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Another U3A Year

It is early October and I guess most of us have started our new U3A year. I am starting my third and final year as Trustee for Scotland, or, as we are now grandly known under the terms of the new Articles of Association, Board Directors. The old NEC (National Executive Council) is now formally called the Board of Directors. It sounds rather grand but it is just for consistency and clarity. Most importantly however, we are all just U3A members, who are trying to do our bit for this great movement. Whilst there is no denying that it is hard work, it is a privilege to be at the heart of things and to be able to help shape the future of the movement.



If anyone is interested in finding out more about this role do please get in touch. It is important that Scotland has a voice on the Board. Whilst we represent the interests of Scottish U3As the wider responsibility is towards the whole movement.



Some people complain that there has been an avalanche of material from the National Office over the past year on various dos and don'ts. I know it all looks terribly vexing and many people say we are getting along fine so why do we need to be bothered with all this legal stuff. That is just it, it is legal stuff and it does apply to us. Data protection, tightening up

of charity law, dealing with vulnerable adults, equality and diversity are all considerations organisations like ours have to consider. Each U3A Committee is responsible for its own affairs. The Trust has a duty to advise all of its members on these responsibilities.

I can tell you that U3As in Scotland are experiencing some of these problems. Very few it is true, but these U3As will tell you that they are thankful for the support from the National Office and local Trust Volunteers. So be confident that you are not on your own. Help is at hand should you need it.



We are bringing the Keeping It Legal Workshop to Scotland in a location as near to you as we can. Inverness, Glasgow and Edinburgh. You will have had information on these and I can only urge you to have someone attend. If you are in one of our remote Island U3As please do get in touch with me and I will see if I can get assistance from the Trust with travel and subsistence expenses.

I am also looking to see what other Workshops we can bring to Scotland. Subjects like Finance, Communications and U3A Management are all possibilities. Experience shows that sharing information and approaches with each other is both helpful and reassuring.

We tried a half day local workshop on finding new Committee Members recently. Facilitated by one of our Trust Volunteers, problems, approaches and experiences were discussed as well as lessons learned from across the wider movement. The benefit for the attendees is in sharing this information. Keeping it short and fairly local was considered an extra bonus. If you are interested in this kind of approach please let me know on this topic or any other.



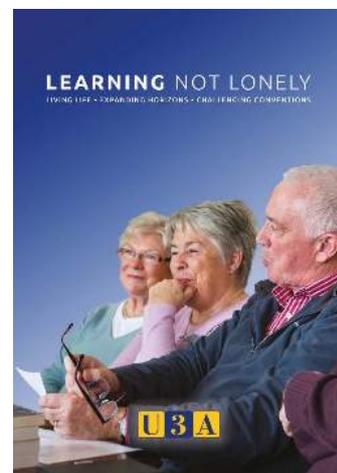
The Trust is about to embark on developing a new Strategic Development plan for the next three years. Extensive consultation was undertaken across the movement. The new Trust Chair, Ian McCannah, presented the main results at the recent National Conference in Nottingham. The Trust will be devoting more effort on Marketing the U3A movement more effectively and supporting both U3A Committees and individual members using digital technology.

As part of raising our profile The Trust embarked on a study of the health benefits of Life Long Learning and the benefits of U3A membership. It transpired there has been very little research on informal learning such as the U3A model and so we tapped into our U3A experience. A series of Focus Groups were organised around the UK and the contributors taken through an identical series of questions. The Learning not Lonely report is available on line from :-

<https://u3a.org.uk/images/misc/impactreport/impact-report-06-1.2-final-web.pdf>

The title for the report came out of the fact that so many members reported that the greatest benefit they found from U3A was friendship. Whole new social networks have to be rebuilt on retiring and the U3A is a ready-made network of likeminded people.

On a final note I would like you join me in welcoming three new U3As to our family in Scotland, Helensburgh, Kinross-shire and Duns. The movement continues to grow in Scotland but there is much more we can do. New members and new U3As are always welcome and we do everything we can to welcome them.



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Keeping it Legal

This workshop explores issues of compliance including: insurance, GDPR, Safeguarding, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. The idea for this workshop came out of the sheer volume of enquiries the National Office handles on these matters. You can find more information on what the Workshop covers by visiting the National Website under Events and Workshops. Booking arrangements have been sent to all U3As in Scotland. If you have trouble booking on-line then call the National Office.

Workshops are being held in

Inverness - 16th October 2018

Glasgow - 17th October 2018

Edinburgh - 19th October 2018



Digital Skills

Getting on-line is becoming a necessity not an option for modern living. It is fast becoming the only way to access many essential services. There are many benefits to older people in accessing on-line services in addition to keeping in touch with the family. Doing so safely and securely is essential. Overcoming the fear of being scammed is one of the major barrier for older people.

