

CHAIRS REVIEW

April 2022 to March 2023

An uneventful year, not really!

As we left the worst of the pandemic behind us, I must say the Committee were hoping for a more uneventful year than the previous two. Like the rest of the world we were hoping to get back to some sort of normality after the rigours and challenges of Covid.

We started the year with a total of 194 members, considerably down from our pre-covid levels. This was common to most U3A's and similar groups but I'm pleased to say our membership is now over 330 and we are welcoming new members each month. During the year we did have one or two groups close but with a new book group, a Golf group, a second Digital Camera Group, two Mahjong Groups and two Watercolour Groups already up and running there are definitely good signs of growth.

The Upper Room and Bone Hill Car Park

In November 2023, just as things seemed to be progressing along nicely we had the news that a review of parking facilities in Torridge was going to take place which could result in building on some of the Car Parks in Torridge including Bone Hill which is so important for the our users of the Upper Room.

Although this review is still on-going the level of opposition shown by our own members, other local organisations and the general public means that this is now unlikely to happen. With continued support from local councillors and MP's we hope to maintain the pressure on Torridge to leave Bone Hill car park as it is.

Having just started to deal with the potential Bone Hill car park development plan, we were next told that parking charges were to be introduced at the car park. Very little notice was given on the implementation of these new charges and without any consultation of car park users it was announced that the only method of payment would be via a SmartPhone App.

For a change, people power was able to force a change in local authority decisions. So whilst we could not get a cash payment option introduced you can now pay at the car park using credit or debit cards as well as by the parking App. So many thanks to all our U3A members who gave their time to express their opposition to these two proposals.

During the year we were also pleased to welcome two new members to our Committee: Wendy Roden and Rob Phillips. It has been good to have their help and input in the past few months.

I would also like to express my thanks to all our Group Leaders and the members of the Committee for all the work they put in to ensure our U3A continues to thrive and grow. I think we should always remember that the people who do so much to help organise our groups and our U3A are all volunteers who give their time quite freely to maintain our organisation.

Once again this seems an ideal time to remind you that your Committee is always looking for new ideas, new enthusiastic helpers and Committee members. If you would like to be more involved in the running of our U3A you have the opportunity to discuss things with the Committee members today or, if you want to step forward for nomination to the Committee you can put your name forward to be added to the list of members being elected to the Committee this morning.