



Northumbria Region u3a

AGM and Quarterly Meeting

Held at North Biddick Social Club, Bonemill Lane,

Washington NE38 8AJ

30th April 2024

From 10.40 – 14.15

Present: - Cecilia Coulson (Whickham), Jayne Dippie (Ashington), Myra Hughes (Ashington), Elaine Young (Derwentside), Frank Young (Derwentside), Jim Bainbridge (Derwentside), Pam Turnbull (Derwentside), Theresa Mulkerrin (Durham & District), Neil Cooke (Middlesbrough), Pam Turner (Morpeth), Sandi Rickerby (Morpeth), Michael Wallace (Newcastle), Mike Cook (Newcastle), Mo Brown (Newcastle), Terry Kirkham (Newcastle), Jan Leach (Seaham), Ted Watt (Seaham), Malcolm Wilkinson (Seaham Harbour), Diana Clark (Washington), Keith Allison (Washington), Derek Ginsberg (Washington Village), Tania Le Marinel (Washington Village), Carol Donald (Wearside), Doug Knox (Wearside), Hilary Shaw (Wearside), Bill Brookes (Wessington), Eileen Smith (Wessington), Gill Talbot (Wessington), Jean Barnett (Wessington), Peter Barnett (Wessington), Arthur Coulson (Whickham), Caroline Davison (Whickham), Colin Watson (Wooler), Peter Davies (Wooler), Mary Barlow (Sunderland).

Apologies: - Jean Cubbin, Ann Carr, Jane Mathieson, Christa Lloyd.

Welcome: - Cecilia Coulson (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave out the housekeeping and safety notices.

The meeting began with the Chair showing photographs of events held within the Region during the last year e.g., A visit to Newcastle Reform Synagogue, North Regional Quiz, Ad Gefrin Distillery, Creative Writers Workshop, quarterly meeting held at Hylton Castle, Real Ale Network and Royal Naval Museum Hartlepool.

Notices: -

Celebration of Music – Leaflets were on each table giving details of the event.

Messenger – More articles with photographs from around the region would be appreciated. Details of closing date for the next issue on the Regions website.

Great North Run – The u3a applied for places and were given 5 which have been filled. Volunteers will be required on the day to wave banners etc.

Regional Leaflet – Mo Brown and Ted Watt are updating the leaflet, and a photographic competition has been arranged asking for photos of activities in the region. Details are on the website.

Next quarterly meeting will be held on 10th July 2024 at the Bowling Club, Pity Me, Durham. As regional meetings have been poorly attended since recommencing after Covid the committee have decided that these meetings should be mornings only for the next year. The attendance and feedback received will then be evaluated and a decision on the future of the meetings will be made.

Annual General Meeting.

A copy of the agenda, previous minutes, standing orders, annual accounts and the treasurers report had been left on each table and spare copies were available.

Members were reminded that a copy of the constitution was on the Regions website.

The meeting was declared quorate, with more than the necessary voting representatives present.

There are no proxy votes.

Tellers: - Mo Brown and Peter Barnett were proposed by Malcolm Wilkinson and seconded by Mike Cook.

Vote 13 For and None Against.

Proposal carried.

Minutes of the previous AGM: - The adoption of the minutes as a true record was proposed by Malcolm Wilkinson proposed and Jan Leach seconded the motion.

Vote 10 For and None Against.

Motion accepted.

Matters arising: - There were no matters arising out of the minutes.

Chairs Report: -

The Chair thanked all Northumbria Region u3a Committee Members, the Regional Support Team members and the Regional Events Team members who have all given her a huge amount of support over the past year.

Jean Cubbin, North East, Regional Trustee has been in post now for 6 months. Over the past 6 months Jean and I, when possible have been out and about together visiting u3as throughout the Region. I give a synopsis of the role of the Region, what our objectives are and Jean informs members about her role within National u3a and also emphasises the ethos of the u3a movement.

The ethos of the University of the Third Age (u3a) is centred around lifelong learning and mutual support for those people who are no longer in full time employment.

The prime objective in visiting u3as is to show our faces, but also to emphasise that Region and National are not on a pedestal. We are volunteers, as all of you, in this room

are. u3a could not continue without each one of you volunteering your time and energy so a big thank you to you all for your support and commitment.

