



Northumbria Region U3A

Zoom Quarterly Meeting

Wednesday Monday 30th January 2023

From 10.00 to 13.00

Attendees: - Cecilia Coulson (Whickham), Joyce McKay (Bedale), Pamela Turner (Morpeth), Catherine Stevenson (Newcastle), Mike Wallace (Newcastle), Malcolm Wilkinson (Seaham Harbour), Ann Carr (Bishop Auckland), Wendy Dale (Tynedale), Diana Clark (Washington), Christa Lloyd (Wearside), John Lloyd (Wearside), Mike Hampshire (Wearside), Ian Jameson (Wearside), Hilary Shaw (Wearside), Wendy Kisby (Wearside), Carol Donald (Wearside), Chris Wright (Wearside), Ted Watt (Seaham & District), Neil Cooke (Middlesbrough), Chris O'Neill (Berwick), Rowena Redgwell (Berwick), Kelvin Rushworth (Wooler), Catherine Stevenson (Newcastle), Mary Dunning (Whitley Bay), Ian Bedwell (Whitley Bay), Ruth Beckett (South Durham), Lorraine Skeen (Derwent Valley), Evelyn Gardiner (Derwent Valley), Peter Barnett (Wessington), Arthur Coulson (Whickham), Sandi Rickerby (Regional Trustee), Derek Ginsberg (Washington Village), Pauline Palmer (Washington Village), and Mary Barlow (Sunderland).

Apologies: - Mo Brown (Wooler).

Visitors: - Catherine Butcher from VOICE, Allan Warmsley Vice Chair TAT and Regional Trustee for West Midlands.

Welcome: - Cecilia Coulson, Chair, welcomed everyone to the first meeting of 2023 and reminded everyone of Zoom etiquette.

Minutes of the Last Meeting: - Agreed as an accurate record.

Matters Arising: - Regional Support Teams' first meeting was due to take place in December unfortunately this was unable to happen for various reasons until 6th January 2023.

The Workshop on 'Where the u3a is now and where we would like to see it in the future' responses are currently being evaluated by the Regional Support Team.

Chairs Report (CC): - Unfortunately Peterlee u3a has had to close due to people not coming forward to go on the committee.

Whickham and District u3a, Prudhoe u3a and some Regional Support Team members had their first meeting two weeks ago looking at Recruitment and Retention of both Committee and new members. If this pilot is successful, then it will be rolled out and offered to other u3as who are having difficulty with recruitment.

Some Regional Committee Members and Regional Volunteers (originally called Trust Volunteers) have joined forces and are working together to visit as many u3as and Networks as possible. In the past eight months eleven u3as and Networks have been visited, to say 'Hello' either face to face or on Zoom. The first Regional Support joint meeting was early January. Workshops, Shared learning Projects, study events and much more will be discussed for the benefit of all members.

Is anyone willing to join the Regional Committee or become a Regional Volunteer? If you are interested, please contact Cecilia Coulson.

Facebook. Do you know of anyone who will be able to assist the region in setting up and maintaining a page. They do not have to be a Regional Committee member. Please email Cecilia Coulson with details of anyone who may be able to help. It is envisaged that this would not take up a great deal of anyone's time.

Members will be aware that Sitebuilder host suspended the National u3as account. Only text was saved for each u3a website, but no photos or files. Sometime this year the new host WordPress rolled out. There are trials going on at National level at the moment to see how this is going to be made available for all u3a webmasters. It is not known if any information on individual websites that are up and running can be transferred directly to WordPress. It could be a case of starting from scratch when WordPress is finally given the go ahead and training in its use will be given by TAT.

A Regional Three Year Plan for 2023 -2026 in conjunction with the aims and objectives of the Region's Constitution has been completed. It was passed by all Committee Members on the 20th January at the Committee Meeting. The Three Year Plan will be available to all members on the Region's website. The Three Year Plan will be an item on every Regional Committee agenda, so we don't lose sight of our aims.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy proforma from National is on the Region's website under the Trust News Tab. Please look at it for your own u3a.

