

Report National Conference August 2019

Opening Summary

We now have half a million members, more than the Women's Institute but people don't know who we are.

The Charity commission now require a development plan.

The Chairman announced that their plan is

Developing the movement.

Recommendations are to be:

- Open warm welcoming and be more diverse.
- Raise our profile
- Increase the number of U3As.

Why do we need to grow? Rate of growth of new U3As is declining.

If we don't grow we will get stale and set in our ways, we need to be kept vibrant.

Only 3% of UK population are members of the U3A.

Encourage people that growth is good.

Workshops National Conference

Workshop 1 'Shared Learning projects'. Presented by Joe Livingston of Bexley U3A and Jennifer Simpson of Leigh and our U3A.

Some examples of ongoing projects:

The wildlife group at Burnham on Crouch were counting glow-worms; our wildlife group might be interested in joining them on this shared learning project.

Bee watch group apparently there are 15 to 20 groups in U3As. They had a talk from the Bumblebee conservation trust and they were so impressed they decided to start a group. Maybe our enthusiastic bee watcher Richard would like to get involved in this shared learning project.

Also a whaling group in the Shetland Isles, which may be of interest to our nature lovers.

Didcot U3A have a group called 'Wonder materials', they were doing a

shared learning project with the National Graphene Institute at the University of Manchester.

The National Chairman thought that Shared learning with other organisations was the best way of promoting the U3A.

Workshop 2

‘Third age matters’ was presented by the current editor Francis Beckett who is due to retire at the end of the year.

The U3A magazine started out as a newsletter, just a few pages and then after a few years SAGA took it over as a magazine. This only lasted for a few years because SAGA wondered what it was getting from it and the U3A wondered why they were letting SAGA control it. Francis Beckett was appointed as editor 20 years ago, it was launched as ‘U3A news’ which was a 12 to 16 page magazine three times a year. It is now a 95 page magazine issued five times a year.

The name was changed to Third Age Matters in 2004, the aim being to look less like a newsletter and more like a magazine. It was a wonderful advertising medium as they knew their readers were interested in education and had the right age demographic for certain advertisers.

The U3A took advice from a business publishing manager, a magazine editor of a Canadian magazine. The advertising limit is set at 40% advertising and advertisers are turned away to stick to this limit.

To remove advertising would make the cost of publishing the magazine horrendous and not acceptable to the members, it is already subsidised by the trust. 350,000 households receive the magazine. It was initially free and some members opted out of receiving it when they had to pay for it. Most U3A’s now include the cost in the subscription.

Coast to Coast no longer goes in the magazine but is available in the newsletter online. In that format space isn’t a pressure therefore they can produce more features on individual U3As.

TAM lifts articles that are in Coast to Coast if they think that they’re worth doing as a feature.

A new editor Joanne Smith has been appointed. She commences employment with the Trust on 1 October and will be responsible for the magazine from January 2020.

Workshop three

'Raising your profile'

the idea is to celebrate the benefits, values and qualities of positive ageing.

Sending a message to all sectors of society that older people have much to contribute to society.

Encourage U3As to actively promote in their locality.

National Annual U3A days are to be held leading towards the 40th anniversary celebrations and beyond which will be in 2022. These will commence on Wednesday the 3rd of June 2020. All U3A's are encouraged to participate and have an open day or event on that day to illustrate to people what the U3A is all about.

The aim is to have this as Macmillan have their annual coffee morning or tea afternoon.

In 2020 it is being held as part of volunteer week, the reason that date was chosen.

If we chose to participate on that day we can get support from National office with literature and also up to £100 grant on an application of support.

Break out groups were formed and we sat down to come up with ideas for the day. Some were good and some were unsuitable.

It was suggested that we should share this day with other local U3As so that if we wanted to get the press or local radio involved we won't be competing with one another but joining together and promote jointly.

Conference final day

Ernie Ray from Radio 4's programme Beyond belief is a historian and passionate about art. He gave a very informed speech on The Medici family and their influence on Art in Florence. This may be of interest to our Art History group.

Ruth Lancashire Chairman

30/08/2019