I would also like to thank Kelvin Rushworth, Publicity Officer for the North West who, although he lives in Keswick is always at the end of an email if I need to pick his brains about publicity for this Region.

National u3a has 4 missions.

- To facilitate the growth of the u3a movement.
- To provide support for management and learning in u3as.
- To raise the profile of the u3a movement.
- To promote the benefits of learning in later life through self-help learning.

All this information can be found on the National website.

You can therefore understand from the third mission, which is raising the profile of the u3a movement, that Region would like to appoint a Publicity Officer or a Social Media Officer, not only to raise our profile, but also to support Region's members when communicating with media outlets.

Liz Thackray's visit was a prime example of raising the profile of the Northumbria Region. She visited 11 u3as in the Region travelling from Berwick u3a presenting their 20th anniversary certificate to Saltburn u3a attending an Earth Studies Group. She was interviewed by a North East online magazine and spoke to a member of Parliament.

One of the items in the Regional Committee's three year plan is to organise learning workshops so members from different u3as can network, learn and have fun. However, now we don't have the number of volunteers required to provide workshops. Volunteers never work by themselves; they always work in two's or more. The Committee are working on this and there is a possibility that 2 workshops could be made available later on this year.

The Three Year Plan 2023 – 2026 is referred to at every Committee Meeting but the Committee will be reviewing, in depth, this plan after this AGM to ascertain if we are continuing along the correct path.

To offset the problem of no workshops the Regional Events Team has organised at least one event a month, so members can come together, learn and laugh. The team has been working very hard with some other u3a members contributing now and again.

Over the year I have advised and supported many u3as from giving advice about whether a dog should be allowed in the venue, a member not accepting health and safety rules and regulations and many more. All policies can be downloaded from the National u3a website and adapted to your own u3a needs.

The Networks have been gaining in strength over the past year. They either meet via Zoom or face to face. Within the Region there are now seven Subject or Interest Networks i.e. Art Appreciation, Geology. I visited the Real Ale Network, that was a good day out. There are also eight Role Networks, e.g. Chairs, Groups Coordinators. Information about all the Networks can be found on the Regional website.

This AGM covers a full day. It has been noticed by the Regional Committee that ever since the Regional Quarterly Meetings resumed after COVID the numbers attending are becoming fewer and fewer. Members are leaving for numerous reasons at lunchtime, so not staying on for the afternoon session. Therefore, it's been decided by the Committee that over the next three Regional Quarterly Meetings they will be held in the morning, with the option to stay for lunch to network. At the end of the year this trial will be reassessed. It is hoped a 'morning' only Regional Quarterly Meeting will encourage more u3as to attend.

I know that u3as around the Region are having problems recruiting Committee members especially Officers, Northumbria Region u3a is no exception. Your u3a may have 7, 8 or even more members on your Committee, which is fantastic. The members of a u3a in the Region ranges from 20 plus to nearly 800 members in Saltburn u3a.

You will shortly see that Northumbria Region u3a Committee has only 7 members to support and advise 9,000 members.

Did you know it's Northumbria Region u3a's 30th anniversary this year? The Committee, as we speak have been sourcing venues for this event to be held in the Autumn. It will give everyone an opportunity to celebrate this Network and the role it plays in supporting all u3as the region.

Mike Wallace proposed the Chairs Report was accepted and Jan Leach seconded.

Vote 14 For None Against.

The report was accepted.

Malcolm Wilkinson proposed a vote of thanks for the work carried out by the Chair during the year. This was seconded by Jan Leach.

Treasurers Report: -

When the committee made the decision not (to) levy subscriptions for 2023 it was anticipated that there would be a deficit for the year and that there was sufficient in reserve to absorb that deficit.

The committee decided that, to encourage attendances at Regional Meetings, it would subsidise the cost and this resulted in a deficit of £661 compared with the previous year when the deficit was £153.

Two quizzes were held during the year resulting in a total deficit of £256.

The overall deficit for the year was £1,288. Had subscriptions been requested the result would be near to “break-even” or, possibly, a small surplus.

The resulting deficit for the year of £1,288 has reduced the reserve to £4,054 with a further £4,000 held in the Special Reserve. Despite the reduction in reserve the committee agreed that there should be no subscription levied for 2024 and this will be proposed at the Annual General Meeting.