Region is hoping to ascertain if any u3a has 'on loan' or in their possession any equipment that belongs to Region. This is so an inventory can be completed. If you do have any equipment, could you please contact Mary Barlow our Secretary via the Regions website.

It would be helpful if u3as using Beacon would inform Peter Barnett that they are using the system so that region can compile a list.

Off the Wall - National u3a is organising a Festival for Learning at The Sill, Hadrian's Wall on Wednesday May 10th. Timings are expected to be 10.30 to 3.30. There will be a small charge for the day. The programme will include lectures about the Wall, also several optional fringe activities in marquees or smaller rooms, including Roman cooking, ecology, charcoal drawing, creative writing... and anything your u3a or one of your groups might like to organise - please contact Sandi Rickerby with your offers or thoughts! Please book early for this event and all details are on the national website.

Northumbria Region u3a Creative Writers this month had their first book published. It's called Leafing Through the Seasons. Any money raised from this adventure will enable the group to put on a Creative Writing workshop for all regional members from those that have never put pen to paper to those that have some knowledge of the subject. Information on how to buy the book and boost the sales is on the Region's website under Groups and Projects tab.

National Network Link meeting. The next Zoom meeting is on 15th February 2023. More information on the Region's website under the Latest News tab.

The Regional Committee are interested in holding a quiz for all members in a suitable venue. Could members assist with the running of this event? It would get u3as socializing again. At the meeting it was pointed out that there is a regional trophy held by Mo Brown from a previous quiz league. The committee will check this out.

Messenger will not be online as usual at the end of this meeting but is being published midway between quarterly meetings and the next issue is expected to be out 14th March. Closing date for articles is 1st March. Please send to Mary Barlow.

The next Regional Quarterly Meeting is the AGM. It will be on Wednesday April 26th 2023. A venue is being sourced as we speak. Look out for information on the website and Newsletter.

Wearside u3a – Christa Lloyd. 30th Anniversary Celebrations. Wearside u3a are holding an event at the Grand Hotel, Seaburn and have places for 150 people. There will be a meal, choir and entertainment. Cost and menu to be announced. Details will be in Messenger and on the Newsletter. Please book early. Email address wearsideu3a@gmail.com

Kelvin Rushworth. Unfortunately, he is having to stand down from being chair of the Regional Events Committee. This small group meet every two months. There is a programme of events in place for 2023. Anyone interested in taking up this position please get in touch with Kelvin Rushworth who will be willing to answer your questions and offer advice.

Sandi Rickerby – Regional Trustee. Talks on the future role of the Regional Trustee in the restructuring of the TAT is ongoing. At the moment the role is in two parts a) Member of the Board of Directors b) Regional Work.

As a member of the Board her role includes, governance, budgets, strategic development, shared leaning committee, communication and external affairs, banking group with concerns over the closure of national banks in villages etc., u3a Voice concerning quality of life for older people and the development of partnerships. Interacting with staff on training, publicity, podcasts and attending conferences

Within the region the Regional Trustee is there to support individual u3as as required. Troubleshoot. Support development. Attend regional quarterly and monthly meetings plus Network meetings. Organise events with team including study days, and workshops.

Mike Wallace – Finance. Draft financial year end accounts are ready and will be examined by David Pattinson. The bank accounts are in a healthy position.

Peter Barnett – Website. There is still work to do on the updating of the website due to the problems already noted in the Chairs report. There are missing files and others that need deleting. If anyone requires information posted to the website please let Peter Barnett know as soon as possible as he will be going on holiday shortly.

Strategy for the u3a Movement a talk by Allan Warmesley Vice Chair of the TAT and Regional Trustee for West Midlands.

There is an enormous range of preferences and opinions along with a fear of or reluctance to change but there is recognition that we need to modernise.

