

# Group Leaders Presentation

An Opportunity to Present and Discuss  
Current Issues in Our U3A

Norman Taylor and the U3A Committee  
on 29th Feb 2020

# Group Leaders Presentation

Let me introduce you to our Committee:-

Chairman

Norman Taylor

Vice Chairman

Frank Tustin

Treasurer

Steve Hughes

Secretary

Ian Macdonald

Membership Secretary

Jackie Gitsham

Groups Coordinator

Anne Reed

Handbook

Norman Taylor

Equipment Co-ordinator & Assistant

Mike Farquhar

Webmaster

Beacon Administration

Barbara Jones

Webmaster

Don Grundell

Health & Safety

Ian Macdonald

Committee Member

Sue James

# Group Leaders Presentation

## Topics to be Presented

- Thornbury U3A Finances
- Beacon System to Manage our Organisation
- Communicating with the Members
- TU3A Website
- Encouraging new Group Leaders
- National & Local U3A Issues

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## Financial Issues

- We have always regarded Groups as Autonomous units working under the umbrella of the Committee of Thornbury U3A. They are at the heart of our U3A!
- However, now under the Governance of the Charity Commission rules, we have to produce an annual financial report addressing the whole organisation.
- The members of the Committee are the Trustees of the Charity and are ultimately legally responsible for all financial aspects of the organisation. Some degree of regular monitoring and overview of Group Finances has become essential!

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## Financial Issues – the Need to Report Financial data

- So, starting last year, Groups were requested to forward their own Financial return to the Treasurer on an annual basis. Ideally, for a 12 month period ending on 30 September to tie in with the U3A financial year end.
- Additionally the U3A Financial Report which accompanies the Annual Return to the Charities Commission must include all Group activities to ensure that they are covered by the Insurance Policy arranged by the Third Age Trust.
- So we on the Committee need to ensure we understand the size of our organisation in terms of the number of active groups, their size, organisation and management.

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## Financial Issues – the Need to Record Financial data

- The Financial monitoring and report has to meet certain requirements for a turnover above £25K. But if the overall organisational turnover exceeds £250K then far more rigorous accounting rules will apply.
- In the current set of accounts, we set out to determine what the overall turnover is; above £25K? or over £250K?
- We didn't want to over burden our Groups, so recording was not necessary:-
  - where Financial transactions are minimal,
  - where there is payment by a member for their own refreshments at Group meetings e.g. lunch clubs
- Financial recording is necessary to be able to identify all income and expenditure by type and the ongoing level of reserves held by the Group. These records and supporting documents such as invoices need to be retained for 6 years

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## Financial Issues – the Need to Record Financial data

- Our initial findings have revealed that our overall turnover for 2018 - 19 is £211K. Significantly above what previous estimates were, and not far below the £250K limit that applies to our accounting practices.
- The examination has revealed the Turnover of several Groups is “Substantial”. The Travel & Tourism is over £60K, the Theatre group is ~£58K whilst the Garden Visits is £13.5K.
- It has become obvious to the Trustees that we don't have full visibility or understanding of how these larger Groups operate.
- The Treasurer and the Examiner have still to examine two of the larger Groups and the latter will produce his final report and (I hope) sign off this years Accounts in the very near future.

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## Financial Issues

- So, to standardise our reporting, our Treasurer is going to issue, to those Groups (60 out of our 86) that are not excluded from reporting, a suitable template for the 2019 - 20 accounts.

<b>Group Name:</b>	<b>Contact:</b>
<b>Opening Reserves (date:                    )</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Income for 12 months</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Less Expenditure for 12 months</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Closing Reserves (date:                    )</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Bank Account held:    YES/NO</b>	<b>Bank Details (if applicable):</b>

- Additional details will be required in a statement on how the Group Finances are organised and controlled.



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## Financial Issues

- For the last two years the TU3A Centre finances have reported a small loss. Last years loss would have been substantially larger without the Commission rebate we received from Riviera Travel. Until now it has been stated that our Central reserves are adequate to cover any small loss.
- Although a full report is still awaited, the Examiner has expressed his current view that our reserves need “review”. His report is not complete, but it is something that will be discussed at Committee for some time to come.
- So let us look briefly at the Group’s Centre finances

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## Financial Issues :- Breakdown of our Subscription

Annual Subs	£6.00	Third Age Trust	£3.50	Standard cost per head
Gift Aid	£1.00	Beacon costs	£1.00	Standard cost per head
Reflects the fact that not all members ask us to claim tax back.		Meetings	£0.75	AGM , Welcome, Handbook Days, Leaders' Lunch
Amount received has been averaged across all members		Handbook & M'ship Cards	£0.50	Reflects 2020 slimmed down Handbook
		Sundry	£1.00	Website, Licences, TAM, Paypal costs, equipment
Total	£7.00	Total	£6.75	Surplus 0.25 per member

- But for members without email connectivity, there are the following additional costs

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## Cost of Printing and Delivery

