

**Cotswold Link u3a network**  
**Minutes of half yearly meeting held via Zoom**  
**on 23 March 2022**

**Present:**

Sue Russell (chair), Ann Kelly (treasurer), Marion Collighan (secretary) Jeremy Furtado (committee member), Jenny Harrison (committee member + Ledbury).  
Chris Hucker (Hereford), Peter McNamara (Leominster), Jim Christie (Ross-on-Wye), Theresa Howard & Mike Byrne (Bromsgrove), Gay Enoch (Droitwich), Chris Wolstencroft (Evesham & District), Sally Whyte (Persore), Alan Russell (Worcester), Pam Davis & Myrtle Moreton-Cox (Cam, Dursley & District), Janet Ropner, Chris Wardle & Ken Inglis (Cheltenham), Roger Streatfield & Jane Moore (Churchdown), Anne Vardy (Cirencester), Gerald Robins (Gloucester), Alun Davies (North Cotswolds), Joan Toon (Stroud), Duncan Fraser (Tewkesbury), Phil Hawthorn (Winchcombe).  
Allan Walmsley (Regional Trustee West Midlands), Susan Parker (Regional Trustee South West).

**Apologies:**

Mike Philpot (Webmaster), Paul Clark (Bourton), Carmel Burton (Tetbury), Norman Taylor (Thornbury) Sally Ferrers (Bishops Cleeve), Michael Vann (Fairford & District) Laurence Wale (Worcester), Lesley Brook (Leominster), Clive Harper (Gloucester), Richard Phillips (Malvern), Ian Barber (Tewkesbury), Deborah Andrews (Evesham & District), Sue Gibson (Cam, Dursley & District), Jenny Mackelworth (Winchcombe), Marilyn Reynolds (Ross-on-Wye), Jackie Jolley (Persore).

**1) Introduction from the Cotswold Link Chair**

Jeremy Furtado, substituting for the chair, welcomed everyone to this half yearly meeting. He asked the participants if there were any who objected to the meeting being recorded to make the secretary's job easier. The recording would be deleted within the next fortnight. There were no objections.

**2) Minutes of half yearly meeting 24 March 2021.**

No issues were raised with the minutes from the previous half yearly meeting in October 2021 and they were agreed as a true record.

**3) Report from the regional trustee for the South West – Susan Parker**

Susan advised that 3 networks/u3as within the SW each bought a copse (100 trees) for the u3a anniversary wood and another copse was bought for the SW region as a whole.

2 hybrid regional meetings have been held since lockdown has eased, moving around locations in the region. She is looking for a venue closer to the Cotswold Link area for the next hybrid meeting in June. She really likes meeting people face-to-face and finds that it is easier to encourage people to volunteer than over Zoom. There are many opportunities for members to volunteer across the wider u3a movement, which does not take away from finding volunteers within individual u3as.

She tries not to send too many mails for circulation on to u3as. As well as mails for committee members, she occasionally sends mails that she asks to be forwarded to members and she would appreciate it if u3as could do this.

There were no questions.

#### **4) Report from the regional trustee for the West Midlands – Allan Walmsley**

Allan reported that on 22<sup>nd</sup> March the WM held a regional conference on “A day of inspiring lives” celebrating peoples achievements in later life. The highlights for him had been a presentation on the science of ageing (which has been added to the WM website, along with other material from the day) and a surprise appearance by the comedian Don MacLean.

Nationally he knows that communications within the u3a are a challenge. The Trust is trying to develop a strategy to keep up with the pace of change over the last 40 years. They are trying to find ways of presenting the u3a movement as a single entity. The movement is very fragmented with many u3as not sharing great ideas. Networks play a critical role in communication and developing u3as. He encouraged the Cotswold Link to try to stimulate interest, bring u3as together and address the problems people have.

Learning channels are being expanded to supplement those available in individual u3as. The Trust wants u3a members to know that they can get involved at many levels within the movement.

The Trust are also promoting, at all levels of the movement, collaboration with other organisations who have similar messages to promote the interests of the u3a, for example Specsavers.