However, the most significant event, from a financial point of view, was the distribution of monies received from Ryton u3a when it was forced to close. The sum of £2,165 was received which together with the balance on the Jesmond Legacy Fund was distributed to 44 of the 48 u3as in the Region, each receiving £49.43. The other 4 u3as did not respond and claim any of the distribution.

The committee are also considering future events. The Special Reserve could be used for forthcoming events as outlined in the three-year plan.

There were no questions on the Accounts from the floor.

Arthur Coulson proposed the treasurers report be accepted and seconded by Malcolm Wilkinson.

Vote 14 For None Against.

The motion was approved.

Mike Wallace put the proposal to the floor that subscriptions for 2024 should not be levied.

Vote 15 For and None Against.

The proposal was accepted.

Mike Wallace noted that David Pattison who examines our accounts will not be available to do so in the future. Region will need to look for another examiner during this financial year.

Mike Wallace is standing down as Treasurer and Cecilia Coulson presented him with a card a bottle of Bacardi.

Election of the Committee: -

Cecilia Coulson put herself forward for election to the committee and as Chair.

Malcolm Wilkinson proposed this be accepted by members and it was seconded by Peter Barnett.

Vote 15 For and None Against.

Mary Barlow, Peter Barnett, Ann Carr, Ted Watt and Malcolm Wilkinson put their names forward for re-election to the Committee.

Proposed by Mike Cook and seconded by Jan Leach.

Votes 14 For and None Against.

Proposal was accepted.

Theresa Milkerrin (Durham and District) put her name forward to be elected to the Committee and as Treasurer.

Proposed by Malcolm Wilkinson and seconded by Arthur Coulson

Vote 13 For and None Against.

Proposal was accepted.

Any Other Business: -

There were two motions which Wooler u3a propose to put before the National AGM in October. These were read out by Peter Davies, Chair.

First motion. We recognise the hard work undertaken by representatives and trustees and are persuaded by the need for an expanded “Council” and a reduced “Board”. Until such times as the “protocols” between the “Council” and the “Board” are determined and subsequently agreed by the u3a members, no constitutional changes should be made and it should be recognised that the practice of larger elected bodies being subordinate to smaller bodies, whether elected or not, has not met with universal success. Thus, our preference is for Board members to be members of the Council and for the Board to report to the Council in the name of good and democratic governance and that such structure should be first considered.

Peter Davies then gave members the thinking behind this motion. It works mainly for those at the top. There are no checks and balances or protocols.

David Knox (Wearside) said their u3a were working on a similar draft and they thought the proposed changes were about money paid to staff.

Peter Barnett (Wessington). Northumbria u3a has little standing under the current system as we are a Network. As things stand Cecilia Coulson does not received emails that are sent out by the National Office to Chairs, Secretaries and Treasurers and relies on members of this Committee forwarding same to her. This has been raised several times with the National Office.

Peter Davies said he would be sending the motions forward to be considered for the National AGM and that other u3as may wish to do the same.

Second Motion. We ask the u3a invests in creating a user-friendly website which is easily accessible to all.

Peter Davies said this was aimed at the National website.

Peter Barnett said the National website was dreadful.

Mo Brown informed the meeting that National were trying to get people to help with updating the site and they had employed a lady with this in mind.

Various members then informed the meeting of difficulties they had had in accessing information on the site.

It seems that Google are able to bypass where you sign in on the website and take you straight to the relevant section.

The meeting was informed that when you look on Google, Facebook, Twitter and X etc., that you get a different explanation of what the u3a is about. National Office have been informed of this and are looking towards getting the same explanation across all the social media sites as we need clarity to attract members.

With no further discussion the meeting closed at 12.00.

The afternoon session was about The QT, a new voice for the North East given by Brian Aitken, previous editor of the Journal and is a Strategic and Media Consultant. Brian Aitken is also the editor of QTonline.

He began by giving a summary of how he got into journalism and became an editor.

The QT is a new online media platform for the North East aiming to deliver quality regional journalism and is still being developed. There are no advertisements but various platforms were suggested where events held by u3as and other organisations could be presented.

The date of the next AGM will be in April 2025.

Name C Coulson **Position** Chair **Date** 26th April 2025

Name M Barlow **Position** Secretary **Date** 26th April 2025