

Banbridge District u3a Reports

Chairperson's Annual Report for the year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

To start I am happy to be able to report that Banbridge District u3a has continued to recover from the effects of the pandemic with membership carrying on its creep upwards during the past 12 months. By the end of the membership year in March numbers had reached 130. So far 71 people have paid their membership fees for the current year, with many choosing to wait until April/May to do so.

The format of u3a events, available to all members, has continued unchanged in the past year. We have a monthly general meeting plus smaller interest group meetings, which can be on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis, depending on the wishes of each subgroup.

The very satisfactory venue for our monthly general meeting has mostly continued to be Bannside Presbyterian church hall. The exceptions were June, when we went on our planned outing to Lissan House and December when a church member's funeral meant that the hall was not available. Fortunately, our secretary, Sharon Henry, was able, at short notice, to secure Ballydown Presbyterian Church Hall and our Christmas party event went ahead there successfully.

There are currently 10 functioning interest groups, ranging in size from approximately 5 to 20 members. Some groups such as the walkers have gone on successfully through various membership changes for many years. The most recent development during the past year has been the setting up of a pickle ball playing group which is proving to be very popular. They meet weekly in the leisure centre. Less positively we lost our Current affairs discussion group when Adrian and Joan Howlett moved to live in England. They had been u3a stalwarts from its beginning in Banbridge and were the guiding lights in this discussion group which they ran in their own home.

As our membership grows it would be desirable if further interest groups could be encouraged. The committee recently decided that groups can apply for a 50 pounds draw down from our central fund to help with group start up or equipment replenishment costs. The u3a is an organisation with a "help yourself" mentality in creating opportunities and interests for its members. I would urge anyone with new ideas for leisure activities or learning which would benefit members to please put them forward.

The annual requirement for a report to the charity's commission was met in January. This was our second year in meeting this requirement and was much easier than the year. The report and attachments have to be submitted online, and the biggest difficulty is to achieve attaching. I have to thank my husband Ken for his help in figuring out how to do it.

In February we made an application to the council for a Take 500 grant with which we had hoped to be in a position to cover the cost of a hired bus for our annual June outing and have funds for further advertising of our existence to potential new recruits. Our organisation was deemed eligible to apply and like every other such organisation we had to attend a marketplace event in the leisure centre on 9th March to seek community votes for our application. I would like to thank all the current committee members for the effort they put into this application but sadly it was ultimately unsuccessful, as were two thirds of all applicants. (Can I congratulate our member Geraldine Foley who is a leading light in the Inland Waterways on the success of their application!)

We will therefore be sticking with our existing shared car transport arrangement for our annual outing. The committee has now decided that our outing will be to Downpatrick on 11th June with the usual start point from Tesco's car park. We will leave at 8.50am intending to arrive at Downpatrick cathedral at 10am where we will have tea/coffee and a tour. We plan to visit Saul church at around 11am, get to St Patrick's centre at approximately 12.30 for lunch followed by their film show, move on to Down County Museum at approximately 1.30pm and leave for home at around 3pm. We will have Clive Schooler as a guide during our visit. The cost of visitor fee/tea/coffee at the cathedral plus Clive's fee will be met from central funds. Attending individuals will need to pay for their lunch at St Patrick's centre and the usual car share costs. Those interested can put their names on a list today or at next month's meeting when 10 pounds deposits per person will also be collected

Finally in addition to the requirement to have annual elections for all members of the committee, u3a has the very sensible rule that Chairpersons, Secretaries and Treasurers have time limited overall periods in office. Covid rather bent these rules but now that we are back on normal tracks it is time for me to step out of the role of chair. Could I make the point that in order for us all to benefit we need to have a healthy turnover of members prepared to serve on the committee and be part of decision making for our u3a. I have been very lucky in having such supportive committee members not only during the past year but also in those who have served in previous years while I have been chairperson. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all. Hereafter I will of course continue to be a keen member, but it is now up to a new generation to take our u3a forward. Wishing u3a all the best in 2024/25 I now hand over to Mavis Turner from Belfast u3a to run our AGM voting process.

Signed: Veronica Barrett

9 April 2024

Trustees Reports to Charity Commission

BANBRIDGE DISTRICT u3a Annual Reports for the year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

Reference and Administration Information

Name of Charity: Banbridge District u3a
Charity Registration Number: NIC 107631
Address of principal officer
C/o: Sharon Henry - Chairperson, Banbridge u3a
41 Drumneath Road, Banbridge, BT32 4EJ

Names of Trustees

Veronica Barrett
Sharon Henry
Jill Noble
Keith Roper
Peter Kearns
Anne Buggy
Anne Lavery
Florence Chambers
Gabrielle Graham

Structure Governance and Management

The governing document of the Charity is its Constitution as adopted initially at the Annual General meeting held on 12th April 2016 and reviewed/updated at the Special General Meeting held on the 14th January 2020. 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 ; 288077) ,the co-ordinating body for u3a groups within the UK.

Objectives and Activities, Achievements and Performance.

Banbridge u3a is devoted in its commitment as set out in article 3 of its Constitution i.e. to advance education and in particular the education of people not in full time gainful employment who are in their third age residing in Banbridge District.

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 31st March 2024 . These have been approved by the charity's independent examiner (See separate reports).

Committee Activities.

The Executive Committee meet monthly in the community room of a local supermarket. Monthly General meetings are held in a local church hall. These meeting run from September to May each year. The June gathering takes the form of a planned outing.

Membership

Membership has continued to grow; we are delighted to report that membership stands at 130 members. A considerable number of our members have been with us for some time, but we have also welcomed numerous others with new skills and interests they are willing to share. Communication is maintained through a monthly Newsletter circulated by email or post to all the members – the vast majority are on email. This updates everyone on both the monthly meetings and on interest group activities, however most of the interest groups also use What's App messaging in respect of their specific activity. Our website is kept updated and details how new people can get in touch and become involved.

The annual membership subscription remains at £20 per person.

Interest Groups and Activities.

In keeping with the u3a movement, Interest Groups, are the evolving life blood of Banbridge u3a with new groups emanating based on the current interest, knowledge and skills of members. Activities currently include groups for Walking, Badminton, Pickle Ball, Art, Photography, Craft, Family history, Historical outings, Board and card games, Flower arranging.

Each group is steered by a facilitator and occur on weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis depending on the activity. Meetings not only avoid social isolation and encourage learning, but also support mental and physical health and wellbeing in a membership made up of third agers.

Monthly Meetings of members.

These meetings, with a speaker, to which all members are invited were held from September to November. In December a social event took place, at which a quiz was held, and finger food provided. Physical monthly meetings resumed in January and the u3a year culminated in an outing to a historic castle in June 2023.

The executive committee pools its knowledge to identify a wide variety of speaker topics, (local history/culture to) during the year which results in an excellent mixture of culture, entertainment and education. We plan to continue with this combination of talks and events which meet the wishes of our membership.

Concluding remarks

We are delighted to say that Banbridge u3a continues to flourish with members learning new skills and exploring new avenues for living full and active lives after retiring from full time work.

Sharon Henry

Sharon Henry
Chairperson (on behalf of the Trustees)

21 January 2025