Trust u3a has 1,100 members and 85 interest groups. It is a place where members who want to take part in Niche activities can be brought together. It is planned to incorporate Trust u3a within the National learning programme.

Allan then invited questions and comments.

In response to a question from Anne Vardy, Allan explained that a few u3as have left the movement (but not in the SW or WM) and that the Isle of Wight was the last to leave.

Joan Toon asked if anybody collaborated with Neighbourhood Watch. Allan replied that he had not heard of anybody doing this but thinks it is a good idea. He added that the Trust are currently looking into how they might collaborate with the community-based activity of the Co-operative Society.

Allan mentioned that he will be speaking at the TUC conference to their retired members to promote the u3a. Phil Hawthorne shared that Winchcombe have collaborated with the Parish council for an entry in their magazine, which is left in

doctors surgeries. They also organise a showcase event for the groups once a year and ask each member to bring somebody else along. In this way they have managed to grow their membership. Janet Ropner mentioned that she has started speaking at NHS pre-retirement courses and is trying to arrange something similar with other large employers near Cheltenham. Jeremy suggested collaboration between groups of u3as in promoting the movement.

Allan pointed out the other organisations are often keen to work with u3as. Joan pointed out that it is important that u3as get enough benefit from any collaboration.

## **5) Upcoming Events in the region**

### **a) Special Interest Day – 6<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

Marion advised that the flyer for the Special Interest Day is nearly ready and will be sent out in the next couple of days. This will be at the Pavilion in Cheltenham on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> July on the theme of Mitigating Climate Change & Environmental Impacts. She gave a brief overview of the speakers and topics to be included. The day is open to members of all u3as within the Cotswold Link and will cost £20, including lunch. There is a deadline for booking but there is a maximum number of participants, so it is best for people to book early if they are able.

### **b) Visit of Liz Thackray (Chair of the Third Age Trust) – 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

Marion advised that Liz, accompanied by Susan Parker, will be visiting members of several groups within Cheltenham u3a on the morning of Monday 18<sup>th</sup> July. Liz will then speak at the Bishop's Cleeve u3a monthly meeting on the afternoon of Monday 18<sup>th</sup> July. On the morning of Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July, they will visit members of Stroud u3a followed by Cirencester u3a. Susan added that they will be driving to Chippenham on Tuesday afternoon but have no appointments, so are flexible when they leave. She is trying to find a very small u3a for Liz to visit on the morning of Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> July before they join Chippenham u3a on the afternoon of Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> July.

Susan agreed with Ann Vardy from Cirencester u3a that they have no hard deadline for heading south, so they are flexible about the time they leave. Marion pointed out that Tetbury u3a have already been asked and advised that they would not be able to be involved in Liz's visit.

### **c) Robot Constructors challenge - 26<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

Jeremy advised that this is being hosted by Gloucester u3a, who have booked a venue in Churchdown. Other neighbouring u3as are helping and are part of the organising committee. He will be circulating more info when it is available.

The challenge will be run along the same lines as the event in 2019 by Cannock Chase. Jeremy requests that the challenge is advertised to

members.

## 6) Air and share

### i. Using Beacon for membership renewal

Chris Wardle explained that about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of Cheltenham members renewed manually this year due to difficulties using the Beacon portal for the renewal process. This was in spite of giving members very detailed instructions on what to do and providing them with all the data items they need on an email. She wondered if others u3as had experienced similar problems and whether u3as help each other out with the renewal process.

Others agreed that they had also encountered problems. Suggestions for improving the process included:

- Clean up the membership record in Beacon to make sure there are no spaces or other extraneous data that will cause problems.
- Have a team to help with the manual renewals so that the membership secretary does not need to process them alone.

Alan Russell explained that he is on the committee overseeing changes and knows that that code changes to allow renewal using just a username and password are being worked on.

Jeremy wondered if it would be possible to introduce batch process of renewals. Alan replied that this is done when u3as migrate to Beacon but would introduce too much complexity in other circumstances.

## 7) AOB

There was no other business.

## 8) Date and time of next meeting

The next AGM should take place in Sept/Oct 2022 and is scheduled to be hosted by Leominster u3a, subject to their agreement.

Signed..... Date .....