

Monthly Meeting Info on 5 April 2024

April's monthly meeting was jam-packed with information, so pour yourself a cuppa, put your feet up and read on!

- if you know of a u3a member who doesn't have email, please do your best to share these Updates - thank you
- things have moved on even since yesterday, so I'll stick to notes from the meeting in this email then post new issues in a separate Update 2 of 2

1. Hospital Radio and beyond

You will possibly recall that Mary Chow had put us in touch with Prince Bishops Hospital Radio and I'd been invited to join Dennis Duncan for a one-hour slot during his breakfast show to promote our u3a. I managed to get the main messages across:

- that we welcome all who are no longer in full-time work
- that we have monthly meetings as well as activity groups
- that we're run by members for members and new ideas for groups and activities would be welcome and supported if viable

The radio is broadcast not only at Darlington Memorial Hospital but also at Bishop Auckland Hospital and The Richardson at Barnard Castle, so the patients / relatives / staff listening may well be more interested in joining a neighbouring u3a than travelling to us at Darlington. Consequently I mentioned our neighbours at Bishop Auckland, Sedgfield, South Durham at Cockerton and Teesdale at Barnard Castle and explained how to contact them.

As a courtesy I contacted the relevant Chairs and got enthusiastic responses from all, but also an invitation to Teesdale's next monthly meeting and to meet up for a coffee with the Chair of South Durham.

I went to Barnard Castle's meeting last week and had a great time with some lovely people; consequently we are invited to join Teesdale on several days out - **information attached** - but please note their coaches leave Barnard Castle at 9am or 9:45am. If you're interested please contact me so I can pass requests on. They are down to their last few places so don't delay if you want to go.

South Durham are keen to explore networking; we had already thought it would be good to invite them to take up places on any trips we run to make them viable - but their Chair wondered if it would be possible for our members to join their walking groups perhaps, and of course it would be good to have extra members in some of our own groups that are struggling to cover costs.

Both South Durham and we need to discuss practicalities as a Committee, and also consult our Group Leaders for their thoughts, so it will be a little while before we can begin. But ... it's an exciting opportunity for both groups to benefit from goodwill and networking.

2. Committee Meeting

Following our Planning Meeting in February, our first Committee Meeting was in March.

In brief, we discussed

- insurance for coach trips; we had already been advised by the u3a Office that filling places with friends / family / other organisations would negate our insurance and the only solution was to book smaller coaches (usually disproportionately expensive) or offer places to neighbouring u3as. The Committee agreed that the latter solution would work for us, especially with South Durham where central pick-ups wouldn't be a problem.
- two proposed new groups and a summer event were approved in principle - see more information in **3. Updates and Developments** below.
- the Development plan was briefly discussed and updated

The meeting concluded with a visit from Cecilia Coulson who is the Chair of u3a's Northern Region. □Cecilia explained how Region was organised and staffed (all volunteers), and as well as monthly trips (Hartlepool Naval Museum, Little Theatre, Music Festival etc) and quizzes, they also have Groups both physical and online covering topics where a single u3a probably couldn't support a local group ... for example

- o Creative Writing
- o IT
- o Real Ale
- o Geology
- o Birdwatching

To find out more take a look at the Regional site:- <https://u3asites.org.uk/northumbria/events>

3. Updates and Developments

Ken Bowman has taken on the task of compiling an Asset Register to try to record the whereabouts of u3a equipment which was kindly stored by members following our hurried departure from Bondgate. If you're housing any u3a equipment - used or stored - thank you! and please let Ken know.

Ken has also taken on the task of compiling Health & Safety and Safeguarding Policies on behalf of the Committee. As Ken says, it is basically common sense and what we should all be doing - taking care of each other - but the documents have to meet the criteria laid down by the Charities' Commission. The most sensible way to achieve this is to use u3a Office model Policies, customised to meet our needs. He's still tweaking but will present the Drafts to members for comments and approval before finalising.

In Steve Keeney's absence Ken reminded members that the next History Group is Members' Day on Wednesday 24 April when Steve himself will give a talk on Finchale Priory and St Godric +/- contributions from others.

Mary Chow promoted Rummikub which is twice monthly on a Thursday morning at the Friends' Meeting House.

With regard to the proposed Website on a new platform, she had received only one volunteer following her appeal for an assistant at the last meeting. That volunteer is me (Victoria) which is far from ideal given how many other things I'm involved with, but we had to have two people going forward for training which Mary and I are undertaking next week. Sheila

Greener has volunteered to proof-read / edit the website which will be a great help, but other volunteers to support Mary would be very welcome.

Victoria Laing I The next Lunch Club is on Friday, 3rd May at Oven in Duke Street. Bookings with menu choices must be in by Wednesday, 24th April. The cost is Starters & Desserts £3.50 and Mains £8.95 plus any supplements noted on the menu **attached**.

The following Lunch Club is on Friday, 7th June at The Devonport in Middleton One Row. We are awaiting the final menu and costs which will be more expensive than Oven, so come to both and have two cracking meals for a very reasonable average cost!!

Sue Murton announced a proposed **New Members' Group** to welcome new and recent recruits. More details to follow.

Sue also announced a **Summer Picnic** to be held in July before the school holidays. Again, more details to follow.

Victoria Laing II floated the idea of a **MOTO** group - a group for Members On Their Own (or whose spouses / partners cannot or do not socialise with them). The idea is to meet up at a cafe for a cuppa and maybe cake and just chat. Hopefully, as well as having some lively company, members might agree to go to the pictures / theatre together join one of our group activities together go for a walk followed by a pint (or more cake) ... you've got the gist! Where this has worked, the spin-off activity has been equal to or outweighed the social aspect of the group itself.

Sue had learned of some MOTO groups which have failed because members only attended now and again and/or didn't seize the opportunity to buddy-up and undertake other activities. So ... the only thing we can do is try and hope it's a success. Following the meeting we had ten expressions of interest, so worth giving it a whirl.

Initially I am happy to co-ordinate the first meeting or two but then hopefully the group itself will decide when to meet / how often / where. To start with though, we need feedback as to whether it would be best to go for a weekend afternoon, or maybe Thursday pm when there are no other groups to conflict? Possibly Binns would be a good starting venue - it's spacious and central, and always very gracious with our Coffee Club meetings there.

Please let me know if you're interested, and if so, your thoughts on which afternoon would be best.

And finally **Housekeeping**.

We need two people at each Monthly Meeting **to dispense Tea and Coffee**. If we could get 6 volunteers they would only need to take a turn every three months. (More volunteers = even fewer times.). Please let **Glenda Nelson** know if you would be happy to do your bit - it would be appreciated.

The Dolphin Centre are continuing to recover from the effects of the Pandemic and now need to use the Studio for the fitness classes for which it was designed. Consequently we will

move to the Central Hall on the top floor for our Monthly Meetings. We can use the side door on Bull Wynd and get the lift directly to the Hall.

Monthly Meetings: Friday, 3rd May in The Studio as usual

Friday, 7th June in Central Hall - enter by the side door on Bull Wynd or front door as usual, past the Bistro, then lift or stairs to the top floor

That's all for the moment folks, but please keep an eye out for the next email with info on outings, a holiday, theatre seats and a request for volunteers ...

regards
Victoria