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) explain digital skills as the ability to access and negotiate services on line. Such abilities as communicating, handling information, transacting, problem solving all done safely and securely. Not so different from ordinary life skills except in using the digital medium.



The SCVO digital skills programme and toolkit can be accessed via the website.

<https://scvo.org.uk/digital/>

Digital Champions



The SCVO are not the only ones promoting digital skills. Voluntary Arts in Scotland recently ran a number of workshops for Digital Champions. Many U3A members from around Scotland attended these workshops

Whether you went to one of these workshops or not, you can access the Voluntary Arts Scotland Digital Skills toolkit via the following link. This resource is particularly relevant if you wish to know more about Social Media.

<https://www.voluntaryarts.org/digitalparticipation>

If you use Facebook, or are considering using it, to promote your U3A you might also consider the following group for advice and tips.

<https://www.voluntaryarts.org/creative-connections-facebook-group-invite-to-join>

The New Big iDEA

You might recently have seen reference to a U3A Partner organisation. The Duke of York, not to be outdone by his father, has launched a scheme to help encourage digital skills amongst all ages. The scheme known as iDEA can be accessed on line at

<https://idea.org.uk/#big-idea>

This scheme, like The Duke of Edinburgh scheme, is based on acquiring 'badges' and working towards Bronze, Silver and Gold. There are many badges to choose from. Each is a short set of activities to work through on line to earn points. And points mean Badges..



awards.

Currently there is no specifically relevant U3A material. But there is quite a lot of interesting stuff to choose from. I am a few points away from my Bronze badge.

Calling All Creatives



An appeal from Voluntary Arts in Scotland;

"We always keen to feature news and opportunities from groups so if your creative U3A groups are looking for new members / volunteers, or are organising an event, do encourage them to get in touch –

info@vascotlad.org.uk “

Also Voluntary Arts in Scotland send out a monthly e-news which includes updates on creative opportunities, useful resources, funding, training and call outs for volunteers. Please encourage your creative groups to sign up for this service.

<https://www.voluntaryarts.org/enews>

Two Key Roles for Scotland

U3A members throughout the UK continue to undertake a wide range of research projects. There is research carried out by members from one or more U3As and there is research carried out in collaboration with a third party institution. The latter is known as Shared Learning Projects. Throughout the UK there is a network of volunteers offer advice and guidance to those considering such undertakings. They are also able to share information about similar activities throughout the UK.

We know have our first Research Ambassador (to my knowledge) in Scotland.

John Revie from Glasgow WE U3A is our Research Ambassador. He can be contacted by email on: - john.revie1@gmail.com

We also have a new Shared Learning Project Co-ordinator. Peter Stanton of Brechin & District U3A who can be contacted on:- peterastanton@btinternet.com

A big thank you to both of them.

A Unique Opportunity

If it sounds too good to be true than it probably is. Except in this case it really is true. You can kick start learning a new language for free. If you can spend two hours for three days a week, over a four weeks period, this may be for you. This is part of a University of Edinburgh research project into the effects on the brain of learning a new language. Does learning a new language have any effect in avoiding or delaying the catastrophic effects of dementia? This is the important question this research is attempting to answer.

We are still working out the details of when and where but if you are interested in finding out more please contact Dr Mariana Vega-Mendoza at Edinburgh University to register your interest without any commitment.

m.vega-mendoza@ed.ac.uk

The idea has already been tested in the BBC series Trust Me I'm a Doctor. You can view this broadcast on the BBC iPlayer at:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0bjj24p>

and the description that goes along with it at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/2NsHY4MhL95FgclByxS1XRI/can-learning-a-new-language-boost-your-brain>

This is an opportunity to kick start learning a language, taking part in valuable research and, as can be seen on the video, an enjoyable experience.

I will be sending round more information when the details of the programme have been worked out. But please don't hesitate in recording your interest as there will be a limited number of places available.

See Stop Press Below

Thank you for your time. I can be contacted on any of the above, or any other Trust or U3A matter on:-

Ed Link

Email ed.link@u3a.org.uk

Phone 01577 864183 or 07504 898090

Or via the National Website or U3A in Scotland Website

Stop Press

Please note the first running of these language courses will take place in Edinburgh and Inverness in February 2019. Each will involve a beginners conversation course in Spanish or Italian for a maximum of 12 people per course.

If you are interested to find out more please contact Dr. Mariana Vega-Mendoza on m.vega.mendoza@ed.ac.uk