was an autobiographical song in the form of a prophecy by the palm-reading midwife who attended Burns' birth.

Live comedy then took to the floor with a tribute to 'The Big Yin', Billy Connolly. Messrs Price, Crooks and Weston, comedians, who allegedly hail from a garden suburb of Glasgow provided a moving interpretation of 'Three Men fae Carntyne' on their way to 'sign on' or otherwise euphemistically referred to as, 'join the parish'.

Marie Christine Glancy was the unfortunate lassie Senga from the dairy, who sustained lifechanging injuries following an altercation with a breadboard. Awful, yet brilliant.



The celebration ended with a vote of thanks to all participants, and particularly Bill Toy, who has been instrumental in bringing on aspirational ukulele musicians and is now retiring as a Group leader.

The closing song 'Tak a Dram (Afore Ye Go)' was appropriate Scottish symbolism for hospitality to finish an outstanding performance by Lanark and District u3a.

Dr Jill Murie

East Renfrewshire u3a Organise a 'Hatwalk'

East Renfrewshire u3a raised an astounding £4,547.48 For the Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice when they held a 'Hatwalk' on St Valentine's day.

The idea was conceived last year by one of our members, Sylvia, a talented milliner herself and a member of our Fashion through the Ages Group. The format of a hat fashion show and an afternoon tea was decided upon with students from Glasgow Clyde College's Millinery course modelling the hats that they had created as they walked among the tables.

Many of our groups got involved to make the event a success. Our Sewing group worked on the tablecloths and our Ukulele group provided the entertainment before the main event. Members volunteered to make sandwiches, scones and cakes and to set up and serve the tea and coffee.

Tickets were sold at £20 each and for an additional £50 some members sponsored a table in memory of a loved one. Many members joined in the occasion by donning their favourite hat.

When the show was over, Jill Busby, an award -winning milliner, gave a fascinating talk on hats through the ages. The raffle was then drawn and prizes, donated by local businesses, distributed to the lucky winners.

The event was attended by some 175 members and friends including representatives from our neighbouring u3as; Glasgow Southside, Glasgow Westend and Paisley all of whom took a table to support us.



Heather Lister, fundraiser from the Hospice gave a short talk on the vision of the Hospice in its new location in Bellahouston Park, thanking all involved for the money raised.

It was a huge amount of work, but it all came together on the day and was greatly enjoyed by everyone who attended.

Marbe McNeill

Summer School 2024



Once again, u3a in Scotland will be running a Summer School at Stirling Court Hotel in the grounds of Stirling University. There are 6 courses on offer:

Creative Craft: producing a fabric picture.

A hands-on workshop to learn the skills needed to produce 3-D fabric pictures. You will make a colourful framed picture to take home. (There is a £10 charge for materials.) This course is viable but has vacancies.

Strolling to admire nature

Leisurely walks to explore the beautiful environment of Stirling University for those who enjoy, and want to learn more about, the fauna and flora around us. This course is almost viable and has vacancies.

Technology: how our household appliances are programmed.

A hands-on introduction to programming everyday devices that is informative, simple and fun. You will be supplied with a small computerised card to use with your own laptop or tablet during the workshop and afterwards at home. (There is a charge of £20 for the card.) This course is not yet viable and has a number of vacancies if it is to become so.

Play writing: creating characters.

In this workshop you'll have the opportunity to create unique and memorable new characters, working with others to tell their stories and bring them to life. No writing experience is necessary. This course is viable but has vacancies.

Drug discovery: where our medicines come from.

This workshop will chart the drug discovery process from antiquity to the present day and highlight the profound impact these endeavours have had on human health. This course has now reached its target number of participants.

Drawing Skills.

The aim of this workshop is to have fun whilst improving our drawing skills. We will be drawing from life and from photographs, learning to observe form, tone and texture in a relaxed atmosphere. This course is viable but has vacancies.

The minimum number on any course is 6 participants and the maximum is 12 on any course other than **Drug Discovery** which is currently 15.

Over the two half days and one full day, there will be 5 sessions on your chosen course. On both days, the 2nd afternoon session will take a different format. On Tuesday there will be a choice of talks: The Boston Tea Party by Ian Matheson, Glasgow artist Bet Low by Hildegard Berwick and Mad, Bad or Sad by Margaret MacDonald, a former OU tutor to guests of Her Majesty. On Wednesday, there will be a choice of activities: Mah Jong, Qi Jong, Laughter Yoga or Modern Board Games. You will be asked for your choices when signing in at Summer School.

For all details and costs, see 'Summer School' on the u3a in Scotland website
<https://u3asites.org.uk/scotland/page/79029>

u3a in Scotland Executive Committee

The u3a in Scotland AGM 2024 will take place at the Friends Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh, the same venue as last year, on Tuesday 11th June. It is being planned as a hybrid meeting.

If the previously proposed changes to the constitution have been approved and the current vice-chairperson chooses to stand again for her post, you will be asked to elect her for two years. This also applies to two existing committee members. Any new officers or committee members would be elected for 3 years. Both the current chairperson and current treasurer will have completed three years in post and, even under any approved changes to the constitution, cannot be nominated to continue in post, prior to the AGM.

Since the last AGM, u3a in Scotland has operated without a secretary, which is not ideal. If you have any secretarial experience, in your working life or as a committee member, please consider applying for this post.

One other committee member will have completed 3 years and cannot be nominated as a non-officer committee member.

Please consider standing for one of these posts. You do not have to be on the committee of your own u3a but if you have previous committee experience and have now stepped down, maybe you would consider joining the u3a Scotland committee.

To summarise:

Posts up for election – existing vice-chairperson, to be elected for up to a further two years;

Chairperson – new nomination to be elected for up to 3 years; *

Treasurer - new nomination to be elected for up to 3 years; *

Secretary – new nomination to be elected for up to 3 years;

Two existing committee members to be elected for a further two years;

One new committee member to be elected for up to 3 years.

*Any changes to the constitution, previously agreed, only come into effect if there are no nominations for these posts.

Online Across Scotland (Free to members of a Scottish u3a)

Coffee House Discussions

In the 18th century in Scotland, people often got together in Coffee Houses to discuss new ideas and matters of the day. Online Across Scotland offers an online equivalent for the digital age through a series of interactive discussions.

These talks are held on the first Thursday of each month at 4 pm. On **Thursday March 7th** we welcome Don von Rohland, Outreach Director at Climate Emergency UK. On **Thursday April 4th**, Angie Grain (Ilkley and District u3a) will give a talk on **Palaces of Culture**, looking at some of our well known galleries and museums: their history, buildings and collections.

Please refer to <https://u3asites.org.uk/onlineacrossscotland/events> for more information and the zoom link.

Autumn Newsletter

The editorial team would like to thank all those who contributed to this edition.

The Autumn Newsletter is due out in October 2024. Contributions should be sent by September 30 2024, preferably by email, to: newsletter.u3ainScotland@gmail.com