

Dear Member

As I approach the end of my first year as Trustee I wonder where the time has gone. One of the most enjoyable tasks has been helping to start up three new U3As. On the other hand, I have not been able to talk to as many existing members as I would have liked. We are a grass roots organisation and being connected to those roots keeps us; well connected! But this is not a time to look back as there is still plenty to do. So, no more waffle down to business. Your help is sought in several areas to grow and develop our U3A movement in Scotland.



U3A in Scotland Website

The website <https://u3asites.org.uk/scotland/home> is the principle way we have of communicating directly with members in Scotland, so please check it regularly.

Particularly the Events tabs and a new tab entitled 'Get Involved'. This new tab will highlight the various activities members can get involved in the wider U3A and with things that impact on our member's lives in Scotland.



Communication is not a one-way flow though, myself and the Committee of the U3A in Scotland need your input and feedback on anything to do with what is going on in and around your U3A and especially what we can do to help.

Participative Learning Workshop in September

Participative Learning is the way we do it in the U3A. This expression captures the ethos of how the U3A operates as the self-help collaborative endeavour that it is. It is described in detail in the booklet *More Time to Learn*. (Copies can be obtained from the National Office)

A Training Workshop will take place in **Edinburgh on Wednesday 20th September between 11:00 and 15:30. Registration and coffee at 10:30.** This is a Trust funded workshop open to all U3A members. It is a Train the Trainer type event to enable attendees to deliver the messages of Participative Learning to the wider U3A community. Initially, places are limited to two attendees per U3A. It will be greatly appreciated if you can register interest with me at your earliest convenience.

Volunteering to help the U3A in Scotland

You may have seen the call for Volunteers in the recent edition of Third Age Matters. The U3A is a voluntary organisation. Nothing happens without the contribution of volunteers. This also applies to the whole movement, not just in our local U3As. The Trust has recommitted to enliven and develop the movement through a network of Volunteers. What each individual Volunteer wishes to do is a matter for them, but there are certain roles that we are trying to fill. Training will be given and travelling and subsistence expenses will be paid by the Trust. The following roles are of current concern but anyone wishing to Volunteer should contact me to discuss the options.

U3A Ambassadors

Raising the profile of the U3A is now one of three Strategic Objectives of the Trust. To this end I am looking to build a network of U3A Ambassadors in Scotland who will actively seek to promote the U3A and its benefits and be available to follow up on enquiries for information in their locality. There are still areas of Scotland where there are no U3As in reasonable travelling distance and many organisations with an interest in the activities of older people don't know of our existence. One of our members was recently asked if we were some form of New Age Cult!

The Trust has recently appointed a professional Communications Officer. Already she is making a difference and so we anticipate an increase in the number enquiries following the various activities to raise the profile of the U3A.

Anyone wishing to find out more please get in touch with me to discuss this further.

Research Project Advisers

Formerly called Research Ambassadors. U3A members are increasingly getting involved in research with external agencies. Many with conventional University Departments, and not just as 'lab rats' as we have in the past. The Trust coordinates the work of Shared Learning Projects and other forms of Research through the Research Sub-Committee. Anyone who wishes to know more should visit the National Website www.u3a.org.uk and under the NEC tab in the members area there is a link to the Research Sub Committee and the work they do. A copy of the recently published Research Guide is available to download.

Exploiting Digital Technology

Love it or loathe it, we live in the information age and a digitally connected world. It is no longer an option to simply ignore it as it will soon be impossible to live a normal life without interacting with government agencies and the other commercial and social interactions on which modern life depends.

There are two aspects here that we would like to address on this account with your help.

The first is concerned with what help you need either in training or access to facilities for the use of IT systems as a management tool in running local U3As. The Trust already supports a Membership System known as Beacon which is proving increasingly popular and has a growing number of satisfied U3As using the system. The Trust also supports an easy to use Web Site builder.

What else do you need? Please let me know how the Trust can help in any aspect of the use of Information Technology in managing and promoting your U3A. For example, whether you are a charity or not you do not need to spend commercial rates to get a licence for things like Microsoft Office. Just ask to find out more.

Digital Champions

Scotland along with the rest of the world is going digital. There are of course great opportunities and threats in this. All of us need to know how to be connected safely. We know that many older people have worked with the growing IT proliferation

through their working lives and for them it has no fears.

But many more don't know how or are simply afraid to try and hence are increasingly rendering themselves into digital isolation.



The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) have launched the idea of Digital Champions and are keen to work with U3As in Scotland. A package of free training is being developed that will be rolled out across Scotland. This work is being funded by the Big Lottery in a three-year programme. Digital Champions will not just be the go to people who know a bit about IT. They will be trained in helping people overcome their reluctance and to get connected safely.



If you are interested in registering to become a Digital Champion please let me know at the address at the foot of the Newsletter.

In addition, Voluntary Arts Scotland is also offering training in getting Creative with Digital Media. Please see the related item on this website or register interest directly with Voluntary Arts. <https://www.voluntaryarts.org/digitalparticipation>

Does your Committee Need a Refresher?

The longest standing U3A in Scotland (Perth) was established over 30 years ago. Since then there has been a steady growth of U3As from Shetlands to the Borders. But the process we now take prospective new U3As through is very different to how we have done it over the years. Laws have changed and constitutions have been updated, advice changed (even reversed) and the movement has grown out of all recognition from the expectations of the founders and with it the demands on U3A Committee Members.

Would you like the opportunity to talk through how your U3A fits with what we are now advising the new U3As. Including talking through the current model constitution and other issues such as data protection and copyright. This is the opportunity for you to ensure you are up to date and an opportunity to identify areas where more detailed advice or training is needed and what the Trust can do to help.

There is also an opportunity here to use that valuable expertise that you have gained as Committee member to help other U3As. It is another area where Volunteers are being sought. Training will be given and expenses reimbursed for Volunteers.

And Finally: We Need Your Stories

The Trust is committed to raising the profile of the U3A. Personal stories and the activities in local communities attract interest and help to raise the awareness of just what a fantastic organisation the U3A is. If there is story from one of your members or you have some significant event coming up please share it with me. I will be keeping a record of all stories and a diary of events to share with the Trust's newly appointed Communications Officer. With only 1% of the over 65s in Scotland who are U3A members we have a lot of awareness raising to do.



U3A Trustee for Scotland Newsletter

Contact

Ed Link, U3A Trustee for Scotland

I can be contacted at:

Email ed.link@u3a.org.uk

Phone 01577 864183 or 07504 898090

Address 5, The Sycamores, 16 Muirs, Kinross, KY13 8GG

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