

**Cotswold Link u3a network**  
**Minutes of half yearly meeting held via Zoom**  
**on 27 October 2021**

**Present:**

Jeremy Furtado (chair), Dennis Chamberlain (treasurer), Marion Collighan (secretary), Sue Russell (committee member + Worcester), Clive Harper (committee member + Gloucester), Jenny Harrison (committee member + Ledbury), Ann Kelly (Worcester).  
Jim Christie (Ross-on-Wye), Mike Byrne (Bromsgrove), Gay Enoch (Droitwich), Jill Wilson (Pershore), Deborah Andrews, Alison Williams & David Keeling (Evesham), Susan Gibson & Pam Davis (Cam & Dursley), Ken Inglis, Janet Ropner & Chris Wardle (Cheltenham), Roger Streatfield (Churchdown), Anne Vardy & Andrew Williams (Cirencester), Michael Vann (Fairford), Joan Toon (Stroud), Duncan Fraser (Tewksbury), Jenny Mackelworth & Paul McDonald (Winchcombe), Denis Riley (Gloucester).  
Alison May (National Office), Allan Walmsley (Regional Trustee West Midlands), Susan Parker (Regional Trustee South West).

**Apologies:**

Mike Philpot (webmaster), Lesley Brook (Leominster), Richard Phillips (Malvern), Paul Clark (Bourton), Carmel Burton (Tetbury), Norman Taylor (Thornbury), Alun Davies (North Cotswold), Sally Ferrers (Bishops Cleeve), Eileen Richmond (Bromyard).

**1. Welcome from the Cotswold Link Chair**

Jeremy Furtado, as 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.

Jeremy then made a few initial comments as follows:

- Bromyard u3a have advised that they are in the process of winding up as they could not find any new committee members. He stressed the importance of asking for help early if a u3a is experiencing problems that might affect their ability to continue, either from a nearby larger u3a, Cotswold link or the regional trustee.
- Sadly, the Cotswold link webmaster David Barrett died suddenly a few months ago. Mike Philpot of Ledbury has agreed to take over as webmaster.
- In July three Zoom talks had been arranged to replace the usual Special Interest Day. The subjects were Robots, Staffordshire Hoard and Gloucester Odyssey.
- Cotswold link had also taken part in Netfest and attended both regional meetings and the national Network link meeting.

Jeremy explained that during the talks from the regional trustees he would like people to direct question through the chat to Ann Kelly and similarly during the talk by Alison May to direct questions through the chat to Sue Russell. Joan Toon expressed her unhappiness that this seemed to preclude asking questions verbally.

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

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

## **3. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the March 2021 half yearly meeting.

## **4. News from the committee**

### **i. Cotswold link fee for 2022**

Dennis explained that the annual levy for Cotswold link is £14 per u3a, which would normally be requested at the end of 2021 to cover 2022. In 2021 the levy was waived due to the pandemic. The committee target to keep a minimum of £1,000 in the bank account and currently there is about £1,300. Therefore, it is proposed to waive the levy again for 2022, so that the levy paid at the end of 2020 will effectively cover 3 years. However, he advised that for 2023 it is expected to request the levy as normal.

### **ii. Update of Constitution for AGM 2022**

Marion explained that the committee felt that the current constitution, which was agreed in 2017, needs to be updated. The intention is to revise the constitution to be more in line with the Small Network Charity Constitution supplied by Third Age Trust. The companion document on how the link is run will also be updated and will contain those items that apply specifically to Cotswold Link and reflect its aims, objectives and principal activities but are not naturally part of a constitution.

The current documents can be found on the Cotswold link website. A revised draft constitution document and a document on “how the link is run” is currently being worked on by the committee. Member u3as will be sent a copy for comment as soon as it is ready. The intention is to have a version of the constitution ready for a vote at the AGM 2022, after review by the u3as and by Third Age Trust.

Joan asked if it was intended to allow for proxy voting. Marion replied that it was not the intention to allow for proxy voting, as each u3a should hopefully be able to field at least one delegate at the AGM.

Jeremy suggested that if people have specific things they would like to see in the constitution they should let Marion know. He proposed to check whether the revised constitution will formalise the voting process and advise Joan.

### **iii. Forthcoming committee changes at AGM**

Jeremy advised that the chair and treasurer will be stepping down at the AGM, having completed their term. There are people who are willing to stand for these positions but if a u3a has an alternative candidate they can of course

propose them. Proposal forms can be obtained from Marion.

Jeremy added that a full Cotswold Link committee is 6 persons and currently only 5 persons have agreed to stand. Marion asked u3as to consider if they have any members who would be willing to stand as an ordinary member to complete the committee.