Membership provides a wide range of attractive learning opportunities through face to face and online activities to be enjoyed in fun and sociable group settings. These are available largely but not exclusively through local activities through your own u3a.

The movement is financially sustainable with numerous income sources.

The greatest challenge is to create sustainability. Membership fell by 20% during Covid. Some u3as closed and some are in a fragile state largely due to minimal activity, little use of technology and members energy levels. The average age continues to rise and is around 74. There are succession issues in most u3as.

The future focus will be on four cornerstones.

- a) U3a profile and effective recruitment.
- b) Encouraging members to enjoy learning.
- c) Encouraging the movement to emerge and collaborate to promote values.
- d) Promote a “single family” u3a movement.

The challenge is to have sustainable u3as so that they can readily regenerate themselves. Have internal technical and professional support. A core of enthusiastic and energetic members.

We need to define and promote who we are and promote a clear mission.

We need to find innovative ways to promote and communicate this profile.

There is a need to continually tailor the range and accessibility of activities.

Promote coordinated group-based online activities and a full range of available options.

We need to promote new initiatives, effective communication and brand promotion.

Encourage at all levels - u3as, networks, regions and the u3a Board.

We need to display and promote a u3a movement that minimises division, emphasises inter connectivity, promote greater unity, recognise the essential role of regions and networks.

All members should feel part of a wider family.

We need to tread carefully and provide opportunities and leadership. Sustainability will provide growth.

We must tell all new and existing members about all opportunities available to them.

This was the end of the talk and Mr Walmsley took questions which were curtailed by a fire alarm which went off in the hotel kitchen where he was.

What has the Board done since the AGM and the position regarding finances?

The cost of doing nothing would make the u3a irrelevant in less than twenty years. The strategy is to set a vision, get the message out and communication. There is little in the budget for advertising.

The Board is waiting for the third quarter financial details (end of December figures) before deciding where they go.

There are lots of imponderables – number of members, income, inflation etc.

Spending seems to be at a lower level than expected and an immediate increase in subscriptions may not be needed. It is envisaged that in the future increases in subscriptions will be notified 18 months in advance.

One member noted she was more positive about staying after hearing the talk.

Another member pointed out communication was a weakness and that emails were only sent to chairs, secretaries and treasurers and are not necessarily shared with members. One member says she is still waiting to get a reply from issues raised at the national AGM.

A member asked about a national advertising campaign.

As previously noted, there is an almost zero budget for advertising although the u3a was mentioned 860 times in two months in the local and national press.

Kelvin Rushworth noted that ITV and BBC had difficulties finding local stories about the u3a and it was up to region and u3as themselves to get the information out to them. Off the Wall would be an ideal opportunity to get our organisations name out there.

One member pointed out that Facebook got them quite a few new members more than when mentioned in the local press.

An introduction to VOICE and the Internet of Caring Things Programme a talk by Catherine Butcher Community Manager for VOICE.

A major UK government initiative to facilitate the commercialisation of key products and services and technologies that increase and enhance healthy life years.

A joint £40m investment from UK Government and Newcastle University.

Reflecting the universities world leading strengths in aging research.

Promoting international dialogue and debate between researchers, industry and patients/public.

Early input into idea development – shaping agendas based on identified needs and citizen priorities.

A digital platform to facilitate smart innovative and meaningful PPI/E (Patient and Public Involvement & Engagement activities).

An app has been designed that identifies areas in which we as individuals can assist research e.g., Why research is trying to muscle in on ageing. Helping to design a study about safe administration of injectable medicines in hospital.

The aims are four fold:-

- a) Help everyone to live longer and healthier lives.
- b) Boost the local economy.
- c) Stay connected to the people and things we care about or care for us.
- d) Make this region the best place to innovate for ageing and longevity.

One member asked do you get university students involved.

Yes, there are programmes and training available for them.

The next Regional Quarterly Meeting including the AGM will be held on 26th April 2023 ~~will be held~~ at the Angel View Hotel, Low Fell, Gateshead.

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