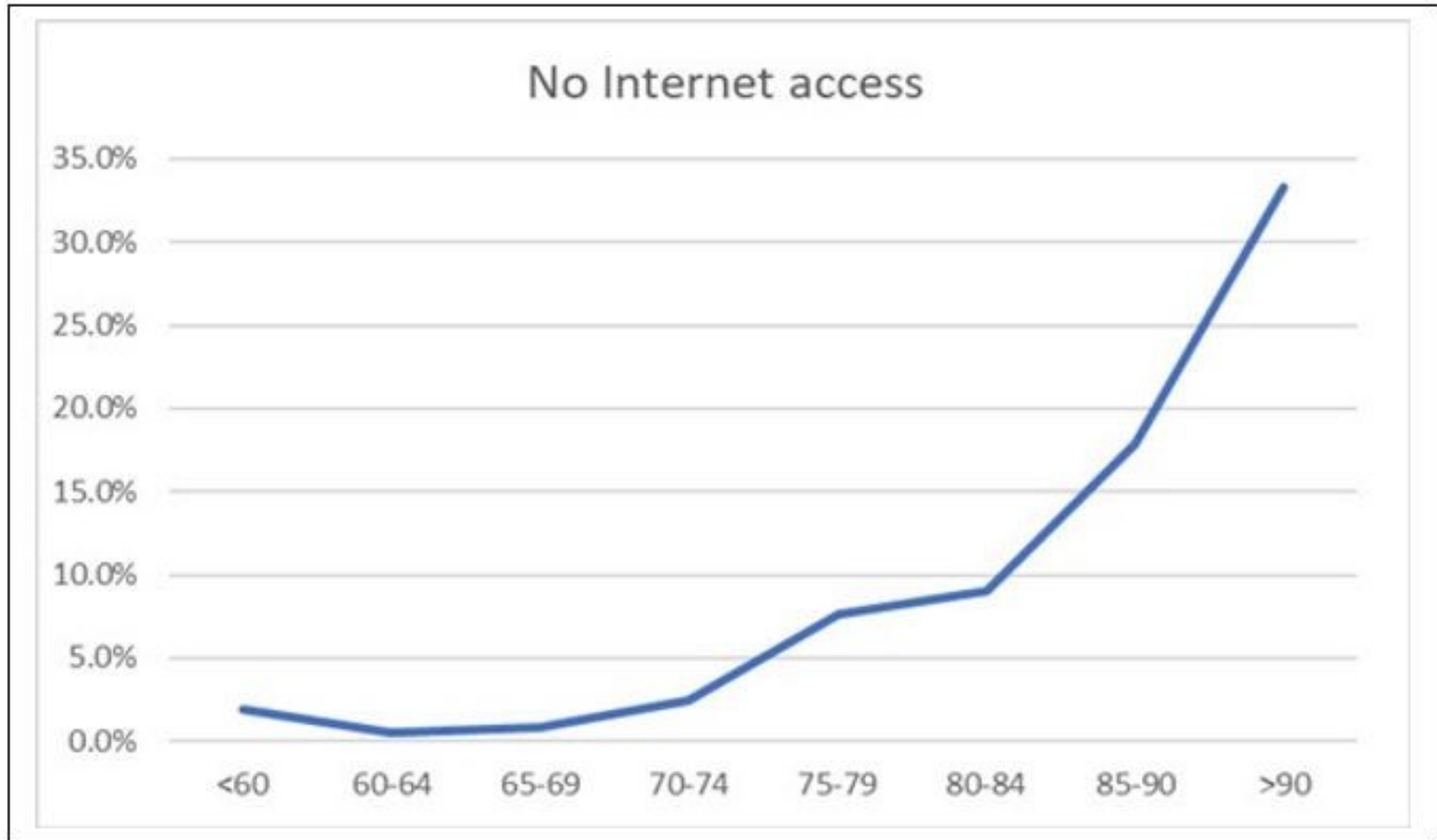
Printing 4 Newsletters	£2.40
Postage & Envelope x4	£2.90
Renewal Letter postage	£0.60
Revised Total	£12.65
Shortfall Expenditure over Subscriptions	£5.65

- We have 140 households not having email connectivity and this amounts to an overall additional expense of £700.
- Some members have volunteered to pay this extra money, some U3As, such as Bristol, automatically charge members an extra £5 subscription for those without email!

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## Financial Issues – Use of the Internet by Age Group

- The National U3A have conducted a survey of U3A's to determine which age groups do not have Internet access.



