



Chepstow

Learn, Laugh and Live!

**NOTES OF CHEPSTOW U3A CONVENERS MEETING
HELD AT CHEPSTOW DRILL HALL
12th April 2019**

Present: 53 Conveners; 10 Committee members; 2 Other U3A members with non-committee roles

Aim of the meeting: to focus on two key themes from the Development Plan:

1. Clear and regular communication about what is available;
2. Raising awareness of Chepstow U3A in the local community.

Welcome

Derek Shottin welcomed the conveners, particularly the new conveners, to the meeting. He introduced Wilf Summerbell as the new convener liaison officer and thanked Kay Mahoney for carrying out the role so well for the last three years. Derek also introduced Hugh Hutton as the new Secretary.

U3A Chepstow Magazine

Nicky Lee gave a brief presentation about the magazine. Some 3,300 magazines have been printed and the web version has received 8,338 hits. 26 groups have been featured and many more have been showcased in the highlights section. Regular features include cooking and gardening articles. The March magazine was a special edition which featured a directory of all the groups for 2019. Nicky paid tribute to the magazine team, comprising Wilf Summerbell, Shelagh Davies, Sushil Nair, Kay Mahony, Derek Shottin and Terry Walters. She thanked Terry, who is retiring from the team, and welcomed Chris Whiteman as his replacement. Nicky emphasised the importance of maintaining group inputs to the magazine.

Social Events

Nicky outlined the social events in the U3A calendar. Regular events are the monthly meeting, the summer and Christmas parties and the monthly coffee mornings. Nicky invited suggestions for speakers at the monthly meetings and for the parties. The coffee mornings regularly attract 30-40 attendees. Occasional events include the quiz which has been going for two years and wine tasting which will probably take place in the third week of August at the Palmer Centre with Dave Lindo organising. Skittles has expanded from a challenge match against Newport into four groups. A Ceilidh and supper is being considered for October at the Drill Hall but there are significant expenses involved, so good support will be necessary for it to be viable.

Open Day

Shelagh Davies described the 2018 inaugural event as a great success, with 40 groups participating and 300 visitors. 24 new members were recruited and she felt that it was a fantastic showcase for the groups. A £200 grant from the Third Age Trust helped with the costs. However, the venue was too small and hot and a number of organisational lessons were learned for this year's event which will take place on 5th October from 10:00am to 4:00pm. The venue has yet to be confirmed but will have more space with better space allocation for groups. There will be a separate performance area so that more groups can perform and performances will be scheduled. More information will be available at a later date.

Finance

David Phillips described the changes to the finance system. Following a period of 6 months 'shadow' working, the finance system was now live within Beacon. Conveners will have 'view-only' access to the financial statement, the group statement and the ledger by group. Updates will be monthly with the previous month's information being available from the first week of the subsequent month. It is important

to recognise that the accounts are done on a cash basis, so there might be some slight timing differences from what the conveners expect. David will continue to post the monthly accounts on the website and notice board and will be able to provide real-time information to conveners on request. Beacon will show all individual payment entries, but it is important that groups make bank payments using their payment book and not via the cash machine. It is also important that electronic payments are properly identified so that there is no confusion.

Membership

Irene Hullah provide an update. There are currently 917 registered members but 175 have yet to pay their 2019 subscription and up to 80 may not renew their subscription. Irene emphasised that group members must belong to Chepstow U3A and suggested that conveners download and print some current membership forms from the website. Non-members may attend up to two trial sessions but after that, if they continue to attend without joining Chepstow U3A, the public liability insurance will be invalidated for the group.

It is not the conveners' responsibility to collect subscriptions and the membership team attend the monthly meeting to collect payments between January and June. Conveners were reminded that, following the start of the new membership year in April, members who have not paid their subscription will appear in red in the group listings. If there any issues with renewals, conveners should contact Irene to resolve them. Beacon issues should be referred to Ian Wood or Terry Summers. If members have not paid their subscriptions within 13 weeks from the start of the membership year, they will be recorded as lapsed and would need to re-join. Lapsed members' details will be removed from Beacon after 12 months. The membership team will shortly email members who have not paid their 2019 subscription and conveners were asked to support the team on this, particularly with members who are not on email.

A reduced membership fee of £6.50 is payable if someone is also a member of another U3A. Membership cards are not routinely issued, but can be provided by the membership team at the monthly meeting if required.

Guidance for Conveners

Derek went through the guidance, which can be found on the website (Information → Groups & Conveners → Guidance for Conveners), and hard copies were provided to attendees. GDPR queries should be directed to Derek as Jill Rundle will be relinquishing responsibility for this topic. Other convener queries should be directed to Wilf. It was confirmed that there was no specific age restriction for U3A members, who should not be in full-time employment.

A bi-lingual U3A logo has been suggested and is being looked into, but there is not one currently available for conveners to use.

Graham Eele questioned the GDPR implications regarding photos which had been transferred from the Chepstow U3A website to individuals' cloud storage, but with links from the website. Derek recognised that this required due consideration and asked Graham to put the issue to him in writing.

Group Discussions

The meeting then broke into groups of about eight, each facilitated by a committee member, to discuss specific questions related to the meeting objectives. The outputs are recorded in the attached appendix.

