



## Falkirk and District U3A Newsletter

May 2020



Editor – John Giovanacci

[j.giovanacci@sky.com](mailto:j.giovanacci@sky.com)

### From the Chair

Dear Members,

I hope you are all well and are not finding the current crisis too overwhelming. Crisis is a word often used too freely, however in the current circumstances it surely applies.

As the government's social distancing measures continue the Trustees Committee wanted to advise our members of our future operating arrangements for the remainder of 2020. I hope everybody understands why we are taking the proposed measures, but I would strongly encourage anybody that wishes to raise any points, suggestions or objections to use the queries form on the CONTACT page of our website.

The Trustees Committee agreed on the following key points. Our primary aims were to ensure our members remain safe, in accordance with government advice, and to enable our U3A to function until such time as circumstances allow a return to a more normal situation, whatever that may be.

1. Falkirk and District U3A is continuing to function during this difficult period and is intending to continue operating for the foreseeable future.
2. We continue to get helpful advice from Third Age Trust and OSCR. Members will continue to receive the Third Age Matters magazine, next due out the end of June
3. We do not know how long, or what form future lockdown will be, however it is likely that older people will continue to be in a shielded group, and this represents a large % of our members.
4. Under the current social isolation regulations, we will not be able to convene a quorum at the AGM scheduled for June 2020 and need to postpone it for that reason. Members will be given due notice when we believe it can be held. Meantime, all our Trustees and co-opted members will stay in post with their current roles and responsibilities.
5. Once lockdown is lifted people may not want to mix in larger groups, until they feel safe
6. We want to protect our membership numbers and to have a U3A to return to once members feel ready
7. Also due to current lockdown measures the Registration meeting scheduled for September will not take place. The Trustees have decided to carry forward to 2020-21 the membership for all current members. All existing members will be automatically renewed in September. No membership cards will be issued.
8. No Membership Subscription will be required at membership renewal. We will waive our Membership Subscription of £20 for 2020-21 until such time current restrictions have been lifted and it is clearer how our U3A will be for the remainder of 2020-21.
9. Any new members will be charged a reduced membership fee.

**Registered Charity No. SCO48974**

10. The existing Trustees Committee members will continue in their roles for 2020-21. Any member wishing to become a Trustee should contact our Secretary, Sheila, at [mackeys598@gmail.com](mailto:mackeys598@gmail.com)
11. We are fulfilling all OSCR requirements as a registered charity
12. The Committee would be grateful for any feedback from members, using the queries form on the CONTACT section of the website <https://u3asites.org.uk/falkirk/welcome>
13. Please continue to check our Facebook page for updates <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FalkirkandDistrictU3A/>

As time progresses, and restrictions are lifted, the Trustees Committee will keep members updated. However it would seem we may all be in this crisis for the foreseeable future. This does not mean that our U3A is necessarily totally suspended. I am aware that some groups are using technology to keep in touch and it may be that one of our members would like to take in the role of co-ordinating these initiatives to ensure all of our members have the opportunity to get involved and keep in touch. I would be very pleased to hear from anybody that has ideas.

In the meantime – Keep Safe.

**Glenn Merrett**

#### **Update from Marion, Interest Groups Co-ordinator**

In these challenging times some of our groups have been suspended to safeguard our members. A couple of groups are using Skype and Zoom to maintain contact with their group attendees, and others are calling and emailing to keep in touch.

As it is unclear when we will be able to return to group meetings, and what format this will take when the restrictions have been lifted, I will speak to all the group leaders and see what their intentions are in regards to restarting their groups. I envisage that it will be quite some time before we all feel comfortable meeting in groups due to restrictions on certain age groups and people with pre-existing conditions. It is understandable that we may have changed our social habits and routines these last few weeks, and our main priority is your health, safety and wellbeing. Please contact me on [marionmerrett@gmail.com](mailto:marionmerrett@gmail.com) if you wish to discuss anything regarding Interest Groups.

