



## **Belfast University of the Third Age Trustee Annual Report for the year 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023**

### **Reference and Administrative Information**

#### **Name of the Charity**

The name of the Charity is the *Belfast University of the Third Age*

#### **Other names by which the Charity is known**

*Belfast U3A*

#### **Registered Charity Number**

NIC101362

#### **Address of the principal office of the Charity**

c/o Treasurer Belfast U3A, 77 Onslow Parade, Belfast BT6 0AS

#### **Names of Trustees (31 March 2023)**

Jim Mc Donnell

Maria Curran

Pauline Prior

Caroline Brown

Helen Mc Glinchey

Neil Mc Quillan

Tom Capper (co-opted June 2022)

Barbara Mc Dermott (co-opted December 2022)

#### **Structure Governance and Management**

The governing document of the Charity is its Constitution as adopted at the Annual General Meeting 30 April 2015. The Trustees are the members of the Executive Committee, elected by the membership at the Annual General Meetings (or occasionally co-opted).

The Charity is affiliated to the *Third Age Trust* (Charity No: 288007), the co-ordinating body for U3A groups within the UK.

#### **Objectives and Activities, Achievements and Performance**

Belfast U3A is devoted to its commitment as set out in Article 2.1.1 of its Constitution i.e.

*‘Advance the education of the public and in particular, the education of the middle aged and older people in Belfast who are not in full time gainful employment’.*

The activities undertaken during the year as outlined in reports below are evidence of that continuing commitment.

**Financial Review:** See *Accounts and Treasurer's Report* for 12 months ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. These have been approved by the charity's independent examiner. (See separate reports)

### **Committee activities**

Due to *Covid-19* restrictions, which changed throughout the year, monthly meetings of the Executive Committee were held virtually (on the Zoom platform) until June 2022. With the easing of restrictions, it was possible to return to physical meetings from September 2022. All of the business of the charity was fully completed throughout the year, including the preparation and submission of all the necessary reports for the 21st AGM (held in April 2022) and for the *Charity Commission for NI* (CCNI). Accounts and reports and other information relating to the AGM were placed on the Website of the Belfast U3A.

We were pleased to run the monthly meeting for all members (with a speaker) throughout the year at the *Balmoral Hotel* and to hold physical meetings with the *Convenors* of our interest groups in April 2022 and in February 2023, and with *New Members* in October 2022. Also, after running the event for two years on *Zoom*, we organised a wonderful physical *Mince Pie Party* with food and entertainment in December 2022. In spite of the icy conditions on the day, 90 of our members joined in the festivities, welcoming the occasion to meet their friends.

As our membership continues to grow, committee members continue to increase their commitment to keeping up with administrative and digital developments. We are delighted to welcome new committee members each year.

### **Membership**

We are also delighted to report that our membership numbers have continued to increase in the past year. We now have 890 members in March 2023. Our membership is now larger than it was pre-pandemic. We are pleased to say that we have welcomed 271 new members since April 2021. So, *Belfast U3A* continues to thrive. While many of our members have been with us for some time, we welcome new members all of whom have new skills and interests which they are willing to share with other members.

The *Newsletter* (which is bi-monthly) was sent by email or post to all members. 97% of our members are on email which means that most of our members are digitally included. Other methods of communication now include frequent emails to individual members through our *Beacon (membership management) system*, introduced in January 2020, regular activity news updates on our website and some news entries on the social media outlets run by the *Third Age Trust*. Informal communication between members continues in person and by phone and all of these communication methods keep people in touch with activities and advice on all aspects of our organisation.

The annual membership subscription was reviewed (in terms of methods of payment and size of the subscription) for the coming year and decisions were made with a view to

ensuring that the charity remains adequately funded and has enough reserves. There will be no change in the membership fee for the coming year.

### **Interest Groups and Activities**

In keeping with the U3A movement, *Interest Groups* (53) remain the lifeblood of *Belfast U3A* and each year new groups emanate from the membership based on requests and on the knowledge and skills of members themselves. Activities include but are not confined to reading/literature, walking, cycling, bowling, golf, language learning, bridge, photography, Pilates, art appreciation, creative writing, music, wine tasting, gardening and discussion groups, with the addition of new groups in the past year - snooker, climate awareness, science for everyone, local history, and mindfulness.

Our first post-pandemic physical meeting with *Convenors* in April 2022 was well attended and was a great success as was a second one in February 2023. We appreciate these terrific members who give their time and energy to leading activities and discussions on a regular basis. Activities may have slowed a little during the pandemic, but they are back in full swing now. Some had held virtual meetings (and some continue to do so) while others communicated by phone, or by using new technologies and digital platforms.

Since January 2022, venues have gradually opened up as restrictions on meeting indoors have eased, so with great enthusiasm among members, we are now meeting physically to enjoy all of our activities and discussions, as social mixing is an essential part of the U3A ethos. It also prevents social isolation, encourages learning, and supports mental and physical health. This is essential for all ages, but especially in an organisation like ours, with a membership of third agers.

### **Monthly Meetings of Members**

These meetings, with a speaker, to which all members are invited, were held very successfully at the Balmoral Hotel throughout the year, with more members joining us each month. The speakers offered us a range of topics which were an excellent mixture of culture, entertainment and education. We hope to continue with a mixture of physical and online events in the future as our members continue to be active both digitally and physically.

### **Concluding remarks**

In the context of emerging from over two years dominated by a global pandemic, we are delighted to say that *Belfast U3A* continues to change with the times, with members learning new skills and exploring new avenues for living a full and active life after retirement.



**Date: 27<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

**Pauline Prior, Chairperson, on behalf of and approved by the Trustees of Belfast U3A.**