Joan asked what an ordinary committee member would have to do and if there is a specific role. Jeremy replied that he will undertake to discuss the roles and responsibilities of the various committee members within the committee meetings in the period leading up to the AGM. Jeremy suggested that ordinary committee members might get involved in organisation of the Special Interest Day or attending meetings on behalf of the link. There is also increased activity in terms of participation in networks and actions coming from trustees meetings.

iv. Schedule for hosting of Cotswold link Half Yearly meetings

Marion explained that a schedule for hosting Cotswold link half yearly meetings exists, which shows dates for several years. She displayed this and will attach the current version to the minutes.

Janet Ropner asked if it would be possible to hold hybrid half yearly meetings to enable those unable or unwilling to travel to be present. Jeremy agreed to look into this with the u3a scheduled to host the meeting.

v. Updating the Website

Jeremy explained that our new webmaster, Mike Philpot, has been very active updating the website. He has removed out of date information and generally tidied up the content. Jeremy particularly highlighted the link to "u3acommunities.org", which contains various special interest links. He encouraged members to take a look at the revamped website.

Jenny Harrison pointed out that the webmaster relies on u3as feeding him material for the website.

Joan asked if we could post details of good speakers at past meetings on the website. Jeremy will ask Mike to look into putting this information on the website. Susan Parker pointed out that there is a list of speakers on the SW region website, which have been submitted by members and other recommendations can be submitted to the webmaster.

vi. Special Interest Day 2022

Jeremy explained that it is intended to hold an in-person Special interest day, as normal, in 2022. The committee have provisionally booked the Pavilion in Cheltenham for Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> July. Jeremy is looking for some u3a members to collaborate in organising the special interest day, with the help of the committee. In particular, ideas for a theme for the day and suggestions for

speakers are needed.

Jeremy stressed that the organisation should be done early, as people are often slow to book and there will be a limit on numbers at an indoor venue. Joan commented that in her experience people book more quickly if they know that places are limited.

Ken Inglis suggested the theme of the Environment and Climate Change. He thinks there would be a chance of getting a speaker from the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust at Slimbridge to explain what they are doing in this field. Jeremy suggested that this idea was circulated but mentioned that Kennet & Avon u3a had arranged a day in ~~Marlborough~~ ~~Weymouth~~ on this subject in 2020, which had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. Jeremy suggested that if Ken formally submits this idea it will be circulated to all the member u3as.

## **5. Report from the regional trustee for the West Midlands – Allan Walmsley**

Allan reported that things have been very busy for the trustees with changes in personnel. The new officers of the Trust and national committee members are bringing fresh ideas and questioning existing practices. The Trust would like to encourage ordinary u3a members to take part at national level more widely, so that the work can be spread over more people. Adverts are often placed in TAM or the electronic magazine. Susan Parker mentioned that some u3as don't publicise these opportunities to their members as they are worried about losing candidates for their own committees, which she does not think is true.

Consultation on the future strategy has been taking place and many members have already contributed. Details can be found on the national website under "About/Principles and Vision" and it is still possible to send ideas to [Strategy@u3a.org.uk](mailto:Strategy@u3a.org.uk).

A Network link meeting took place on 12<sup>th</sup> October and Sue Russell is now involved in the organisation of Network link.

In the WM a successful Philosophy week was held and it is hoped to hold a similar week with a different theme. The WM Newsletter "Connect" is published monthly and sent to u3a chairs in the region.

Some u3as in the WM are struggling but most do ask for help early, which allows advice to be given.

Trust u3a was set up as an online u3a about 18 months ago. It has about 1,000 members, about half of which are new to u3a with half already belonging to a local u3a. Interest groups can often be formed that would not get enough members at a local level. Trust u3a is considered very successful and the principle of having interest groups in this format is to be continued, in connection with the national learning programme on the website.

Joan commented that she is a member of Trust u3a and thinks it is good for members who can't access venues easily. People can also contact others from the same part of the country and can arrange to meet up if they wish.

Jeremy asked whether the regional organisation structure should be reconsidered and noted that the SW (in particular) is a very large region geographically. He would like to see closer links between u3as that are located near each other.

Susan Parker pointed out that she has subdivided the SW region into 3 sub-regions to make it easier for the regional team to support u3as.

Allan pointed out that there are no boundaries and u3as can make links with whoever they wish. Susan pointed out that regional meetings facilitate the creation of links between u3as.

Jeremy will plan to discuss within Gloucester the possibility of wider local interactions. Janet Ropner mentioned that some very specialist groups from Cheltenham, e.g., Genetic genealogy, are planning to reach out to neighbouring u3as. Jeremy suggested that Gloucester take on Cheltenham at petanque and Janet will put him in touch with the Cheltenham group leader.

## **6. Report from the regional trustee for the South West – Susan Parker**

Susan reminded anybody working on the anniversary quilt that they should submit their entries as the deadline is approaching. She encouraged people to send a picture of their creation to the SW region webmaster, Malcolm Tulip, even if they are not planning to formally enter the competition.

Susan reminded that Sue Stokes is doing a presentation on 4<sup>th</sup> November on PR to u3as in the SW and people are encouraged to sign-up. She encourages u3as to develop PR teams rather than trying to find one person to do it all.