#### **Update from Louise, Membership Secretary**

Membership stands at 145 this year. This is a small increase on last year's figures. Most people joined at our September 2019 Registration Meeting. Others joined at our Monthly Open Meetings but unfortunately these meetings had to cease in March due to the present Covid-19 lockdown. At present, it seems most unlikely that government restrictions will be lifted in time for a September 2020 Registration Meeting. Therefore, the Trustees have decided that all existing members will remain as members until such times as current government restrictions have been lifted and it is clearer as to how Falkirk & District U3A can go forward for the remainder of 2020-21.

#### **Update from Archie, Speakers and Open Meetings Secretary**

The speakers for the latter part of the year who did not get an opportunity to speak were asked if I could keep their name on file for future use to which they agreed. I am not inclined to approach any new speakers until there is clarity on when we can have open meetings. In the meantime, I will start to compile a list of possible speakers.

**Registered Charity No. SCO48974**

## **Update from Sandra, Development Secretary**

The future of our organisation is in all our hands and we will probably have to think of new and innovative ways to function, keeping people engaged with our attempts at finding fun filled activities. It seems likely that for those of a certain age, many with underlying health conditions this will require changes, but not necessarily for the worse or by sacrificing what makes our lives fulfilled. Life has always evolved to embrace new technologies and new ways of working. So if social distancing is with us until the roll out of a vaccine , treatment or herd immunity we should think of our how to enjoy and give meaning to the life we currently experience.

Some Interest Groups are continuing on line, and I know the Current Affairs Group is as vibrant as ever, although without the tea and scones and Brexit taking front of stage. Our environment is certainly a lot quieter and there are more birds to be heard, flowers to be appreciated and new sciences to be explored. Lots of our groups could function really well via Zoom and not only will we continue to be engaged with friends but will learn lots of new skills.

Garden Birds: could we perhaps map the birds in our garden, or seen during a daily walk, while actually hearing their bird song. Nature continues despite human intervention, so perhaps we can involve neighbours and friends in a communal effort. Include and involve those not currently members of our organisation and experience a life beyond the virus. If we have any members who have some knowledge of garden birds then we can all come together with photographs, species and the sounds of local birds.

We may be unable to go to garden Centres but many will come to us. In May Bonnyview and Torwood Garden Centres are trying to set up a delivery service. Perhaps members know of others and we can pass that onto members.

So please keep checking on our website and we will attempt to think differently and find our new normal until this pandemic is over.

## **Financial overview**

We have sufficient financial reserves to enable us to cover foreseeable costs until June 2021, when the next operational year ends. Whilst the current membership fee has been temporarily waived, should fuller activities recommence the Trustees reserve the right to review membership fees. The only expenses currently forecast cover the regular payments that we make to U3A Scotland and the Third Age Trust. The bulk of our other expenses generally relate to Open Meetings and associated costs.

## **U3A: Keeping In Touch**

I highly recommend this Facebook page which has been set up Nationally and has nearly 3,500 members participating with a few from Falkirk U3A having joined the page. Don't just take my word for it, Louise Westall thinks 'it's excellent, I've had a few laughs and enjoyed the puzzles, certainly worth joining' and Fiona Stewart adds 'it's so good, everyone should join'.

Check it out please, there is so much to find in the page including information, puzzles, jokes, discussions and something to keep everyone interested. Just go to the link below, click Join and you will be asked which U3A you belong to before being approved.

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/U3AKeepingInTouch/?epa=SEARCH\\_BOX](https://www.facebook.com/groups/U3AKeepingInTouch/?epa=SEARCH_BOX)

## U3A Eye Project

This is a fortnightly project to encourage members to take and submit pictures of their surroundings during this unprecedented time. The theme changes each time but it is not a competition, what we want is interesting photos, possibly a different way of showing things, anything that has captured your imagination. **The photograph must be taken during the lockdown.**

At the end of each fortnight up to 15 photos will be chosen and published on an online gallery. All you need to do is upload your photo using the form in the link below.

Already 2 of our members in Falkirk have had their photographic skill acknowledged with Janette Stevenson making the final 15 with her 'Yellow' themed picture and then to follow Arlehne Stewart made the final cut in the next theme '3'. Well done to both of them!!

Follow the link below to find out full details:-

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/u3a-eye?fbclid=IwAR0nDJgqIMT7MUtgil18YTbhpRSGRlUV0Qz6b77TubhHY0qUdtsbEv4KQIM>