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## Finances Issues – So what are our Subscription options

- Cut costs and keep the same Annual Subscriptions. But costs are going up all the time and we have very little margin!
- Raise Subscriptions for those without e-mail connectivity to cover these costs; approx. £5 per household
- Raise Subscriptions by £1, to £7 per annum for Single Members and for individual households, to raise income to cover just the additional costs
- However, depending on whether the Examiner states in his reports that our reserves are “inadequate for our turnover and risk”, we may have to raise Subscription beyond these levels for every one, possibly by £2 or £3

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## Management of our Membership

- As the TU3A comes under greater scrutiny from organisations such as the Charity Commission, then we also have to demonstrate our management of the organisation
- The Committee runs our TU3A organisation by means of the Beacon Database – as do many other U3As.
  - All our personal data is stored on Beacon from the Membership Forms
    - It has the Protection & Privacy built in – as good as any other public database, and meets the Data Protection Laws
    - It avoids Group Leaders keeping Group Members personal details on their own PCs – possibly breaking GDPR Laws
    - It avoids embarrassing episodes if their PCs are hacked
- Group Leaders, or their designated alternative, need to create their Membership Lists on Beacon and keep them updated!

**We need all Groups to be on Beacon!**

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## Management of our Membership

- The Committee will provide help (if required) in establishing the Group list on Beacon in the first instant. And support the group thereafter where necessary.
- I hope a short demonstration will help those more reluctant to use it to see how easy it is to use.
- The demonstration of Beacon will show you how to:-
  - Access to Beacon
  - Check if members have paid their Subscription
  - Add a member to your Group
  - Remove a member from your Group
  - email your Group
  - List your Group membership

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Demonstration of Beacon



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## Communicating with our Members

- We have the annual Handbook, the Quarterly Newsletter and the Website; what should the relationship be between them?
- The Handbook is our Flagship document issued annually and has basic information on all our Groups. But often with errors of one type or other!
- The Newsletter is issued Quarterly, with some Groups reporting on the activities completed in previous Quarter and those planned for the next 3 months. Others merely repeat what is in the Handbook
- The Website is for “dynamic” data that you wish to pass to your group or any new members. It is the world’s window on our activities. But many Groups never touch it.
- Many other U3As do things differently! Let us look at a couple

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## Communications to our Members

- Cheltenham U3A have 125 groups and 1800 members
- They charge £12/yr for a Single person, £20 for joint membership.
- This includes 5 copies of the “Third Age Magazine” and a copy of their own bi-monthly Magazine. But no Handbook!
- They have a more sophisticated website, using an outside organisation to maintain it.

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This is  
Cheltenham's  
Winter  
Newsletter

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## Communications to our Members

- Gloucester U3A have 52 groups and 1,000 members
- They charge £12/yr for each Household
- They receive Gloucester's U3As Quarterly Magazine; there is no annual handbook
- They have Monthly meetings open to all members

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Gloucester  
Quarterly Magazine

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## Communications to our Members

- Bristol U3A have 150 groups and 1450 members
- They charge £17/yr for single members, £27/yr for Joint membership. But this goes up to £22/yr and £32/yr if the member is not on e-mail to receive their Newsletter
- They hold free Monthly Meetings with talks. I could not get access to their Quarterly Newsletter.

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## Communications – Use of the Website

- Our Website is the window through which the World can look at Thornbury U3A
- Many of the Group Leaders don't use it or update what is on it. What should we use it for? my belief it is for the Dynamic data on Group activities – changes in venue or membership numbers or costs of attending.
- The website is easy to use!
- Demonstration of Group Leaders Page
  - Access the Website
  - Access your Web page
  - Edit Text on your Web page
  - Add a Link to a document

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Demonstration of Website



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## Communications to our Members – Potential Change

- Should we reconsider how we Communicate with our members.
- One suggestion based on these two examples; place our emphasis on the Newsletter each quarter. Have all the information currently in the Handbook in the Newsletter together with the current and planned Group activities.
- Distribute it electronically and at a Quarterly Coffee (& Tea) morning that becomes a Social event. I saw how popular the Handbook Collection mornings were in terms of the meeting and greeting over Teas & Coffees.
- Distribute it to those who don't have / want email through the Group meetings to try and eliminate the high postage charges.

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## Communications to our Members

- This approach would do away with the Annual Handbook and since all membership data is on Beacon, could remove the need for the Membership Card as well.
- However to make this a success **you would all have to make contributions to the publication** on a quarterly basis.

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## Getting more Members to Participate

- We are finding it difficult to replace Group Leaders! Several of our Groups will fold this year unless new Leaders are found
- What can we do to make it easier for members to come forward?
- Run a Series of meetings to guide potential Group Leaders in how to set up a Group.
- Improve the Group Leaders Page on the Web to give better help on starting and running a group?
- What else can we do?

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## Other U3A Issues

- National U3A want changes to U3A Logo
- National U3A are proposing a “National U3A Day” for June to widen the appeal of the U3A. It expects all U3A to do something!
- Thornbury U3A has the Open Talks and Open Visits but should we offer more meetings to the whole Thornbury U3A, eg those quarterly Coffee Mornings I mentioned earlier, regardless of whether we change our policy on Communication with our members
- Thornbury U3A need a simple Risk Management Policy for those our Groups and Ian Macdonald is leading that research

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Feedback from Group Leaders