Susan wants to encourage members within the SW to combine to buy trees for the u3a anniversary wood. This would allow us to have a copse (100 trees) in a known location so people could visit it. She will advise us if she finds out how this could be done in terms of finances. She reminded that u3a funds cannot be contributed, the donation must come from individual members.

Anne Vardy asked how members can get involved with the u3a wood and pay for trees if they are not on the internet. Also, she would like to know who owns the trees that have been purchased.

Allan advised that a member buying a tree is making a charitable donation and does not own a physical tree. An agent buys the trees on behalf of the Trust and plants and manages them for 12 years, after which the trees should be self-sufficient.

Jeremy suggested that people could buy their own trees independently and plant them.

Allan replied that most managed schemes would work in a similar way to the Trust's and the point is to provide an easy way to contribute and to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Alison stressed that donations for trees must not go through the accounts of the u3a. Andrew Williams concluded that it seems like the best way for members to participate was to donate in the way suggested by the Trust.

## **7. Talk by Alison May, Head of Member Services at National Office**

Alison gave an informative talk on Member Services, which is one of 3 departments within the Trust. The other 2 departments are Internal Services and Policy and Communications. Member Services deals with Learning, Events, Advice and Information, Volunteering Support and Beacon. Alison has 7 team members, some part time. The remit of Member Services is to promote and facilitate learning and details of the various activities were given, including website links. The slides will be circulated with the minutes.

Attracting new committee members is one of the most difficult topics for u3as at the moment. There are ideas on the website and it is suggested to stress that committees take collective responsibility and new committee members will have support from others.

Alison explained that there are ideas on the website about growing the membership under "Support for u3as/Growth Matters". Clive Harper noted that when he is talking to people about joining u3a one of the first things they normally ask is "What does it stand for?". He finds that they are put off by the word "University" and wonders if there are discussions about changing this. Anne Vardy agreed with these comments.

Alison pointed out that the word "University" has been dropped, except in exceptional circumstances. Susan noted that it would be difficult and very expensive to change the name legally.

It was suggested that members should reply to the question by talking about what the u3a does when asked what u3a stands for. Jeremy mentioned that he always describes the u3a as a "self-help learning co-operative".

## **8. Air and share**

### **i. Sharing activities**

Mike Byrne noted that pre-covid the u3as within the Cotswold link generally had reciprocal arrangements for members of other u3a. During the pandemic some u3a have been opening their Zoom activities to members of other u3as more widely. He wonders if the reciprocal arrangements should be formally extended in respect of monthly meetings or membership of groups. He would also like to see more use of hybrid meetings in the future.

Jenny Mackelworth points out that many groups are at capacity and it would not be right of allow members from other u3as at the expense of their own members. People who want to join more than one group can easily join more than one u3a. Joan pointed out that for specialist subjects to get a big enough group might require collaboration between u3as.

Jenny Harrison points out that reciprocal arrangements are not in the Cotswold link constitution.

ii. Safeguarding

Janet Ropner advised that Cheltenham have just approved a new safeguarding policy, based on the template provided by the Trust. They found it quite difficult to agree this and wondered what others are doing, particularly in the context of training for group leaders once the policy is agreed.

Susan Parker pointed out that there is a national Safeguarding workshop that people can attend. Alison commented that the problem with training sessions on safeguarding is that the people who sign up are already motivated around the topic and it's really important to also reach those who know less about it.

Alison advised that the Trust are looking to update the template and that it is important to focus on the actions that need to be taken. Susan suggested that training on safeguarding might be combined with training on diversity and inclusion. There seem to be some conflicts between the safeguarding advice and the diversity and inclusion advice.

Joan noted that safeguarding is the responsibility of all members and group leaders should not be made to feel that it is their responsibility or it will become even more difficult to find people to lead groups.

Alison noted that every u3a should have a safeguarding policy as the Charity Commission require safeguarding to be addressed. There is information on safeguarding on the national website under "running your u3a".

Alison pointed out that safeguarding is about protecting vulnerable people, it is not connected to risk assessments. Risk assessments have to be prepared in relation to an activity, they can't be prepared specifically in relation to the person taking part. If a person might not be able to take part in an activity then a discussion needs to take place with them.

iii. Potential use of disability information

Chris Wardle noted that we are encouraged to accommodate members with special requirements but there is nowhere in the Beacon system to record special requirements advised to the membership secretary in a systematic way.

Alison advised that special member requirements should not be added to the member record unless the member specifically requests it. We should keep the minimum information necessary about a person and allow the minimum number of people possible to see it. Members should be advised to inform the group leader of any groups they join about their requirements, if this is relevant to their participation.

**9. AOB**

There was no other business.

**10. Date and time of next meeting**

It is intended to hold an in-person meeting, which Stroud have agreed to host. The proposed date is 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022.

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