

Hollywood District u3a Trustee's Annual Report 1st April 2020 - 31st March 2021

Charitable Objectives

Our purpose is exclusively charitable and provides no financial benefit to individual members.

We aim to advance the education of older people who are no longer in full time employment and to provide recreational activities which will physically, mentally, and socially enrich their lives.

We provide our membership with opportunities to learn, share their knowledge and skills and make new friends in a relaxed and stimulating environment.

Public Benefits

Various interest groups are developed around subject areas or activities which have been suggested by the members. In this way members have more opportunities to engage in new activities or renew and increase their ability in previous areas of interest.

Such activities enable our members to engage with other members and to be more involved in community life. This involvement improves their sense of well-being and lessens their potential to feel isolated and lonely.

We promote social inclusion and highlight that membership is open to all regardless of educational attainments and other potential social or physical barriers.

With our age profile we endeavour to make our activities accessible and support health needs of older people and those with disabilities.

Membership is open to everyone who is retired or semi-retired with no age limit.

Our annual subscription is £20 which covers the membership fee to The Third Age Trust, the Third Age Matters Magazine and general administration costs.

This year the Executive Committee was cognizant that, if possible, it would be appropriate to reduce normal membership fees because a number of our meetings were cancelled because of the social restrictions required to reduce the spread of Covid-19.

We wanted to encourage the retention of our membership in a fair way, and we consulted with the treasurer if we had adequate funds to offer membership for two years for the price of one, from April 2020 to March 2022. The proposal for a reduced subscription was duly agreed by the committee.

Governance

We, the Trustees of Hollywood District u3a, confirm that in our governance, we have given due regard to the Charity Commission's Guidance and its statutory Public Benefit Requirements under the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

We believe we have taken the steps that are required by monitoring the reports on membership, finance, and activities at our monthly committee meetings.

Throughout this year all meetings in person have been postponed as directed by Government Policy restrictions to minimise the spread of Covid-19.

We started using Zoom for our monthly meetings in April 2020 and once we learned not to talk over each other it was a great success!

Issues and needs continued to be identified and resolved at our committee meetings via zoom each month.

Main Activities and Achievements

1. Learning to communicate via Zoom.

In April, the committee unanimously agreed that meetings via Zoom seemed to be the best way forward. We embraced the situation by developing our skills in technology to improve our communication with our membership.

The Third Age Trust set up Zoom tutorials to help Trustees and u3a members to engage in this whole new world of technology.

One of our Trustees became our Zoom master and set up Zoom Pro for our u3a. She has since supported many members with her knowledge, skills, and calm manner.

2. Website

In April, the Trustees decided it was time to replace our website as it was quite inflexible and difficult to manage.

We now have a user friendly, colourful, and much more interesting website for our members and the wider public to use & enjoy.

It was reported by our Webmaster at the November meeting that 'views' on the website had increased by 30% during a previous 30-day period.

Thank you to our Trustees who co-ordinated the transition.

Also, thanks to our Webmaster who continues to update it.

3. Mailchimp

We had a weak spot regarding immediate communication with our members.

Our solution was to set up Mailchimp to send bulk emails easily to all our members.

We sent an online Christmas card to all our members to let them know we were thinking of them.

Now the Newsletter is also emailed to all members each month.

We have 28 members who don't have email facilities and a number of Trustees volunteered to phone them to make personal contact with them during lockdown.

They received positive feedback, some provided email addresses of family or friends through which they could receive communications.

Four members seemed to be more isolated, and the Trustee will maintain contact with them.

4. Beacon

After attending technology meetings to research the Beacon Data Management System we decided it would greatly improve administration of our u3a.

Beacon will hold our data together, securely and meets with GDPR requirements.

It will enable Committee and Group Leaders to access their relevant sections easily and efficiently and will make management of memberships and accounts much better.

As a result, it will benefit all members.

5. AGM

Zoom enabled us to hold our postponed AGM from 2019/2020 and our current 2020/2021 AGM.

These decisions are documented in our Committee Meeting minutes.

6. General Meetings

Members really missed their social interaction, cup of coffee and the opportunity to listen to a wide variety of excellent speakers at the monthly meetings.

Our Meet and Greet volunteers and Refreshment Team are all on standby.

Zoom tutorials have encouraged us all to become more confident using Zoom for our talks and they have been as follows:

A virtual walk from East Belfast to Holywood by a Blue Badge Guide,
The History of Christmas followed by Coffee and Chat in our respective homes,
Overwintering Birds on the shore of Belfast Lough,
The Life and Times of Lord Dufferin and Ava,
and The Millennium Stone.

All these meetings via zoom have been well attended and we have received positive feedback. We encourage those who don't have access to Zoom to join with a 'Zoom Buddy' to share the talk when restrictions allow.

7. NIREC

Zoom also facilitated Northern Ireland Regional Committee meetings where Trustees from the 25 other u3as in Northern Ireland met up to share ideas and support each other.

They also organise speakers and training courses for Trustees.

8. Greater Belfast Network Group

Chairpersons from neighbouring u3as met to share ideas and information.

9. Hollywood at Home

The website facilitates our online monthly Magazine which was the brainchild of one of our Trustees. Issue 1 was published on the 25th March 2020.

It has been invaluable to our members and non- members throughout this past year providing interest, humour & a positive vibe.

Interest Groups and individual members contribute articles, our Chairperson writes about new developments in our u3a and encourages everyone to keep safe and well.

Colour photographs make it bright and cheery.

Our wonderful Trustee and his wife give a huge amount of time and expertise to collate and edit the Magazine and there have now been 14 Issues.

Feedback has been very positive.

10. Newsletter

A monthly Newsletter detailing General Meetings and Interest Groups and messages from Group Leaders to their members if they can't meet now, is posted on our website. Members have said they found this Newsletter very clear and informative.

11. Interest Groups

Our Interest Groups have been as follows:

Amblers, Book Reading, Bowls, Canasta, Coffee and Chat, Creative Writing, Exploring the Short Story, Film Club, Fine Dining, First Aid, Gardening Group, Local History, Loose Ends, Mindfulness, Points of View, Photography and Tai Chi.

Zoom has enabled discussion groups and virtual visits to be organised by the Points of View Group, the History Group, the Short Story Group, the Creative Writing Group, and the Gardening Group.

Other Groups which don't lend themselves to Zoom are waiting until restrictions are relaxed.

Risk assessments for Groups and venues will be carried out according to Government Guidelines when necessary.

The Trustees and members greatly appreciate the time and energy given freely by our Group Leaders for the benefit of all.

In summary

As this year ends it is beneficial for the Trustees of Holywood District u3a and its members to reflect over the past year to assess what we aim to achieve and how successful we have been in providing benefit to our Members.

We have had very positive messages of support to the Chairperson and Trustees. It has also been encouraging that 264 members have renewed their membership and we have 13 new members.

There has been an increasing number of our members joining the different meetings via Zoom as they have developed the necessary technical skills.

As Chairperson I feel that the Trustees have embraced the social restrictions of the Pandemic and have consistently worked towards improving communications and interests for the benefit of our Members.

I would like to say a big thank you to them for their dedication and commitment during this challenging year.

Also thank you to Joy Montgomery, our President and to Valerie Cobain, Trustee for Northern Ireland for all their support during the year.

In the future we hope to extend our membership and start new groups and partnerships to provide us with fresh learning opportunities.

We will also continue to promote u3a throughout our local community and extend the meaning of our strapline 'learn, laugh, live'.

This report has been approved and adopted at the Trustees' meeting of Holywood District u3a and signed on their behalf on 12th April 2021.

Liz Wallace.
Chairperson