Conclusion

Wilf asked attendees to complete the feedback forms and hand in their notes from the group discussions.

Derek stated that training workshops will be arranged for conveners, commencing in May. He asked attendees to consider supporting the committee on particular issues and pointed out that this could be from within or outside of the committee. He observed that whilst the Development Plan had just been updated for 2019, the day's discussion indicated the need to make further updates. He thanked all the conveners and other attendees and closed the meeting.

Appendix - Feedback from group discussions.

First Discussion Session

We have an increasing membership and as this grows we need to increase the number of activity groups on offer. What ideas do you have for new groups and new activities?

Suggestions:

Science	Astronomy	Climate Change
'Demystified' e.g. stats, fun with numbers	Card Games, Board Games	Study Days
'Demystified' e.g. current affairs	Boules/petanque	Short mat bowls
Walking...football, rugby, cricket, netball	Folk Dancing	'Universal Symbols' symbols in cultures
French conversation...not beginners. French scene	Food...history; around the world	'Discussion' general & debate
Moral Maze	Use of social media	DIY
German...beginners	Italian	Community Group...joining other groups to help locally
French...beginners	Welsh...beginners	Yoga
Computer group....help sessions Smart phone use	Coaching for short presentation, speaking with confidence	Comedy, 'Improv'
Grumpy Old Women Possibly G. Old Men	Swimming	Meditation, relaxation
How to Photoshop	Engineering trips	Week day lunch club
Fine dining	Come dine with me....lunch or dinner	Sailing
'One Offs' for gardening (from gardening group?)	Gardening to host a seasonal special	Seasonal special for flower arranging....Xmas, Easter.
Days Out...Opera, classical music.	Jazz appreciation	Bell ringing

Second Group Discussion (one question for each group)

Question 1: How might we improve our communication especially with the following:-

- Under-represented groups in Chepstow U3A.
- 'pre-retirement' possible members.

Responses:

Leaflet drops could be considered

SAGA, Age Concern, Doctors' surgeries and Facebook might be good opportunities for promotion

An article in the Forest Review might attract new members

Coffee mornings and face-to-face discussions could be effective

It would be important to promote the health and social benefits and use catchy material to help overcome the wrong perception that U3A has an academic bias

Question 2: More social activities have been requested by some members. We organise:- an Inter Group Quiz, Wine Tasting, Away Days, Skittles

- should some of these be more often?
- are there other social activities we could offer?
- how could we organise and co-ordinate social activities?

Responses:

It was felt that quizzes required a lot of effort, so perhaps two per year

The frequency of wine tasting was thought to be about right

For away days, there could be better coordination between group-organised activities and centrally organised ones.

For skittles, it was felt that the skittles groups should decide whether the frequency is appropriate

Consideration should be given to broadening the participation in social activities to include outside people or groups

U3A participation in community initiatives such as the Big Lunch could be considered

More interaction with schools or youth groups

Themed trips (engineering, races, cricket, football)

A knock-out quiz

A members' forum for ad-hoc activities

Facebook/WhatsApp groups

Question 3: There have been requests for activities at other times. Saturday? Sunday afternoon events/activities? What are your ideas about weekend events?

Responses:

It is important to recognise that individuals may have specific issues for or against weekend/evening sessions including family commitments; 'empty' days (such as Sundays); concerns about returning home late at night; public transport issues.

The group could not assess the likely popularity of evening/weekend events and suggested using the magazine and group conveners to sound out interest. Contact groups (as suggested above) could also be used.

Question 4: We have a website, a monthly magazine, a monthly meeting, a monthly coffee morning and email. Are there further ways we could raise the awareness of the purpose and activities of U3A in the local community?

Responses:

A greater presence/involvement in the Chepstow show

Via South Wales Argus or other local press articles

Facebook

Doctors' surgeries (noted that Chepstow hospital promotes U3A)

Magazines in hairdressers

More posters – possible redesign to refresh

Evening groups possibly inviting schools groups to joint sessions (e.g. GCSE art students) for mutual benefit

Presence at the bandstand in summer

What's On

Parish Magazines articles

Activity days with community focus e.g. litter picking, weeding planted areas or cleaning the subway

Tap into social isolation initiatives e.g. via GPs

Use of bi-lingual logo

Question 5: Is there anything that we are not doing that you think we should be doing?

Response:

It was felt that this had generally been addressed in the first discussion session and the responses to the previous questions and the feedback forms.

Feedback Form Summary:

1. New conveners found it very useful, gained lots of ideas and enjoyed meeting so many others.
2. Many found the clarity of information on conveners' role and on management of Beacon especially useful.
3. Big emphasis from conveners on having a presence in local newspapers and magazines.
4. Finding ways of emphasising to the community of the benefits of social interaction.
5. 'The Contact Group' was suggested to follow up anything social including days out, visits, theatre, cinema, someone to go with, community events.
6. Develop links with Chepstow Society
7. Many conveners liked the outward looking emphasis.
8. Publicising what we do including use of logos, car stickers.
9. Some questions overlapped points already made. It was too long.
10. More specific targets to achieve in group discussion needed.
11. Make use of the microphones. Some found it difficult to hear everything.